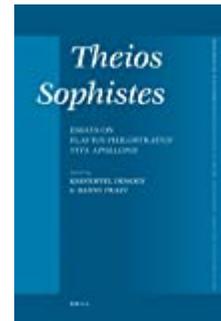




**Kristoffel Demoen, Danny Praet.** *Theios Sophistes: Essays on Flavius Philostratus*. Leiden u.a.: Brill Academic Publishers, 2009. 405 S. \$200.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-90-04-17109-1.



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**Published on** H-Soz-u-Kult (May, 2009)

## K. Demoen (Hrsg.): *Theios Sophistes*

*Theios Sophistes* is the latest in a series of stimulating new works on Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius* (henceforth *VA*). It brings together fifteen papers mostly written for a conference held in Brussels in 2006. The collection offers a good survey of past and current scholarship on the *VA* and opens up or explores a variety of new perspectives on the text. Particularly interesting is the juxtaposition of literary and philological studies in the first part and the discussion of historical, religious, and philosophical aspects in the second.

In the first chapter, 'Les choix narratifs de Philostrate dans la *Vie d'Apollonios de Tyane*', Alain Billault discusses Philostratus's *VA* as an encomiastic, chronological, and selective account of the life of a divine man. If the integration of historical narrative and ethical synthesis in Philostratus's text places the *VA* in the tradition of encomiastic biography, Philostratus is original in dealing with a new type of hero, the divine man, as well as in introducing a metanarrative dimension: throughout the text, Philostratus intervenes in his own voice and thereby draws the reader's attention to his own authorial activity. The second chapter, 'Towards a New Critical Edi-

tion of Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius: The Affiliation of the Manuscripts*', presents the new edition of the text in preparation by Gerard Boter. After a brief state of the art on the text of the *VA*, Boter lists the most important manuscripts, and sets out how these relate to one another. Especially the bipartition of the manuscript family is shown to have important implications for Boter's new edition.

Ewen Bowie's 'Quotation of Earlier Texts in *Ta es ton Tyanea Apollonion*' offers the reader a good survey of the range and distribution of references to earlier authors in the *VA*, set out most clearly in two user-friendly tables at the end of the chapter. References in the *VA* range from actual quotations accompanied by the author's name to oblique allusions. By choosing to refer above all to serious and philosophical texts, Philostratus presents himself as a serious and philosophical writer and Apollonius as a serious and philosophical character. Intertextuality is also central to the following chapter, 'How to become a poet? Homer and Apollonius visit the mound of Achilles', by Peter Grossardt. If Apollonius's visit to Troy imitates earlier trips by Alexander, Caracalla, and,

according to a tradition found in the *Vita Romana* and a scholion to Plato's *Phaedrus*, Homer himself, Grossardt argues that the questions Apollonius asks Achilles echo Lucian's *True Histories*.

Author and Narrator: Fiction and Metafiction in Philostratus's *Vita Apollonii* lays bare the distinction between author and narrator in the *VA*, and shows how this narrative structure draws the reader's attention to the text's fictionality. Wannes Gyselinck and Kristoffel Demoen demonstrate this metafictional character of the *VA* most clearly in their stimulating analyses of the prologue, the India episode in book III, the myth on myths in book V, and the satyr play of book VI. They also argue that the dramatic irony resulting from comments on the frame story by characters in the main story does not only question the believability of the story, but also promotes it as a piece of fiction.

Graeme Miles's *Reforming the Eyes: Interpreters and Interpretation in the Vita Apollonii* studies Apollonius as an interpreter as well as an object of interpretation. As an interpreter, Apollonius often enters in dialogue with other characters in the text: whilst arguing against interpretations marred by self-interest or fear, he tends to base himself on literature, myth, and history to present a Greek reading of dreams, omens, or works of art. At other occasions, Apollonius withholds interpretation of religion in an attempt to stimulate the reader's interpretative skills and, at the same time, maintain a sense of mystery. Likewise, Apollonius as an object of interpretation is shown to defy a straightforward reading. Miles ends with an analysis of the role of mimesis and phantasia within Apollonius's theory of interpretation. In the next chapter, *Irony versus Eulogy*. The *Vita Apollonii* as Metabiographical Fiction, Thomas Schirren sees the same discourse on mimesis and phantasia as key to understanding Philostratus's double aim with the *VA* as both eulogy, commissioned by the Empress Julia Domna, and irony, by way of game on the part of a highly sophisticated author. If much of this sounds familiar from the author's 2005 monograph on the *VA* Thomas Schirren, *Philosophos Bios. Die antike Philosophenbiographie als symbolische Form. Studien zur Vita Apollonii des Philostrat*, Heidelberg 2005, an interesting new element in his contribution in the volume under review is a discussion of the thoroughly different interpretations of (Philostratus's *Life of*) Apollonius by Hierocles and Eusebius, as evidenced in the latter's *Against Hierocles*.

The last chapter of the first part is Luc Van der Stock's *Never the Twain Shall Meet? Plutarch and*

Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius: Some Themes and Techniques*. First, Van der Stock examines some at times tantalizing evidence suggesting a link between Plutarch and his contemporary Apollonius as well as between Philostratus and his predecessor Plutarch. After that, he confronts the proems of Philostratus's *VA* and Plutarch's *Lives* from the perspective of ancient rhetoric. The final section of the chapter confronts the *VA* with Plutarch's most *Pythagorean Life*, viz. that of Numa.

The second part of the collection sets off with Graham Anderson's *Folklore versus Fakelore: Some Problems in the Life of Apollonius*. Anderson suggests that several stories in the *VA*, for example about healing and exorcism, animal behaviour, or mythological figures, merit closer attention from folklorists than is currently the case. After this, Jaap-Jan Flinterman focusses on *Apollonius's Ascension*. On the one hand, he discusses Heracles, Empedocles, and Romulus as precursors of Apollonius's bodily ascension. On the other hand, he examines why Philostratus chose the Rhodian temple of Athena at Lindus and the temple of Dictynna on Crete as the setting of two versions of the story of Apollonius's ascension: if the choice for Athena underlines the influence of Heracles's ascension as a model for Apollonius's, Dictynna was closely related to Zeus, had also experienced an apotheosis, and had escaped capture by Minos in the same way as Apollonius defies capture by a student in the last chapter of the *VA*, as well as, ultimately, by the reader.

*Some Letters of Apollonius of Tyana* form the object of Christopher Jones's contribution. More particularly, Jones makes a case for the authenticity of a group of letters which display a degree of knowledge of local practices that archeological and epigraphic research suggests only an insider would have had. The letters discussed cluster around Olympia, Ephesus, and Sardis. Jones also suggests that the Lucius Pompeius Apollonius of Ephesus mentioned in Cyriac of Ancona's transcription of an Ephesian inscription may be the Apollonius of the *VA*, thus implying that Apollonius may have had Roman as well as Ephesian citizenship. In *The Emesan Connection: Philostratus and Heliodoros*, John Morgan suggests that the city of Emesa, with its famous cult of the Sun, forms a connection between Heliodoros's *Aethiopica* and Philostratus's *VA*. According to Morgan, both authors use fictional constructions of idealised solar states at the margins of the world as a displaced means to articulate a message about the Emesan cult (p. 279-280). Whether or not one is convinced by this claim, Morgan also establishes an interesting link between the moderate, hellenized presentation of the cult of the Sun in Philostratus

and Heliodorus on the one hand, and similar efforts of Julia Domna and other members of the imperial family on the other. If all of this would suit very well with the idea of Heliodorus the novelist being identical to Heliodorus the Arab, who, just like Philostratus, was part of the circle of Julia Domna, Morgan opts for dating Heliodorus around the time of the Emperor Julian, thus turning him into a witness for Philostratus's continuing popularity in the fourth century.

In one of the most substantial and stimulating contributions to the collection, Danny Praet examines 'Pythagoreanism and the Planetary Deities: The Philosophical and Literary Master-Structure of the *Vita Apollonii*'. As Praet extensively demonstrates, each of the eight books of Philostratus's *VA* focuses on one deity. The sequence of planetary deities involved - Gaia (Earth), Helios-Apollo (Sun), Venus, Artemis (Moon), Hermes/Mercury, Ares/Mars, Chronos/Saturn, and Zeus/Jupiter - uses the astrological system of its day but turns it into an allegory that praises a correct observance of religious traditions and upholds an ideal of moral struggle against opposing forces' (p. 315). As such, Philostratus's *VA* should be taken seriously not just as a literary text, but also as a unique philosophical work.

Next, Erkki Koskeniemi discusses 'The Philostratean Apollonius as a Teacher'. He shows that Apollonius, who was largely an autodidact himself, taught not only his followers, but also public crowds and powerful men through discussions as well as speeches about religious, political, cultural, philosophical, geographical, and zoological topics. The last chapter in the collection, by Marc Van Uytvanghe, studies 'La *Vie d'Apollonius de Tyane* et le discours hagiographique'. Van Uytvanghe explains parallels in the descriptions of Jesus Christ and Apollonius by considering all these texts as hagiographic discourses, characterized by the choice of a specific type of hero, a specific relation between text and reality, a performative aim, and a typical way of presenting the hero as a divine man.

The range of approaches to the *VA* represented in *Theios Sophistes* makes that the book has something to offer for every reader, but also brings out the rich and multilayered character of Philostratus's text. In combination with the bibliography, general index, and index locorum at the end of the volume, this turns the collection into a useful and stimulating instrument for a wide variety of readers.

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**Citation:** Lieve Van Hoof. Review of Demoen, Kristoffel; Praet, Danny, *Theios Sophistes: Essays on Flavius Philostratus*. H-Soz-u-Kult, H-Net Reviews. May, 2009.

**URL:** <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=24841>

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