



THE ATHENS GREEK RELIGION SEMINAR, Tuesday April 25, 2023

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Death of a *parthenos*: the Case(s) of Aglauros

ABSTRACT

Written sources inform us about Aglauros, an Athenian cult heroine with a *hieron* at the east slope of the Acropolis. She was the patroness of the ephebes and ranked first in their oath. The *aition* for this function was her heroic self-sacrifice during the Eleusinian war: she gave her life for the salvation of the city by throwing herself off the Acropolis.

There is also a figure called Aglauros in the myth of the birth of Erichthonios, in literary and visual sources. She is part of a maiden triad, with Pandrosos and Herse, to whom Athena entrusts the earthborn baby, hidden in a chest the girls are forbidden to open. When Aglauros disobeys and discovers a snake (or snakes) next to the baby, she gets so terrified that she jumps off the Acropolis. (In several sources, she is joined by one or two of her sisters in disobeying and dying).

Both figures of Aglauros have only in common that they are *parthenoi* who die a violent death by throwing themselves off the rock. Fifth-century images contribute substantially to an understanding of the Athenians' interests in Aglauros in divergent contexts. They reveal why a traditional cult heroine became integrated into a myth which had nothing to do with her original *persona*.

The seminar takes place **Tuesday April 25, 2023, 17h (Athens time)** with live presence at the Swedish Institute or via Zoom link.

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