

Women in Antiquity
SPRING 2024

MEETING 9

Images of Women in Athenian Literature

- Classical Athens
- Female protagonists
- Literary women vs. goddesses
- Antigone
- Medea



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Five things today

- 1 Classical Athens
- 2 Female protagonists
- 3 Literary women vs. goddesses
- 4 Antigone
- 5 Medea

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Quiz #4: Living Unpublicly in Athens

1. Who were the hetairai? What role did they play in Athenian society? Why does Pomeroy say it is tempting to idealize them?
2. In *Bacchae*, who attacks Pentheus and tears him to pieces? Why do they do this?

EC1. In Classical Athens, all of the following were true about seduction EXCEPT:

- (a) Seduction was considered more serious crime than rape, because it implied longer contact
- (b) Adultery via seduction was allowed one day a year, on the Festival of Eros
- (c) The aggrieved husband had the right, but not the obligation to kill the seducer
- (d) As with rape, the male was always understood to be the guilty party, not the female

EC2. According to Pomeroy, why did Xenophon, Plato, and Aristotle all believe Spartan customs regarding women were more wholesome than those of Athens?

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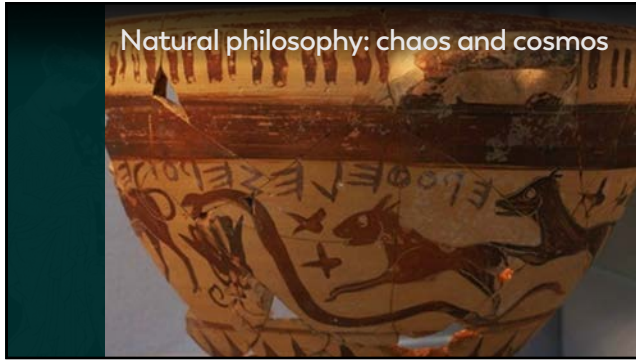
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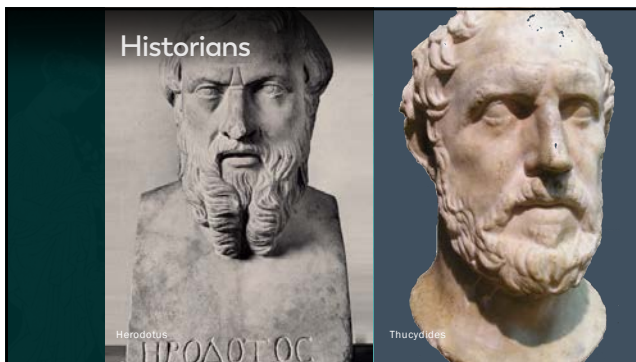
Secondary Source Reading

Voula Lambropoulou
"Some Pythagorean Female Virtues"

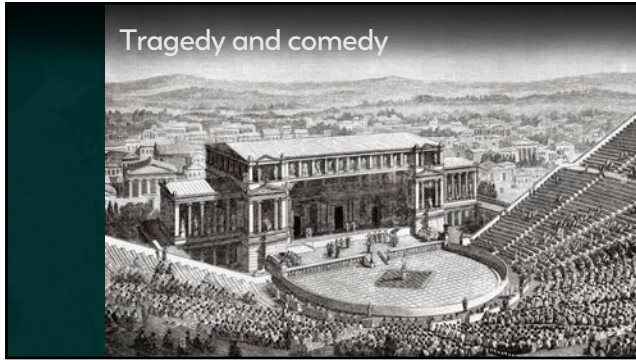
► **SOME TAKEAWAYS**

- Pythagoras – looking for a rational way of living and constructing a community
- Women have distinctive virtues characteristic of them
 - Generosity and bravery
 - Moderation, keeping an even keel
 - These exist to help ground and smooth out the wildnesses of men
- Pythagoreans believed that women are the foundation of society by being the foundation of family and marital relationship

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Secondary Source Reading

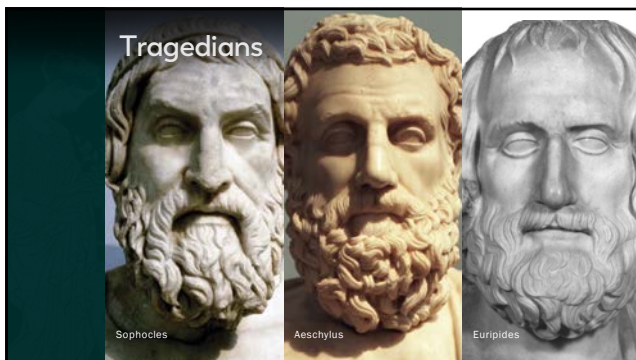
Helene Foley

“The Conception of Women in Athenian Drama”

► **SOME TAKEAWAYS**

- How to approach the understanding of:
 - how women are presented in literature and
 - how we can gain insight into real women in Greek society
- Conclusion: simple relationships are upended in drama
 - For the purpose of understanding what is the norm and how it is violated
- The simplest conflict is two people already connected by family
 - Clytemnestra Agamemnon Orestes Electra
- These private relationships reflect, parallel, and twist the problems in public society

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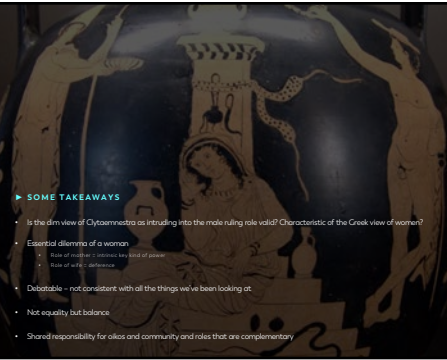
Secondary Source Reading

Zeitlin

“The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in the Oresteia”

SOME TAKEAWAYS

- Is the dim view of Clytemnestra as intruding into the male ruling role valid? Characteristic of the Greek view of women?
- Essential dilemma of a woman
 - Role of mother + intruder by kind of power
 - Role of wife + seductress
- Debatable – not consistent with all the things we’ve been looking at.
- Not equality but balance.
- Shared responsibility for oikos and community and roles that are complementary




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Primary Source Reading

Sophocles

from Antigone



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Antigone and Creon

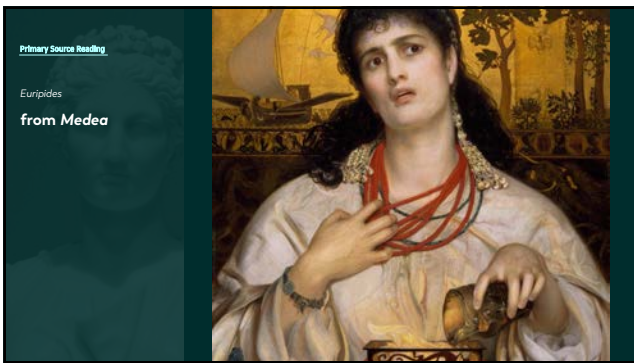


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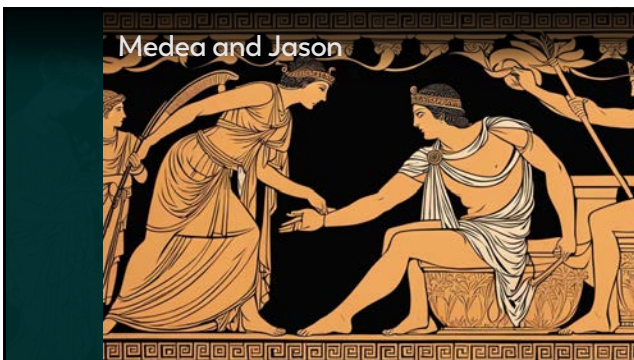
Antigone and Ismene

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Primary Source Reading
Euripides
from Medea

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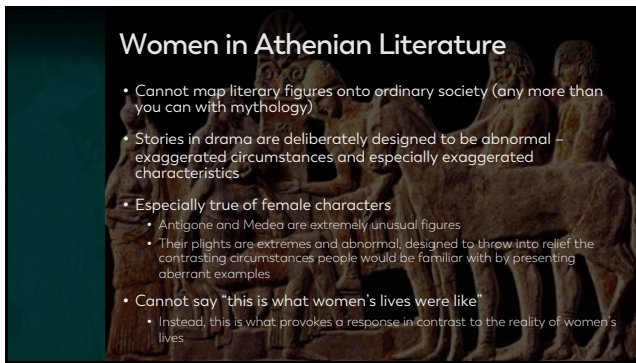


Medea and Jason

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