



Lecture

## RENAUD GAGNÉ

Pro Futura Scientia Fellow, SCAS.

Reader in Ancient Greek Literature and Religion, University of Cambridge

### *Hyperborea between Cult and Song: Theologies of Space in Archaic Greece*

Thursday, 30 March, 6:15 p.m.

In the Thunberg Lecture Hall  
SCAS, Linneanum, Thunbergsvägen 2, Uppsala  
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The lecture will be followed by a reception. Prior registration is required.  
Please contact [rsvp@swedishcollegium.se](mailto:rsvp@swedishcollegium.se) no later than 27 March to sign up.

This is an event in the series 'Ancient Civilizations: Crossroads and Contacts, Phrygians, Greeks, Romans and Hyperboreans'.  
Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study (SCAS) in collaboration with the *Department of Archaeology and Ancient History*,  
*Uppsala University* and *Agora: Interdisciplinary Research Network for Classical Studies at Uppsala University*.

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#### ABOUT RENAUD GAGNÉ

Renaud Gagné holds a BA in Classics and an MA in Ancient History from the Université de Montréal and a Ph.D. in Classical Philology (2007) from Harvard University. He was Assistant Professor in the Department of History and Classical Studies at McGill University, Montréal (2006–2009) and Lecturer (2009–2015) at the Faculty of Classics at the University of Cambridge before becoming Reader in Ancient Greek Literature and Religion (2015–). He is a Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge (2009–). He has also held visiting posts at the Freie Universität Berlin, the Université de Montréal, and the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHES).

Gagné has received major grants and fellowships from Harvard, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, the Onassis Foundation, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and he has been awarded the Gold Medal of the Governor General of Canada and the Philip Leverhulme Prize. He has published *Ancestral Fault in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, 2013), a book which traces the history of ideas about divine generational punishment throughout ancient Greek culture and the long reception of ancient Greek literature. He has also co-edited *Choral Mediations in Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, 2013) and *Sacrifices Humains: Perspectives Croisées et Représentations* (Liège, 2013).

During his Pro Futura Fellowship, he will edit *The New Cambridge History of Greek Literature* and work on completing two monographs: *Hyperborea: Excursions to the Overnorth* and *Chorus and Symposium: Metaphors of Performance*.

#### ABSTRACT

How does cult locate divine power? Greek gods come and go, and their arrivals function as powerful markers of time and space. Sanctuaries are the visible traces of their movements. Whether the moment of arrival is a point in linear time or a cyclical recurrence, divine presence remains solidly anchored in the aetiological space of cult foundation. The god's once and future arrival is a permanent intervention in the meaning of the landscape. It traces a transformation that elevates the location of the site to a special level of significance – what I call a cult chronotope. At the heart of this significance is the weaving of local ritual space in the larger settings of divine geography. The dynamic system of Archaic and Classical polytheism makes generous use of divine trajectories to link space together. The god's arrival is, more often than not, a passage from another, definite place. When it is commemorated in formalised language, the establishment of cult tends to involve a web of other locations in its marking of space. The god's arrival, that is, positions local sacred space in a network of relations to other spaces. Considerations of centre and periphery invariably delimit that network. This paper will look at the representation of three such networks, and briefly contrast their articulations of centre and periphery. All three are ritualised texts of the 6th century BCE from the domain of Apollo: texts of the three great sanctuaries of Didyma, Delphi, and Delos. The first text is a tiny inscribed oracular tablet. The other two are exuberant, expansive hymns (nominally) sung by choruses. Situating the presence of the god in the sanctuary is at the heart of all three texts. All three reflect Apollo's deep connections to the far north. The idea is to juxtapose radically different ways of representing cult chronotopes in order to better discern strategies and identify patterns. Hymnic geography, the fundamental vehicle for exploring the spatial and temporal imagination of cult in Greek religion, can only be properly understood through contrast, and by assessing the agency at work in each individual text. Greek religion is a map of songs. Apollo's mythical North is a uniquely rich point of reference for comparing its sacred topographies of the mind.