EUR-Rome-Aelius Aristides-Bibl

Sacred tals

Aelius Aristides' Sacred Tales is a complex literary text, and its first book—the diary—puzzles scholars, as it has no parallel in the entire work. This paper offers a justification for this section by arguing for a deliberate contrast between the diary and Books 2–6 of the Sacred Tales, as a result of which the latter section is crafted as a narrative about Asclepius. I will first identify a large series of shifts in the ST: starting with Book 2, change concerns the protagonist, which from Aristides' abdomen turns to Asclepius, the narrator, dream interpretation, genre, and arrangement of the events. Secondly, I discuss the impact of these shifts upon the readers' response: while the diary invites the readers to relive the everyday tension between known past and unknown future, the spatial form of Books 2–6 creates the opposite effect, turning the readers' attention away from the human flow of time towards Asclepius, and leading them to perceive features of his divine time.

Aelius Aristides' Sacred Tales: A Study of the Creation of the “Narrative about Asclepius”

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* This chapter describes a textual analysis of the *Sacred Tales*, inquiring about their date of composition and *raison d'être*. The author tries to understand whether Aristides saw the *Sacred Tales* as a eulogy and nothing more, or whether an ulterior motive, such as commemorating himself as an orator by claiming Asclepius as his literary patron and, if so, what literary means employed to this end. The chapter clarifies a number of issues concerning the composition of the *Sacred Tales*, notably their time of writing, the nature of the source-material used and, perhaps most importantly, Aristides' motives for their composition and publication. The chapter also analyses the *Sacred Tales* by reviewing their impact on their ancient readership. The study has concurred with scholars such as Petsalis-Diomidis by pointing out that the text was an act of self-presentation and cannot be read literally.

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