

Performance and (Re)Performance: Reading the Delphic Hymns in Context

This paper re-reads two understudied and often undervalued epigraphical hymns to Apollo (those attributed to Athenaios and Limenios, found in the Treasury of the Athenians at Delphi in 1893 by l'ecole française d'Athènes). Every performance may involve re-performance—this either of specific content or of the performative act itself. I suggest that the performance of these hymns at the *Pythais* festival is best understood within a context of *re-performance*—the repeated enactment of the festival itself as well as the (re)performance of songs throughout the day. A heightened awareness of these immediate inter-texts permits a new appreciation of composition, continuity, innovation, and intent.

I rely on the initial publications on these texts (Crusius-1894; Reinach-1893; Weil-1893) as well as more recent considerations (Bélis-1992; Furley and Bremer-2001). However, I attempt to move beyond their work by broadening the importance of context for my reading. Taking as my example the Achaeans in *Iliad* 1.472-5, who sang paeans to Apollo all day long, I make repetition a central idea for understanding. The Athenians periodically sent a *theoria* to Delphi to celebrate the *Pythais* with song. The festival itself likely included the performance of multiple musical compositions. Since this was a specifically *Athenian* festival, there is no easy deferral or attribution of these other performances to other Greek cities, and we must consider what other songs would be sung. I suggest that the treasury plaques on which two hymnic texts were found (exceptional in that they preserve not only text, but also musical notation) offers a compelling piece of evidence to support not only the idea of (re)performance at this festival, and additionally offers a unique opportunity for inter-textual reading—the two texts are inscribed in close proximity, were performed for the same cultic event (either successive festivals or possibly the same one), and follow a remarkably parallel narrative sequence. Moreover, there is a rich textual

history of earlier hymns and stories related to these hymns.

I offer a consideration of the two hymns, one which displaces interpretive issues and focuses on the under-studied implications of continuity and innovation, similarity and difference, expectation and innovation. I ask: “How might this more immediate awareness of intertextuality influence meaning, appreciation, and affective power?”

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