

## Through Pilgrim Eyes: The Myth-haunted Landscape of the Second Sophistic

In much of the surviving literature from the Second Sophistic we see an increasing focus on the greatness of the mytho-historical Greek past, often presented as an attempt to preserve Greek identity against a kind of creeping Eastern or Romanizing influence. In addition (and in part as handmaiden to the above) we also see the emergence of several travel or “pilgrim” narratives, works both fictional and non-fictional (though these categories necessarily *blur*) in which a traveler views the Greco-Roman landscape around himself through an almost exclusively mythic or sacred lens.

In this paper I intend to explore how the use of myth during this period<sup>1</sup> affects literary description of real world geography and how this, in turn, affects aspects of the identity of travelers experiencing that geography and the identity of the geography itself. I will accomplish this by looking at several literary selections with an eye to the following: 1) how these travelers/pilgrims describe the world as existing in a kind of eternal, mythic past upon which the details of the contemporary Roman world rarely encroach and 2) how both the persona of the traveler and the “Greekness” of the place itself are reified through *reenactment*; that is, only by participating in the myth connected to a particular place can a traveler fully understand or experience a location and express its true, ancient identity.

In particular I will attend to selections from the following authors/works: Pausanias, *Periegesis*; Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii*; Dio Chrysostom, *Orationes*; Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*. In each of these texts we find an individual wandering (sometimes lost!) in a (largely) sacred, mythic Aegean landscape. By playing out the mythic script suggested by various locales these individuals are variously able to reintegrate themselves properly back into society, underline and validate the ancient Greek identity of a place, and become *mythic* themselves. In many ways

---

<sup>1</sup> For the most part I will be examining 2<sup>nd</sup> century/early 3<sup>rd</sup> century texts.

these narratives anticipate the Christian pilgrimage narratives of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries in which penitents demonstrate divine favor and solidify their identity with Christ by imitating the actions of various Old Testament personae in their original locations.

### **SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Alcock, Susan E., John F. Cherry, and Jás Elsner, eds. *Pausanias: Travel and Memory in Ancient Greece*. Oxford University Press, 2001.

Elsner, Jás. "A Greek Pilgrim in the Roman World" *Past & Present* no. 135 (1992): 3-29.

Harland, Philip, ed. *Travel and Religion in Antiquity*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011.

Harrison, S. J. "Literary Topography in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*" in Paschalis and Frangouldis (2002): 40-57.

Jones, C.P. *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom*. Harvard University Press, 1978.

Leyerle, Blake. "Landscape as Cartography in Early Christian Pilgrimage Narratives" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64, no. 1 (1996): 119-143.

Paschalis, Michael and Stavros Frangouldis, eds. *Space in the Ancient Novel*. Ancient Narrative Supplementum 1, 2002.

Pretzler, Maria. "Turning Travel into Text: Pausanias at Work" *Greece & Rome* 51, no. 2 (2004): 199-216.

Rutherford, Ian. "Tourism and the Sacred: Pausanias and the Traditions of Greek Pilgrimage" in Alcock, Cherry, and Elsner (2001): 40-52.