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pre-retreat newsletter

1 message

Metalepsis Seminar / Virtual Session 1

metalepsis seminar / WAAC / 2 November 2013

THE MUDDY MYSTERY OF THE HESTIA-HERMES CASE

METALEPSIS SEMINARIANS, 9-ERS, AND AUXILIARY MEMBERS:



Thanks to inquiry started by Berrin Terim, I began to do a "close reading" of Alberto Pérez-Gómez's description of the **prytaneion**, Πρυτανεῖον, the building that contained the civic hearth-flame of Athens. Unlike the College of Vestals in Rome, this facility was not only open to men, but men only, an apparent reversal of the cult of Hestia whose priestesses are not only women but virgins "wedded to the flame." APG's account and Fustel de Coulanges' on the subject of Hestia could not be more opposite.

There is a lot of explaining to do here ... APG's use of **Vernant's classic study** and subsequent essay seems to leave out the warning about the lack of evidence that Hermes and Hestia had any association whatsoever outside of Phidias's group sculpture, where they are paired symmetrically in a series depicting the Olympian gods and goddesses. APG's essay is preceded by a similar **essay by Jean Robert**, a colleague of Ivan Illich and a nice guy I met in the 1990s. I'm attaching his essay. You can find the full text of Fustel de Coulanges' **The Ancient City** on our reprints list or [on the web](#).

Everybody's "a nice guy" here, and I don't want to be mean, but a tradition and several ideas relating to metalepsis are at stake. The issue is much more complicated than I had first thought. I would prefer to extend Alberto's thesis than to destroy it, but it is clear that the tendency to back-project a conceptual pairing on to an ancient mythology just to tie up loose ends or make a thesis about space is bound to lead to trouble. The myth resists being paraphrased and/or stylized. I propose we get into this soon, before the semester is over, and that we include some wild cards, such as the helmet of Hermes shown in Vico's frontispiece. I have an idea that this mystery makes the perfect "ghost story" for our event next weekend. I hope you will know who Hecate is!!! There's more to her than just a Google entry. Think like an architect.

Attached to this newsletter are some documents for you to mull over. You probably already have ready access to Pérez-Gómez's *Built Upon Love*. I will not include any of my own writing yet, except for a one-page **reconsideration of metalepsis** based on the thought suggested by a friend of mine (Juanita Djelal), about "leipsis" meaning "seizure." PERFECT!!!

ABOUT THE RETREAT: I will be sending you some **more maps and a program**, also a final list of room assignments and

directions to those rooms. Anyone wanting to ride a bicycle or a horse must bring head protection! Better even, sign a release. I don't want blood on my hands. Remember, presentation format is voluntary but you should have something to say about your own work, also a ghost story (local participants can skip the ghost story and abbreviate their work review).



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3 attachments

 **vernant.pdf**
2294K

 **leptis.pdf**
47K

 **HESTIA.pdf**
21K