Athanasius Strikes Back: The *Life of Antony* as a Rebuttal of the *Vita Apollonii*

12th Mary E.V. McClanahan Essay Prize Lecture

presented by

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By the 5th century CE, Christian hagiography had become a preeminent form of literature in the Roman world. What began with harrowing stories about martyrs tortured and executed during the imperial persecutions transitioned into idealized accounts of ascetic holy men and women who became figurative martyrs, relinquishing not their lives but worldly pleasures. In this talk, I analyze Athanasius' *Life of Antony* and Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* in light of the concept of the "holy man." More broadly, I propose that early Christian hagiography was a calculated response to the burgeoning pagan revival of the third and fourth centuries.

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