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Preferred panel: 1. Images, Texts, Reality.

Title of the paper:

Once upon a time there was a donkey... ( *Il Romanzo d' Esopo* 59-64G; Plutarco, *Septem Sapientium Convivium* 150D ss.).

Length of paper: 20 minutes.

Outline of the content:

In the *Romance of Aesop* the story-teller sometimes exemplifies situations and gives advices and solutions, using the analogical evidence of fables. The stories within the borders of the *Romance* plot, acquire a new power: they become historical parable of the vicissitudes of Aesop's life more than literary or rhetorical examples of fables genre. In this way the physiognomics of the animals of the tales with their characteristics and different typologies, like a comic mask, become caricature of the face of the crippled dwarf in the *Romance*. They act together with Aesop and fill up the mimical gestures of the Story-Teller inside the *Romance* with a perhaps less evident, but more pragmatic and deeper meaning.

For example we have already seen ( FIEC congress Kavala 1999) that the tale of the cicada (W) or grasshopper (G), has a narrative function in the plot of the *Life* because it saves Aesop and also grants freedom for Samo and all its inhabitants , but at the same time it gives us the evidence that the historical Aesop ( Hdt.II 134-135; *P. Oxyr.* fr.2 col. II) in the age of the written draft of the *Romance* at least, was known like a little wise man, a black skinned dwarf with a strong voice in a pressing analogy with the very small insect of the tale its song and its burnt skin by noon sunbeams.

Once upon a time there was a donkey ...

This ass, then, a plain, sometimes humble animal "was there": that is to say, there in the *Romance*, in the tales of Aesop's narrative *Corpus*, in the analogy Aesop- ass about wich Plutarch speaks in his *Septem Sapientium Convivium*. This animal is strictly linked with the Story- teller. But the donkey was there too... in a cow shed in Bethlehem, near to a cow and to a baby, a very small newborn child, who does'nt yet speak his *logos*, an unusual *Verbum* that gives up a turned upside down ethymological meaning, a meaning that must be shown by facts. The modest scent of the modest donkey blends with the scent of straw, of hay, of every ignored tiny thing. No one could suspect at that time that in a few years it would have become the scent of sanctity, of freedom, of brotherhood.