

A l'invitation de l'UMR 8210 ANHIMA – Atelier Chicago-Paris et de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études, PSL – Programme CIRCE

Christopher FARAONE, Professeur à l'Université de Chicago, donnera une série de trois conférences sur le thème:

[Oracles, Incantation and Lament: The Ritual Hexameters of Women from Homer to Theocritus](#)

1. Séminaire de François de Polignac, EPHE, mardi 5 décembre 2017, INHA, salle Fabri de Peiresc, 11h-13h :

[Circe's Instructions as the First Sibylline Oracles](#)

2. Séminaire de Cléo Carastro, EHESS, jeudi 7 décembre 2017, INHA, salle Mariette, 11h-13h :

[Helen's Pharmakon as a Transformed Hexametrical Incantation](#)

3. Séminaire de Renée Koch-Piettre, EPHE, vendredi 8 décembre 2017, INHA, salle Mariette, 17h-19h :

[“Like Golden Aphrodite”: The Adonia and the Female Laments in the Iliad](#)

Vous êtes cordialement invité(e)s Contact: Cléo Carastro (Carastro@ehess.fr)

Abstracts: _____

“Oracle, Incantation and Lament: The Ritual Hexameters of Women from Homer to Theocritus”

Bakhtin famously argued that in his day the novel was a young “genre-in-the-making” that easily absorbed other genres, both the literary (e.g. epic and tragedy) and the mundane (e.g. epistle and legal transcript). These lectures examine how orally composed Homeric epic (as we find it inscribed in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*) likewise absorbed both the form and content of three shorter hexametrical genres that were performed by women in three clearly defined ritual contexts: oracles, incantations and laments. Such an approach challenges the traditional assumption that, because these shorter ritual genres are generally preserved in sources much later than the Homeric epics, it must necessarily be the case that they imitate or borrow from epic and are not influenced at all by the continuing performance of all three genres down until the Hellenistic period and beyond. This older scholarly

assumption cannot, however, account for the recent and growing evidence that at least two of these shorter genres -- incantations and the Orphic "passports of the dead" -- were orally composed and thus were sung for centuries before they happened to be preserved in the late classical period on lead and gold tablets, a fact that encourages us to abandon the assumption, for example, that the oracles preserved by Herodotus or parodied by Aristophanes, were somehow spontaneously invented in late archaic period. Each lecture frames the question around a single Homeric moment – Circe’s instructions, Helen’s pharmakon and the laments of the Trojan women, but includes other evidence as well to argue for a long tradition of a single hexametrical genre from the archaic period to the Hellenistic. All three cases, moreover, allow us to excavate very early female song-genres that have hitherto been lost to us.

INDIVIDUAL LECTURES:

1) Circe’s Instructions as the First Sibylline Oracles

This lecture focuses on the tenth and eleventh books of the *Odyssey*, where the poet places in the mouth of Circe speeches of advice that reflect two different kinds of traditional oracle: (i) the so-called “colonization oracle”, which directs migrating people to the site of their new home, and; (ii) the ritual-advice type of oracle, which tells them what ceremonies to perform after they arrive. Here, we will see how Circe’s initial speech clearly reflects the generic features of oracles (as itemized by Fontenrose) that are preserved in early historical sources such as Herodotus, as well as in the artful parodies of oracles composed by Aristophanes. Richard Martin has rightly argued that Circe’s speech and the “Orphic” gold tablets both illustrate a “speech type-scene” concerned with directions and instructions (“map” and “script”) that occurs elsewhere in *Odyssey*, but this presentation digs deeper by arguing that both belong to a narrower subset of this speech act: the hexametrical oracle. I will argue, moreover, that the situation of Circe living alone in an isolated place, where she is consulted privately by a male elite, recalls the very old Greek tradition of individual oracle singers,

called “Sibyl” in Anatolia and “Bakis” on the Greek mainland. Insight into the Sibylline inspiration for Circe’s speech, moreover, helps to explain her curious epithet (“the dread goddess of human speech”) and helps to show how the poet by shifting in *Odyssey* 10 away from the image of Circe as a dangerous witch to Circe as a wise Sibyl, grants her a different and important kind of authority. This local authority is, nonetheless, undercut by the introduction of Tiresias as second and

more powerful seer, whom the panhellenic poet introduces as a source of knowledge of events beyond the horizon of the *Odyssey* itself, for example, the fate of the other *nostoi*.

2) Helen's *Pharmakon* as a Transformed Hexametrical Incantation

This lecture begins and ends by arguing that the description of Helen's magical herb (*pharmakon*) in *Odyssey* 4 is drawn from the boastful content of traditional hexametrical charms, that we find inscribed on lead amulets of classical and early Hellenistic date discovered in Crete and West Greece, such as the recently published Getty Hexameters. But to establish the widespread tradition of hexametrical incantations, it will also treat in detail the incantatory *pharmaka* of Empedocles and the boast put in the mouth of the disguised Demeter in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter. Other important evidence for this tradition of incantations, include a hexametrical fragment Aristophanes' lost *Amphiareus* and the first half of Theocritus' *Idyll* 2, in which the main character Simaetha sings a binding love charm. In the end, we will see that the poet of the *Odyssey* took a traditional Greek boast about the power of orally performed hexametrical spells and transformed it into a boast about the power of Egyptian herbal *pharmaka* in order to bolster his presentation of Helen's court at Argos as an oddly "oriental" place where women have extraordinary power.

3) "Like Golden Aphrodite": The Adonia and the Female Laments in the *Iliad*

This lecture begins with a substantial body of scholarship, starting from Margaret Alexiou's famous study *Female Lament as a Speech-Genre* and more recent work by Sheila Murnaghan and Christine Perkell to show how knowledge of this lament tradition informs our reading of the *Iliad* and especially the end of the poem where the laments of the Trojan women seem to present a critical female counterpoint to the heroic ideology of the poem. This chapter, however, seeks again to push the analysis beyond the simple speech-act and flesh out a specifically hexametrical genre by focusing solely on the diction of the Homeric dirges and later laments composed in this meter, especially Erinna's late-classical Lament for Baucis and Bion's Hellenistic Lament for Adonis. The hallmark for this chapter is the curious claim in the *Iliad* that both Briseis and Cassandra are acting "like golden Aphrodite", when they first see the corpse of a beloved and heroic young man, a simile that reveals how the poet of the *Iliad* knew of the tradition of ritual laments over Adonis sung by Greek women at least as early as the sixth century on Lesbos and presumably elsewhere along the Anatolian littoral. The payoff here is a clearer explanation of the stanzaic structure of the Trojan laments and of certain puzzling details, such as Andromache's rebuke of her dead husband at the end of her lament

and Hecuba's emphasis in hers on the beauty of her dead son's body, all of which can be found in the tradition of Adonis laments.