



THE ATHENS GREEK RELIGION SEMINAR, Tuesday, October 10, 2023

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Homer, Philology and Magic during the first centuries CE

ABSTRACT

Homeric meter and Homeric language, as well as entire formulae, individual verses, or series of verses, have been extensively employed in the ritual recipes known as “magical papyri”. To what extent does familiarity with the Homeric text manifest itself in the incorporation of these Homeric elements into magical hymns, prayers, and incantations? Is it solely a mechanistic technique relying on superficial analogies between individual words and the goals of the performance at hand?

Since the Hellenistic period and, especially within the framework of the Second Sophistic movement, the reuse of Homer in scholarly and literary production has taken various forms: supplementation, paraphrase, satire, and even the construction of new compositions from rearranged Homeric verses. Philological approaches and interventions in the Homeric text, literary depictions of Homer and his heroes, and the reworking of Homeric episodes sometimes appear to correlate with how the Homeric text has been used by religious practitioners. By situating the Homeric text in the broader context of its reception and considering it as, by definition, flexible, we can understand how its use in ritual contexts, different from those of the original poems, can still be enriched by the Homeric narrative.

This presentation, which is part of broader research on the role of mythic narrative in rituals, aims to explore the relationship between Homeric scholarship and Homeric fanfiction with ritual texts containing Homeric material, through concrete examples such as *GEMF 30 (PGM VI+II)* and, especially, *POxy 412, 228-231* from Africanus’ *Kestoi*. The goal is to defend the Homericity of ritual reuses as well as the potential of mythic narrative to enhance ritual effectiveness.

The seminar takes place **Tuesday, October 10, 2023, 17.00 (Athens)** with live presence at the Swedish Institute or online via Zoom.

To participate (in-person or via Zoom), please register at:

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