



Greece Emerging from the Dark Age
Women in Antiquity | Meeting #5

1



Upcoming Dates

- Monday, March 9
Images Essay Due
- Monday, March 23
Proposal Due
- Sunday, March 15
Responses for Week 5 Due

2

Five things today

- The archaic period
- Hesiod and the farm
- Kouros and korē
- Sappho and lyric poetry
- Spartan women

3



4

Quiz #3 | Greece Emerging from the Dark Age

1. Spartan women

- a. went to war alongside the men
- b. exercised and ate well
- c. never married
- d. received ceremonial tattoos at age 13

2. All of the following are true of archaic Athenian Greek burials [\[1/10/25\]](#)

- a. Washing and dressing the dead was always done by male relatives of the dead
- b. Male graves significantly outnumber female graves
- c. Male graves tend to contain spears and shields, while female graves tend to contain cooking pots, spindle whorls, and jewelry
- d. Visual depictions of funerals show women beating their heads and tearing their hair, while men are rigid and restrained

3. The archaic statues of maidens (korai) and youths (kouros) were

- a. clothed if male, naked if female
- b. naked if male, clothed if female
- c. always naked
- d. always clothed

4. According to Pomeroy, all of the following are true of the poet Sappho [\[1/10/25\]](#)

- a. She belonged to a community, Lesbos, where women were valued and educated
- b. Her work is an example of individualism in Greek poetry during this period
- c. She was the only female Greek lyric poet
- d. Some of her poetry suggests she may have been married and had a child

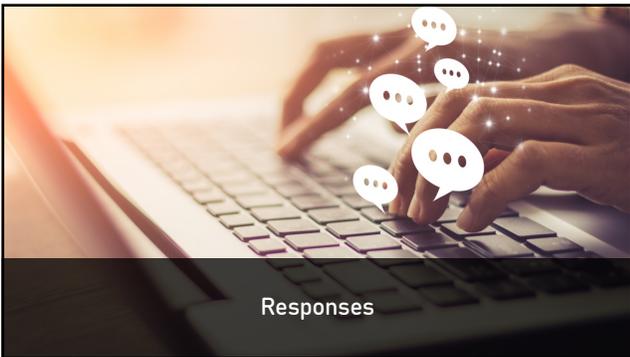
5. Advice given by Hesiod in Works and Days includes:

- a. "Do not let a flaunting woman coo and cozen and deceive you; she is after your barn."
- b. "First of all, get a house and a woman, and an ox for the plow—a slave woman and not a wife, to follow the oars."
- c. "A man should not clean his body with water in which a woman has washed, for there is bitter mischief in that."
- d. All of the above.

Extra Credit

EC. Pomeroy called Spartan marriage customs "unusual among the Greeks." How were they unusual? Give an example you remember.

5



6

Questions about whatever



7

Women of Homer



8

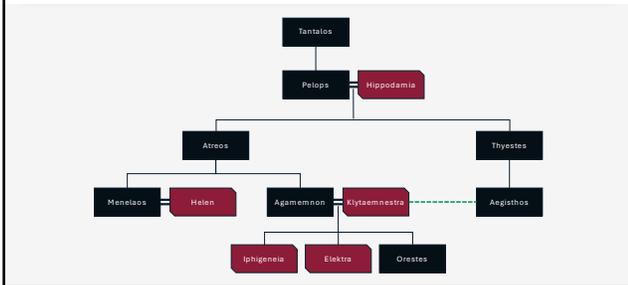
Bad couples in Homer

- Menelaus and Helen
- Agamemnon and Klytaemnestra



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The "cursed" house of Atreos



10



11

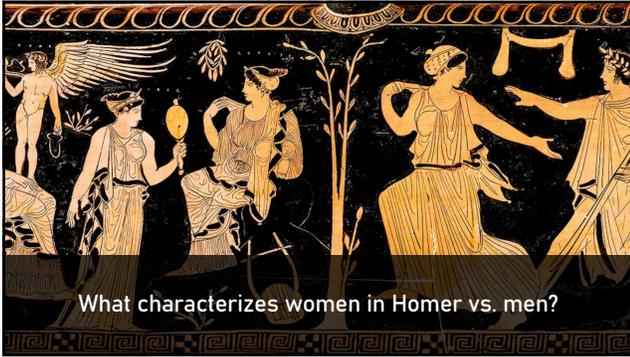
Secondary Source Reading

Ken Dowden
"Approaching Women Through Myth: Vital Tool or Self-Delusion?"

- 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 victimization
 - ... through people that are unreal, to cast the normal into relief

A marble relief sculpture depicting a mythological scene, likely the murder of Agamemnon by Klytaemnestra and Orestes. The figures are shown in a dramatic, emotional state.

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What characterizes women in Homer vs. men?

13

Secondary Source Reading

Sherry B. Ortner
"Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?"

- **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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Ideal couples in Homer

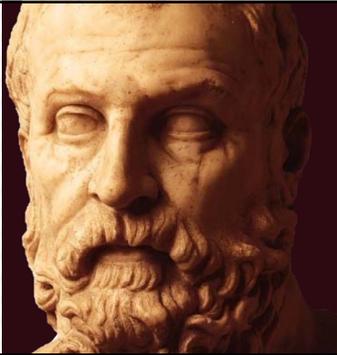
- (Reformed) Odysseus and Penelope
- Hektor and Andromache

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Secondary Source Reading

Marilyn B. Arthur
"Early Greece: The Origins of the Western Attitude Toward Women"

- 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"

- 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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Greece Emerging from the Dark Age

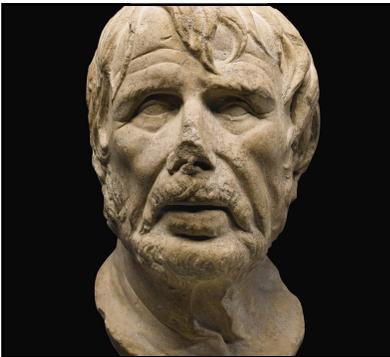
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The Polis

- City-state
- Synoecism
- Replacement of basileus with magistrates
- Council of "elders" (aristoi)
- Citizen assembly (demos)

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Hesiod

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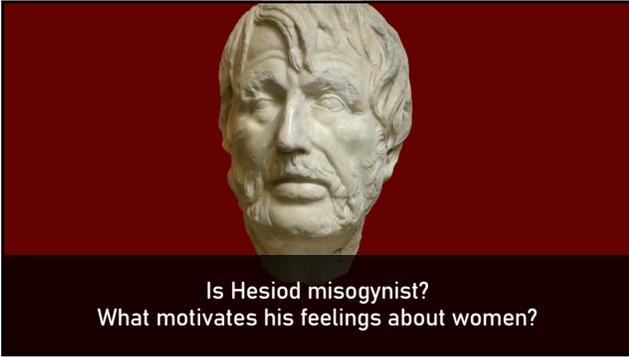
Primary Source Reading

Hesiod
Works and Days

- Women as deceivers
- Women as laborers
- Practical approach to ensuring a stable farm and a prosperous community



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Hesiod on women

- "Do not let a flaunting woman coax and cozen and deceive you: she is after your barn. The man who trusts womankind trust deceivers."
- "First of all, get a house, and a woman and an ox for the plough—a slave woman and not a wife, to follow the oxen as well—and make everything ready at home, so that you may not have to ask of another, and he refuses you, and so, because you are in lack, the season pass by and your work come to nothing."
- "And so soon as you have safely stored all your stuff indoors, I bid you put your bondman out of doors and look out for a servant-girl with no children;—for a servant with a child to nurse is troublesome."
- "But when the artichoke flowers [in June] ... then goats are plumpest and wine sweetest; women are most wanton, but men are feeblest, because Sirius parches head and knees and the skin is dry through heat."

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Symposion

- Patronage of creative expression
- Communal
- Make audience, mixed performers

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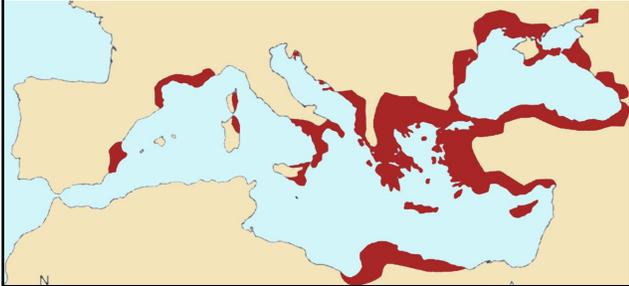


Hoplite army

- Unified force of many citizens
- Shift toward the citizen
 - Shared burden of defense
 - Empowerment of the many
- Changes in gender expectations

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Greek expansion through colonization



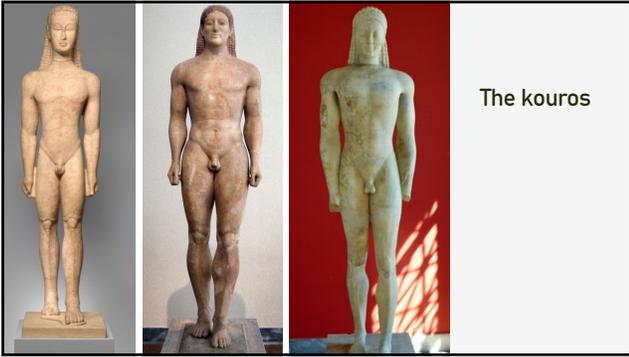
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Greek colonies

- Colonies are children of a particular polis
- Expansion of mother city's political, economic, and cultural power
 - New resources and markets for trade
 - Relief of population stress
 - Control of strategic locations

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The kouros

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The korē

- Pleasantness, modesty
- Demure but not shy and retiring
- Lively interest and engagement
- Dress is one of two forms up to the neck

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Visual femininity

- Draped attire (varies by region)
- A kind of strength
 - Male strength = musculature
 - Female strength = stature, engagement

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Secondary Source Reading

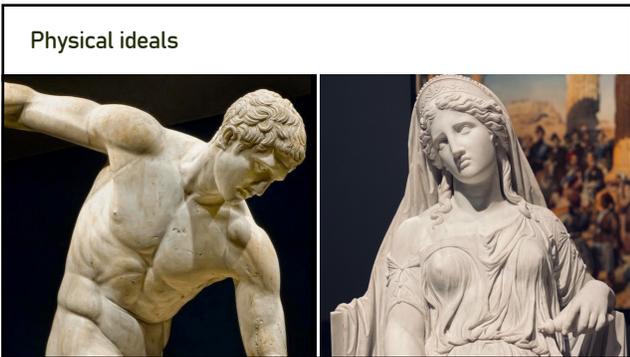
John Heath
"Women's Work: Female Transmission of Mythical Narrative"

- Necessity of transmission and even mythological storytelling
- Storytelling in the course of daily work and childrearing
- The forms of storytelling we are used to seeing are only part of the story



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Physical ideals



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Lyric poetry

- Epic poetry
 - Objective
 - Top-down
 - Reinforces rules of society
- Lyric poetry
 - Subjective
 - Personal
 - Questioning

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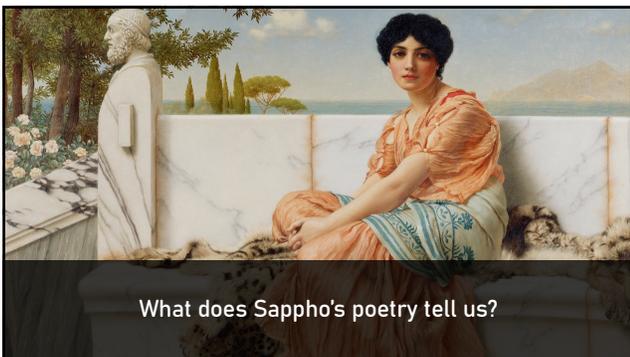
Primary Source Reading

Sappho
Selected poems

- Personal and subjective
- Emotion as discourse
- One side of a duality



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What does Sappho's poetry tell us?

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Secondary Source Reading

John D. Marry
"Sappho and the Heroic Ideal"

- Prominent exception to the idea of hero
- Lyric poetry of Sappho has heroic elements of epic poetry
- Despite different medium, forum, and level of intimacy



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Secondary Source Reading

Eva Stehle Stigers
"Sappho's Private World"

- Vantage point and the nature of what she's trying to express in her poetry



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Panhellenism

- Strong polis identity
- Shared cultural superiority
- Mutual competition between poleis to achieve ideal society

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Sparta as a "warrior society"

- Spartan men solely devoted to war
- Lack of direct evidence about Sparta

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Spartan social hierarchy

- *homoioi* "men of equal status," peers
Spartan citizen/warrior elite
- *periokoi* "dwellers nearby"
Laconians who were free, but disenfranchised
- *helots* heilotes, "prisoners of war"
State-owned serfs

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Agogē

- Begin training from age 7
- Bond with older boy who guides through training
- Eat at mess with the men
- Rituals to toughen and train

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Spartan women

- Property management
- Housework and clothes-making were performed by lower classes
- Physical fitness and training
- Infanticide

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Women and property in Sparta

- Women controlled their dowries and inheritances
- By the 4th century two-fifths of Spartan land and property was controlled by women
- Originally austere
- Later Spartan women displayed their wealth
 - Clothing
 - Purchases like racehorses
 - Jewelry and cosmetics
 - Resistance to archaic austerity

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Primary Source Reading

Plutarch
Sayings of Spartan Women

- Enforcement of Spartan expectations from birth to age 7
- Spartan patriotism begins with the matron



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How "good" do Spartan women have it?

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Courtship and marriage in Sparta

- Spartan warriors were held to be equal = no arranged marriage for status
- Focus on compatibility and the ability to produce children
- Weddings were often secret
 - Unproductive marriages quietly annulled
 - Young men and women in a dark room
 - Groom carrying the bride away in secret
- Bride with male clothing, hair cut short
 - Possibly a transition from homosexual relations in the barracks

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Adultery and children

- Women could bear children of men other than their husbands
- Helots' children could not be citizens
- Adultery was not as strictly proscribed as elsewhere

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