

Myth, Singers and Song [Unit 1]

SECTION A: MYTH AND HOMER

Discussion Points:

1. How can we see that the Homeric epics are the result of an oral tradition? How does that affect our interpretation of the epics?
2. What difficulties do we encounter when we want to look at 'myth and Homer'? How can neoanalysis help us interpret Homeric myth?
3. How does Homer fit in with his mythological and 'literary' contemporaries? How useful is it for a study of Homeric myth to look at comparative Greek epics?
4. How and to what extent do the Near Eastern parallels help us interpret Homeric myth?
5. To what extent does the study of myth in Homer help us to talk about the origins of Greek myth?

Secondary Reading:

- Burgess, J. S. 'Neoanalysis, Orality, and Intertextuality: An Examination of Homeric Motif Transference', in *Oral Tradition* 21, 2006, 148-89. [Moodle]
- Currie, B. 'Homer and the Early Epic Tradition', in M. J. Clarke, B. G. F. Currie and R. O. A. M. Lyne (eds.) *Epic Interactions: Perspectives on Homer, Virgil and the Epic Tradition Presented to Jasper Griffin by Former Pupils*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 1-46. [Moodle]
- De Vet, T. (2005), 'Parry in Paris: Structuralism, Historical Linguistics, and the Oral Theory' in *Classical Antiquity* 24, 2005, 257-84. [Moodle]
- Edmunds, L. 'Myth in Homer', in Morris I & Powell B. (eds.) *A New Companion to Homer*. Leiden: Brill, 1997, 415-441. [Moodle]
- Graf, F. *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*. London & Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996, 57-80. [Library]
- Scodel, R. 'The story-teller and his audience', in Fowler, R. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 45-55. [Library]

SECTION B: STORYTELLING IN HOMER

Primary Reading:

Homer, *Odyssey* books 1 and 8

[see also 4.1-24; 11.333-84, 13.1-15; 17.512-27; 24.330-80]

Homer, *Iliad*, 3.125-244 and 9.185-98

Hesiod, *Theogony* 1-115

Myth in Greek and Roman Epic

Discussion Points:

1. What is the role of songs in Homer?
2. What can the portrayal of bards and the settings in which they sing tell us about the function and role of bards in Homeric society?
3. How are *kleos*, immortality, memory and song linked?
4. What is the function of storytelling in the Homeric epics?

Secondary Reading:

Minchin, E. 'The Language of Heroes and the Language of Heroines: Storytelling in Oral Traditional Epic', in Cooper, C. (ed.) *Politics of Orality: Orality and Literacy in Ancient Greece*, Vol. 6. Leiden: Brill, 2007, 3-38. [Moodle]

Scodel, R. 'Bardic Performance and Oral Tradition in Homer', *AJPh* 119, 1998, 171-94. [Moodle].

Segal, C. *Singers, Heroes and Gods in the Odyssey*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, chapter 6. [Library]

SECTION C: ILIADIC MYTHOLOGICAL PARADEIGMA

Primary Reading:

Homer, *Iliad*, books 9 and 24 (focusing in on the myths of Meleager and Niobe)

Bacchylides, *Ode* 5.56-77

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.149-312

Apollodorus *Bibliothēke* 1.8 and 3.5.6

Discussion Points:

1. How have these myths been embedded in the context of the poem? How have they been structured?
2. What are the functions of these myths?
3. How have these myths been adapted and manipulated? To what effect? To what extent can we establish this?
4. Compare these myths with other *paradeigma* (*Il.* 4.370-400, 5.382-404, 7.124-60). Can we see a pattern across Homeric mythological *paradeigma*?
5. What do these passages show us about the nature of Greek myths?

Myth in Greek and Roman Epic

Secondary Reading:

- Alden, M. (2000), *Homer Beside Himself: Para-Narratives in the Iliad*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 1-47, 179-290 (esp. 13-47). [Library]
- De Jong, I.J.F. *Homer: Critical Assessments, Vol. 3D*, London and New York: Routledge, 1999, 383-503. [Library]
- Edmunds, L. 'Myth in Homer', in Morris I & Powell B. (eds.) *A New Companion to Homer*. Leiden: Brill, 1997, 415-441. [Moodle]
- Nagy, G. *Homeric Questions*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1996, 113-146. [Moodle]
- Willcock, M.M. 'Mythological Paradeigma in the *Iliad*' in D.L. Cairns (ed.) *Oxford Readings in Homer's Iliad*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 434-55 [Library]