

Women in Antiquity
Spring 2024

MEETING 4

The Bronze Age and its Homeric Echo

- The Greek Dark Age
- *Iliad* and *Odyssey*
- Marriage in Homer
- Penelope and Nausicaa
- Helen and Klytaemnestra

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Five things today

- 1 The Greek Dark Age
- 2 *Iliad* and *Odyssey*
- 3 Marriage in Homer
- 4 Penelope and Nausicaa
- 5 Helen and Klytaemnestra

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Upcoming dates

- Images Essay due Monday, March 4
- Proposal due Monday, March 18

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Quiz #1: Ancient Goddesses and Gods

- 1. Pomeroy calls Athena/Minerva "the most complex of the goddesses." What's unusual or distinctive about her?
- 2. What do you think was Hesiod's overall message in *Theogony*? What parts stood out to you that relate to this perspective?
- EC1. The "virginal" (that is, unmarried and non-monogamous) Olympian goddesses include all of the following EXCEPT:
 - (a) Athena
 - (b) Artemis
 - (c) Hestia
 - (d) Hera
- EC2. How would you describe the Greek (male) gods' sexual liaisons with female mortals? How do they compare to goddesses' liaisons with mortal men?

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Questions about whatever



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The Homeric Era

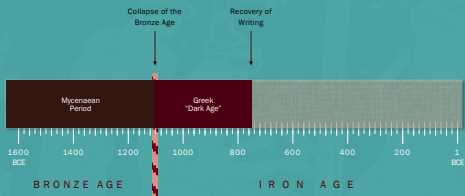
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Collapse of the Bronze Age

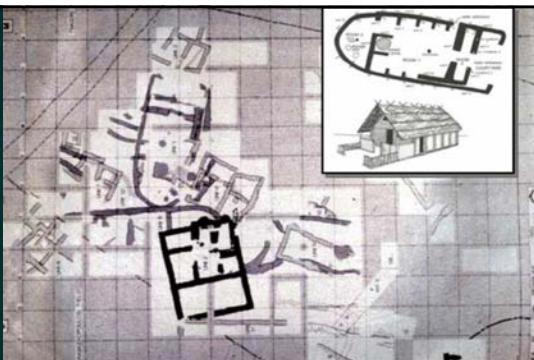


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Periods of Greek History



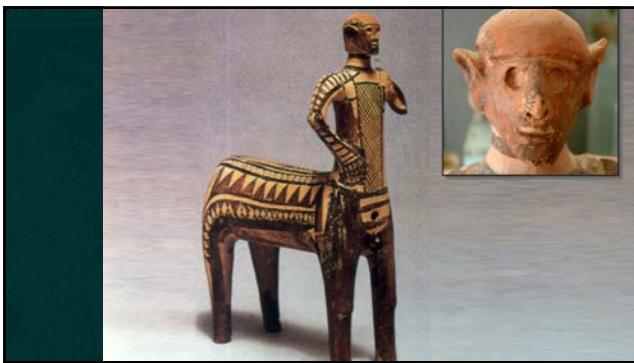
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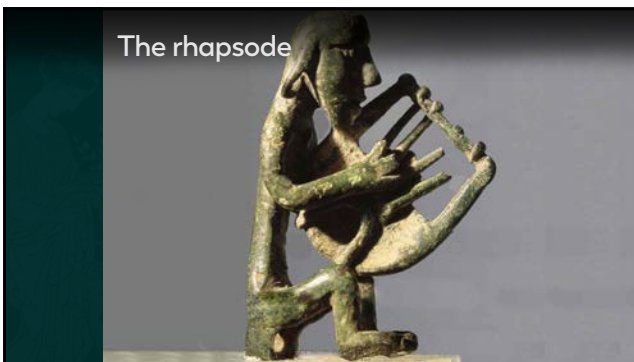
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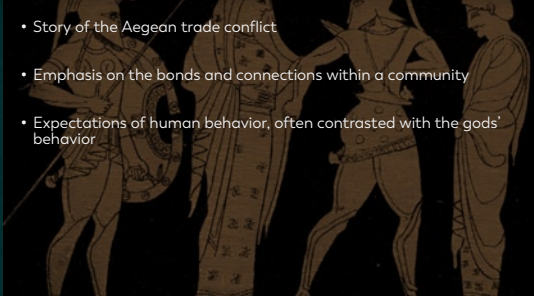
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Greek religion



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Homer's Trojan War: *Iliad* and *Odyssey*



- Story of the Aegean trade conflict
- Emphasis on the bonds and connections within a community
- Expectations of human behavior, often contrasted with the gods' behavior

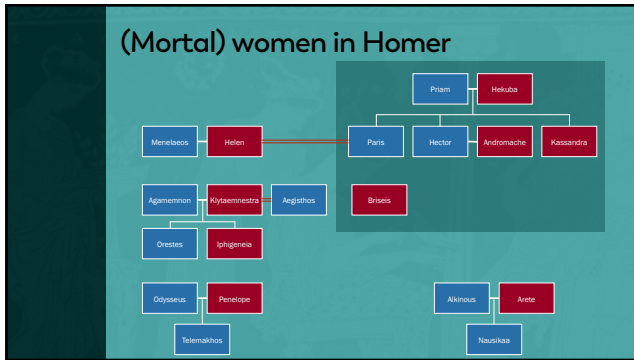
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Recovery of writing preserves Homeric society



- Regional diversity of custom and tradition
- Emergence of hellenism and contrasting idea of *barbaroi*
- *Xenia* — guest friendship
- Critical importance of marriage bond
- Agonal society
 - *Timē* — honor and respect
 - *Aretē* — achievement of excellence

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Primary Source Reading

Homer

"Agamemnon's Insult" (from *Iliad*)

► SOME TAKEAWAYS

- Briseis is being claimed as a prize, causing conflict
 - Briseis degraded by the Greeks because the Greek men are prideful and greedy
 - Mistreatment of women is the result of male hubris
 - Homer is writing this story as an indictment of the Bronze Age Greeks
- Greek gods respond to actions by mortals that damage human society
 - Punish human behavior that doesn't greatly affect the gods
 - Greeks have moved beyond the basic function of ancient religion

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Primary Source Reading

Homer

"The Artifice of Penelope" (from *Odyssey*)

► SOME TAKEAWAYS

- Penelope contrasted with the men of Ithaka
 - Penelope shows wisdom, cunning, constructive behavior
 - Suitors show only lust for power, wealth, and feasting; son, Telemachos, is useless
 - Penelope is responsible for the entire community, but cannot take a male role (compare with Klytaemnestra)
- Reunion of Odysseus and Penelope restores balance and complementary responsibilities
- Balanced potency of the marriage bond is the core of the Greek community

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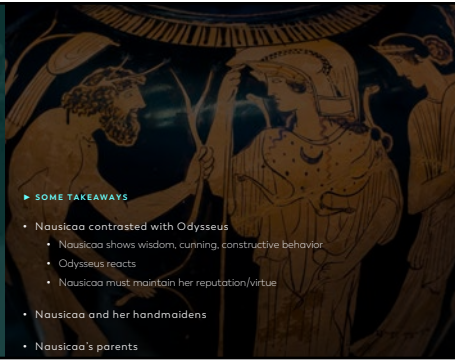
Primary Source Reading

Homer

“Nausicaa and the Stranger” (from *Odyssey*)

▶ **SOME TAKEAWAYS**

- Nausicaa contrasted with Odysseus
 - Nausicaa shows wisdom, cunning, constructive behavior
 - Odysseus reacts
 - Nausicaa must maintain her reputation/virtue
- Nausicaa and her handmaidens
- Nausicaa’s parents



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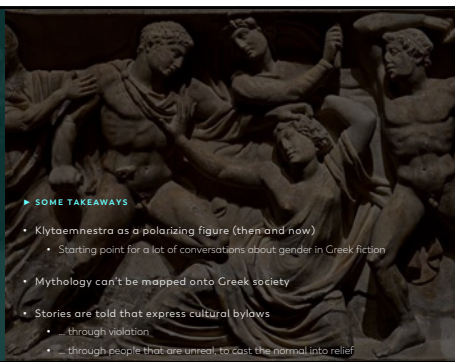
Secondary Source Reading

Ken Dowden

“Approaching Women Through Myth: Vital Tool or Self-Delusion?”

▶ **SOME TAKEAWAYS**

- Klytaemnestra as a polarizing figure (then and now)
 - Starting point for a lot of conversations about gender in Greek fiction
- Mythology can’t be mapped onto Greek society
- Stories are told that express cultural bylaws
 - ... through violation
 - ... through people that are unreal, to cast the normal into relief



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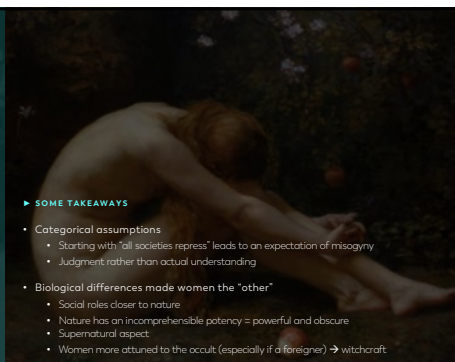
Secondary Source Reading

Sherry B. Ortner

“Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?”

▶ **SOME TAKEAWAYS**

- Categorical assumptions
 - Starting with “all societies repress” leads to an expectation of misogyny
 - Judgment rather than actual understanding
- Biological differences made women the “other”
 - Social roles closer to nature
 - Nature has an incomprehensible potency = powerful and obscure
 - Supernatural aspect
 - Women more attuned to the occult (especially if a foreigner) → witchcraft



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Secondary Source Reading

Marilyn B. Arthur

“Early Greece: The Origins of the Western Attitude Toward Women”

► **SOME TAKEAWAYS**

- Hektor and Andromache as the marital ideal
 - Hektor has public duties, Andromache has private duties
 - Both are equally important to the survival of the community
- Athens undergoes constant social evolution
 - Reforms are about social organization—rules constantly changing
 - Effects on gender are secondary

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Secondary Source Reading

Marilyn B. Arthur

“The Divided World of *Iliad* VI”

► **SOME TAKEAWAYS**

- More on Hektor and Andromache
- How Homer depicts marital relationships
 - Hektor and Andromache
 - Menelaos and Helen
 - Agamemnon and Klytaemnestra
 - Odysseus and Penelope

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