

Outline 7: The Heroic Age, Religion and the Gods

Monday, January 30, 2017

Reading: C/F 54-55; 142-153

Καλημέρα (kah-lee-meh-rah)

Greek 'Hel-'

- Helen: Helen of Troy (mythical cause of the mythical Trojan war) (female)
- Hellen: common ancestor of all Greeks (male)
- Hellene: name Greeks called themselves
- Hellas: what the Greeks called Greek
- Helle (Hellespont): girl that fell of the magical ram and into the straight now called the Hellespont

Θ θ theta is for Theseus, (mythical) hero of Athens (killed the Minotaur)

Hesiod's Heroic Age = 1600 - 1200 BCE

- Mycenaean
- Late Helladic
- Late Bronze Age (mainland) divided into Bronze and Heroic
 - Linear B tablets that were once used for economic purposes were now used to depict the stories of gods
 - myths have connections to reality

What is a hero?

- performs deeds of strength and courage
- often offspring of a god and a mortal
- mortal (exceptions)
- 'star' of a war, quest/search, labour(s)

Hero Worship

- after death
- chthonic deities (dead and in the underworld)
- means of worship: pouring a libation, usually wine, sometimes milk, honey, or sacrificial blood on the ground bc they are in the ground
- in-ground offerings bc they are in the ground

Heroes and Labour Myths

Theseus (C/F p. 55)

- triumph of civilized over uncivilized
- killed the Minotaur, but also had other labours

- overcame both men and beasts
- man ran a hotel/inn and when guests came, he adjusted the people to fit his couch, so Theseus adjusted him back
- fought and defeated a wild boar
- captured Amazon queen Antiope
- caused a war between Greeks and Amazons (war called Amazonomachy) (C/F p. 152)
- Ancient Greek statues were not naturally white but were painted
- Amazons were celibate female warriors, made babies with outsiders, killed or expelled male children
- again, triumph of civilized of uncivilized

Herakles

- son of Zeus and a mortal woman (Zeus tricked her by disguising himself as her husband)
- driven crazy by Hera so he ended up killing his own children
- ordered to perform 12 Labours by king of Tiryns
- first labour: killed the Nemean Lion w his bare hands (C/F p. 55)
- second labour: killed Hydra
- another labour: go down to Hades and bring back Cerberus (C/F p. 153)
- deified (joined the gods, universally loved by all Greeks, particularly loved by Peloponnese)
- Romans called him Hercules

Heroes and Quest Myths

Odysseus: quest for home (Troy to Ithaka)

- post-Trojan war
- took him 10 years bc he spent 7 years under the power of a beautiful witch that seduced him, reflected Bronze Age trade routes
- Scylla (monster that lived close to Charybdis and she barked like a dog and had dog heads) and Charybdis (whirlpool that possibly reflected the Straits of Messina)
- Polyphemus possibly reflecting Mt. Etna (Sicily)

Jason: quest for the Golden Fleece

- may represent the exploration of the Black Sea
- great-grandson of god of winds
- raised by the centaur Cairon??
- pre-Trojan war, beginning of Late Bronze Age
- goes from Thessaly to Colchis searching for the Golden Fleece in his ship The Argo
- the sailors are called the Argonauts?
- there were lots of Heroes on The Argo helping him, including Herakles

- has to get thru the clashing rocks
- when Jason gets the Colchis, the Fleece is guarded by a snake, in order to get it, he needs to subdue the snake
- Medea helps Jason and she gives the serpent a sleeping potion so that Jason can grab the fleece and take it back to Hellas
- Jason was helped by Medea the way Theseus was helped by Ariadne
- Medea was also ditched by Jason (wtf)
- Medea gets revenge by killing their children

Heroes and War Myths

Pre-Trojan War Myth

Thebes (Boiotia)

- Greeks fighting Greeks
- north of Boiotia is Sicily
- Thebes was the home of Oedipus
- the Sphinx had a riddle for Oedipus, she was so shocked he knew the answer so she killed herself (C/F p.88)
- Inheritance Struggle: Seven Against Thebes (represent son trying to overthrow brother)/Return of the Seven (sons of the original 7 heroes returning to get revenge)

Greek Religion: Characteristics

- 'Greek glue', unifying
- polytheistic (poly=many, theistic=gods)
- no sacred text
- no priesthood
- embedded in daily life
- emphasis on rituals and festivals
- ritual animal sacrifice: procession (people carrying things and walking towards an altar and a libation is poured on the sacrifice) (C/F p. 144)
- music is v important in processions and rituals
- sanctuary: altar, or temple (but temple is not required), set aside for gods and worship, have a clearly marked boundary
- temple: house of the god, home of cult statue, storehouse of religious, public, and private wealth (also became banks in later antiquity)

Hesiod: Author of Book Called *Theogony* (Genealogy of the Gods)

- anthropomorphic: have the shape of humans except they were bigger and better looking
- awe-some, powerful, immortal
- sustained by ichor in their veins
- existed on ambrosia, nectar, smoke (don't eat human food)

- behave like humans

The Gods: Olympians, Mt. Olympus (Thessaly)

- lived on Mt. Olympus in Thessaly (highest mountain in Hellas)
- behavioural psychology has shows that the #11 is the best number for cooperation
- there was traditionally 12 gods on the Mt. and they are a family (family affair)

Oldest Olympian: Aphrodite (Hesiod)

- according to Hesiod, Aphrodite is the oldest Olympian even though she is apparently Zeus's daughter
 - Heaven and Earth had children and Heaven did not want his kids to be more powerful than him so he kept stuffing them back into Earth
 - Earth got annoyed so he stopped but instead he hid them in a cave
 - Earth showed her kids a sickle and spoke to them to give them courage
 - her son Cronus agreed to cut off Heaven's genitals and throw them into the sea
 - out of the sea stepped out Aphrodite (reincarnation of Heaven's penis)
 - goddess of procreation, beauty
 - sided with the Trojans
 - 'daughter' of Ouranos
 - Botticelli painted a painting of her birth called Venus by the Romans
 - Eros: son of Aphrodite, god of love
 - Pan: half man half goat, ultimate rural deity, associated w sexuality, god of shepards, plays pipes, the word panic comes from his name (C/F p. 151)

Olympian Siblings:

- Zeus: sky/weather god, king of the Olympians
 - attributes: thunderbolt, eagle, oak tree (most gods have sacred trees) (C/F p. 176)
 - married to his sister Hera
 - hurled his thunderbolt at his enemies
- Hera: goddess of marriage, on Greek side of Trojan war (C/F p. 146)
- Poseidon: brother of Zeus and Hera and father of Polyphemos, god of the sea, god of horses, god of earthquakes (C/F p. 146)
 - attributes: trident, dolphin
 - near Athens is one of his best known temples: Cape Sounion
- Hestia: virgin goddess, sister of Zeus and Hera and Poseidon, 'eternal flame'
 - domestic: hearth
 - public: prytaneion
 - does not have temples, not very well known goddess, but she is the heart of Greek religion
- Hades: NON-Olympian, chthonic, master of Cerberus, lives in house of Hades, son-in-law and brother of Demeter, worship him by pouring libations, name means invisible
 - underworld is a dark, damp, and gloomy place

- Demeter: goddess of grain and agricultural fertility, mystery cults (held in secret at night), mother of Persephone
 - had to search for her daughter in the underworld which is why a torch is an attribute
 - the kidnapping of Persephone describes the seasons
 - attributes: wheat, torch, cornucopia

Second Generation Olympians

- all offspring of Zeus
- Ares: god of war, always armed, god of the blood, awful parts of war
- lover of Aphrodite, not widely worshipped, some say he is the father of Eros, Hephaistos: god of metallurgy, blacksmith (C/F p. 150)
 - husband of Aphrodite
 - was born with a deformity so Hera kicked him out of Olympus
 - made Achilles' armour
 - temple of Hephaistos in Athens, best preserved temple in Hellas

Twins:

- Artemis: daughter of Zeus and Leto
 - goddess of hunting, wilderness, life transitions
 - attributes: bow & arrow, deer, dog
 - Romans call her Diana
- Apollo: god of light, music, and prophecy (C/F p. 69)
 - attributes: lyre, laurel (sacred tree), tripod cauldron

Strange Births

- Athena: goddess of war, wisdom, weaving, daughter of Zeus and Metis
 - when Zeus heard she would give birth to someone better than him, he swallowed Metis, and Athena was born from her father's head (C/F p 17 and 130)
- Dionysos: god of wine, theatre, good times, son of
 - attributes: kantharos, maenad, satyr
 - when Zeus appeared to the pregnant mother, he sewed Dionysos into his thigh
- Hermes: god of thieves, commerce, athletes
 - attributes: caduceus, herm

Return of Hephaistos to Mt. Olympus

Praxiteles: Hermes & Dionysos (C/F p. 149)

Images: Theseus (C/F p. 55), Theseus & Antiope (C/F p. 152), Herakles (C/F p. 55), Cerberus (C/F p. 153), Oedipus & the Sphinx (C/F p.88), Poseidon (C/F p. 146), Artemis,

Eros, Pan (C/F p. 151), Athena (C/F p 17 and 130), Apollo (C/F p. 69), Hermes & Dionysos (C/F p. 149)

Study Map: Athens, Colchis, Black Sea, Thebes, Mt. Olympus, Olympia, Tiryns
Please include the following:

From Lecture 4: Knossos, Crete, Thera, Akrotiri

From Lecture 5: Mycenae, Tiryns, Pylos

From Lecture 6: Troy (Ilion/Ilium/Hisarlik), Ithaka, Hellespont

Words to Remember

People: Hesiod, Theseus, Amazon, Herakles, Jason, Argonauts, Oedipus, Zeus, Hera, Ares, Hephaistos, Hestia, Poseidon, Hades, Demeter, Persephone, Aphrodite, Eros, Pan, Athena, Artemis, Apollo, Hermes, Dionysos, maenad, satyr

Places: Athens, Colchis, Black Sea, Thebes, Mt. Olympus, Olympia, Tiryns

Terms: hero, chthonic, libation, Amazonomachy, Nemean lion, Cerberus, Argo, sphinx, *Theogony*, anthropomorphic, ichor, nectar, ambrosia, immortal, prytaneion, trident, lyre, tripod cauldron, laurel, caduceus, herm, kantharos

Map: Thebes, Colchis, Athens, Mt. Olympus

Think About It!!

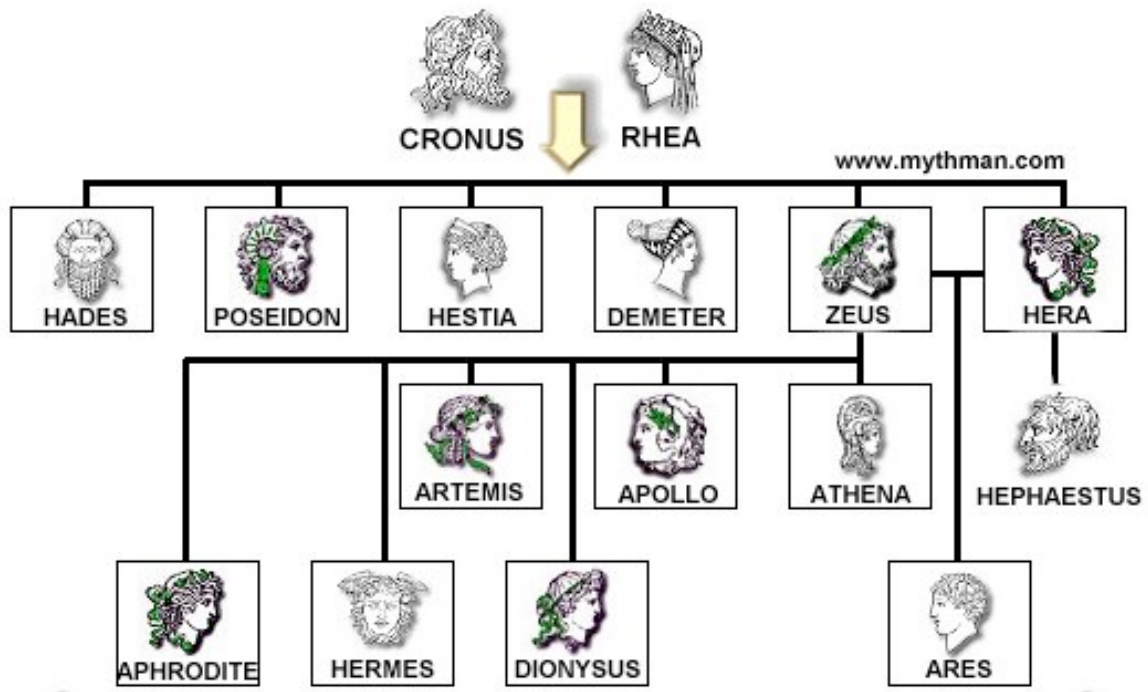
1. How does modern hero worship differ from that of ancient Greece?
2. What other labours did Herakles perform? See C/F p. 152-153
3. How does the hero Herakles differ from most other heroes?
4. If Hades is a brother of Zeus, why is he not an Olympian god?
5. Does the portrayal of Greek gods and goddesses in the movies differ from how they were perceived in ancient Greece? If so, how?
6. In what ways does Greek religion differ from your religion? If you are not religious, how do you differ from the ancient Greeks?

Recommended Websites for Greek Mythology:

<http://www.maicar.com/GML/>

<http://www.mythindex.com/>

<http://www.theoi.com/>



**MYTH MAN'S
OLYMPIANS**

