



The Øivind Andersen Lecture Series

Homer, Hesiod and 'Homeric' Hymns at the Service of Isis: The Reuse of Greek Epic Tradition in The Poetic Dedication of Isidorus at Narmouthis

Lecture by Prof. **Anastasia Maravela** (Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas, University of Oslo)



Processional way leading to the temple of Medinet Madi/Narmouthis (source: Wikimedia Commons)

The lecture will take place on **Thursday, 22 May 2025, at 7:00 p.m. (EEST)** at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, Tsami Karatasou 5, 11742 (the lecture will also be streamed online via Zoom)

Registration is required for both in-person and virtual attendance.

To attend **in-person**, please register at norwinst@uib.no

To attend **via Zoom**, please register via the following link:

<https://uib.zoom.us/meeting/register/oRti6uFrSy62ehvG6zPq4Q>



Abstract

In around 88 BCE a certain Isidorus dedicated a set of four poems in traditional Greek metres – two in hexameters and two in elegiac *disticha* – to the goddess Isis-Hermouthis. The poems, conventionally known as “the hymns of Isidorus” (SEG VIII 548–551), were carved on the entrance pilasters of a forecourt of the goddess’ temple in Narmouthis/Medinet Madi, southwest in the Fayum oasis in Egypt. Despite their temporal and spatial distance from the core of Greek epic tradition – the poetry of Homer, Hesiod and the hymns conventionally known as ‘Homeric’ – the four poems that make up Isidorus’ poetic gift to Isis-Hermouthis engage intensively, and often creatively, with early epic at multiple levels. This lecture will discuss the themes, scenes and tropes from early Greek epic poetry that have left their mark on Isidorus’ poems, hoping to shed light on the intertextual and cultural strategies, by means of which a regional Hellenistic poet puts the Greek literary heritage at the service of a complex goddess, who at first had been local and non-Greek, but by that time had developed into a universal deity.

Biographical Information

[Anastasia Maravela](#) is Professor of Ancient Greek at the Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas, University of Oslo. She studied Classics at the University of Athens, University College London and the University of Oslo. Her research interests span from editorial philology to literary criticism, aspects of ancient history and social life in antiquity. She has written on Greek epic and lyric poetry, imperial prose, Greek and Coptic papyri from Egypt, as well as religion and magic in the ancient Mediterranean.