

- 1) The background to the *micro-narrative* of Herakles in the 19th book of the *Iliad*. Alkmene is impregnated by Zeus, who impersonates her husband Amphitruo, away at war. (Intercourse with a god is *always* fruitful. It's one of the perks.) In some versions of the myth (cf. Plautus' *Amphitruo*), the *real* Amphitruo arrives on the same night as the *false* Amphitruo – hilarity ensues in a *Three's Company* vein. In some versions, the *real* Amphitruo also impregnates Alkmene, who therefore carries twins: a hero Herakles, and a mortal Iphikles. Now note carefully the Homeric version:
- 2) *Iliad* scroll XIX line 95ff.: [95] "Time was when [Hera] deceived Zeus himself, who they say is greatest whether of gods or men; for Hera, woman though she was, beguiled him on the day when Alkmene was to bring forth mighty Herakles in the fair city of Thebes. He told it out among the gods saying, 'Hear me all gods and goddesses, that I may speak even as I am minded; this day shall an Eileithuia, helper of women who are in labor, bring a man child into the world who shall be lord over all that dwell about him who are of my blood and lineage.' Then said Hera all crafty and full of guile, 'You will play false, and will not hold to your word. Swear me, O Olympian, swear me a great oath, that he who shall this day fall between the feet of a woman, shall be lord over all that dwell about him who are of your blood and lineage.'
[112] "Thus she spoke, and Zeus did not suspect her, but swore the great oath, to his much chagrin thereafter. For Hera darted down from the high summit of Olympus, and went quickly to Achaean Argos where she knew that the noble wife of Sthenelos son of Perseus then was. She being with child and in her seventh month, Hera brought the child to birth though there was a month still wanting, but she held back the offspring of Alkmene, and so kept back the Eileithuias. Then she went to tell Zeus the son of Kronos, and said, 'Father Zeus, lord of the lightning, I have a word for your ear. There is a fine child born this day, Eurystheus, son to Sthenelos the son of Perseus; he is of your lineage; it is well, therefore, that he should reign over the Argives.'
[125] "At this Zeus felt grief [*akhos*] to the very quick, and in his rage he caught Atê by the hair, and swore a great oath that never should she again invade starry heaven and Olympus, for she was the bane of all. Then he whirled her round with a twist of his hand, and flung her down from heaven so that she fell on to the fields of mortal men; and he was ever angry with her when he saw his son groaning under the cruel labors [*athloi*] that Eurystheus laid upon him.
- 3) A definition: **hôrâ**, pl. **hôrai** 'season, seasonality; time; timeliness.' It is etymologically related to **Hêra**, goddess of everything that is timely, in season, or due. Thus Hêra is goddess of marriage, the time of human fruition into the adult world, of 'ripening' into adulthood. She is also goddess of childbirth, a process that occurs after three seasons of fruition, and which ends at a specific *hôrâ*, for which you pray. Hôrâ is a symbol of generation, and rebirth: *Iliad* 6.144: And the son of Hippolokhos answered, son of Tydeus, why ask me of my lineage? Men come and go as leaves year by year upon the trees. Those of autumn the wind sheds upon the ground, but when spring [*hôrâ*] returns, the forest buds forth with fresh vines.
- 4) Herakles has been knocked 'out of synch' by the very goddess of synchronization. *He* (and not Eurystheus) should have been king of Argos. Hera sped up the childbirth of Eurystheus and slowed down the one of Herakles. The result: *athloi* for Herakles: a life of continuous struggles.
- 5) A key component of a hero: he or she is out-of-season. And this un-seasonality is the cause for *athloi*, superhuman struggles to get *back in synch*. This seems to be the etymology for the word *hêro*: 'the timely one' – but only, as we shall see, timely in *death*. Only at the hour/season (*hôrâ*) of death does the *hêro* return to a life in synch.

- 6) *Hêrakles'* name is compound: *Hêra* and *kleos*. Literally, "He who is the *kleos* of Hera." Through the very act of a-synchronicity, Herakles will engender *kleos*, both for himself and for the god who antagonizes him. In the end, there is a reconciliation: Hera finally accepts Herakles as a son, but only after terrible ordeals (his 12 labors; death of his wife and children).
- 7) Achilles also is out-of-synch. We've seen already how Achilles has a 'two-fold' life: one with no *kleos*, but great length of time, or one with great *kleos*, but short. But like Herakles, Achilles is also born out of synch.
- 8) Backstory: Achilles is born at the wrong time: he should have been a son of Zeus. Zeus was courting Thetis, a goddess of the sea (and apparently an archaic goddess – possibly a remnant of a great-mother worship). During courtship, Zeus learns a prophecy that the child of Thetis will be greater than his father. Zeus, fearing a civil war (and his own safety), breaks off the courtship and commands Thetis to marry a mortal. She marries Peleus, and Achilles is born (and from that wedding, the Trojan war: see the *Cypria* 1ff.)
- 9) Achilles is then untimely, just as Herakles is untimely: he has the wrong father, the wrong birth. He should have been greater than the gods, but instead he is simply greater than Peleus: he is the 'Best of the Achaeans', but not the best of the Olympians. He is *liminal*: stuck between mortality and immortality (and therefore a true Greek hero).
- 10) Around the figure of Achilles cluster a number of *doublets*: double-lives. (Life as Zeus' son/Peleus' son; short life/long life.) Another doublet: Patroklos, Achilles' *alter ego*: 'another self.' At first, appears to be a stand in for Achilles. At 1.335, he is sent to fetch Briseis, for instance. Like Achilles, disappears from the epic for several books as the Trojans pound on the Greek army. Reappears (with Achilles) in the famous Embassy Scene of Book IX – and we'll be looking at that a bit more this afternoon.
- 11) Books 5-8 chronicle the ascent of Hektor, once Achilles withdraws from battle. One of the most beautiful—and revealing scenes—is the end of Book VI. "Andromache's farewell."

"Dear husband," said she, "your valor will bring you to destruction; think on your infant son, and on my hapless self who before long shall be your widow—for the Achaeans will set upon you in a body and kill you. It would be better for me, should I lose you, to lie dead and buried, for I shall have nothing left to comfort me when you are gone, save only grief [akhos]. I have neither father nor mother now. Achilles slew my father when he destroyed Thebe the goodly city of the Cilicians. ... My mother—her who had been queen of all the land under Mount Placus—he brought here with the spoil, and freed her for a great sum, but the archer—queen Artemis took her in the house of your father. Nay—Hektor—you who to me are father, mother, brother, and dear husband—have mercy upon me; [429] stay here upon this wall; make not your child fatherless, and your wife a widow...

- 12) Speech is shot through with the language of lament even while Hektor is alive. This is a bad thing: the music of sorrow always begins to surround those about to die. It prefigures their death and will transfigure their death into *kleos*. Specific themes: loss for the immediate family; *substitution* of lamented one for one's own family; the key word *akhos*, 'grief'. We will be returning to *Achilles*, whose name embodies grief.

- 13) Hektor juggles themes of glory and grief: [440] And Hektor answered, “Wife, I too have thought upon all this, but with what face should I look upon the Trojans, men or women, if I shirked battle like a coward? I cannot do so: I know nothing save to fight bravely in the forefront of the Trojan host of warriors and win fame [kleos] alike for my father and myself. Well do I know that the day will surely come when mighty Ilium shall be destroyed with Priam and Priam’s people, but I grieve for none of these—not even for Hecuba, nor King Priam, nor for my brothers many and brave who may fall in the dust before their foes—for none of these do I grieve as for yourself when the day shall come on which some one of the Achaeans shall rob you for ever of your freedom, and bear you weeping away.
- 14) A gorgeous moment that Butler can’t quite capture: [482] With this he laid the child again in the arms of his wife, who took him to her own soft bosom, smiling through her tears. The Greek is *dakruoen gelasasa*: ‘having laughed a tearful thing.’ Compression of the scene into two words.
- 15) Take a look at Thetis’ speech to her son in Book 1.410ff: Thetis wept and answered, “My son, woe is me that I should have borne and nursed you. [415] Would indeed that you had lived your span free from all sorrow at your ships, for it is all too brief; alas, that you should be at once short of life and long of sorrow above your peers: woe, therefore, was the hour in which I bore you...
- 16) Thetis’ speech is, in effect, a lament for Achilles while he is still living; though the *Iliad* does not include the death of Achilles (that’s in the epic cycle), the language of lament clusters around him. His name is comprised of two parts: *Akhos* (‘grief’) and *laos* (‘people’) – possible interpretations are either ‘grief to the people’ (i.e. in battle), or, more probably, ‘grief of the people’, the encapsulation of the ‘best’ who are lost to war, and thereby signifying extreme grief.
- 17) Patroklos’ name is also significant: *pater* (father) and *kleos* (glory). Literally: ‘glory of the fathers’: Patroklos himself (structurally, functionally) is a conduit for *kleos*, passed down from father to son – who is in time a father.
- 18) Patroklos and Akhilleus re-appear (after quite an absence) in Book 9. An amazing moment when the embassy arrives to find Achilles in his tent **singing**: “When they reached the ships and tents of the Myrmidons, [186] they found Achilles playing on a lyre, fair, of cunning workmanship, and its cross-bar was of silver. It was part of the spoils which he had taken when he destroyed the city of Eetion, and he was now diverting himself with it and singing the glories [*klea*] of heroes. He was alone with Patroklos, who sat opposite to him and said nothing, waiting till he should cease singing. Odysseus and Ajax now came in....”
- 19) An amazing moment: within an epic, Akhilleus is singing an epic (or, put another way, within a song of *kleos*, Achilles is singing *kleos*). And Patroklos (Pater-kleos) is awaiting his turn at singing: he is going to continue Akhilleus’ song of *kleos* (in all sort of senses!). The lyre also contributes to A’s *kleos*: his war booty from Eetion.

- 20) Odysseus makes the first effort to get Akhilles to accept the repayment and rejoin the war. Is rebuffed by Akh.: “As hateful [*ekhthros*] to me as the gates of Hades is one who says one thing while he hides another in his heart; therefore I will say what I mean. I will be appeased neither by Agamemnon son of Atreus nor by any other of the Danaans, for I see that I have no thanks [*kharis*] for all my fighting. He that fights fares no better than he that does not; coward and hero are held in equal honor [*timê*], and death deals like measure to him who works and him who is idle.” Speech constitutes part of the crisis of reevaluation/measuring that occurs in the epic – remember the Disney line, “What is the measure of a true hero?”. If that measure is **not** *timê*, then what is it?
- 21) Akhilleus decides the measure is *not* material worth, either. A flat-out rejection of everything Agamemnon has to offer: “[Agamemnon’s] presents are hateful [*ekhthra*] to me, and for him I care not a bit. He may offer me ten or even twenty times what he has now done, nay—not though it be all that he has in the world, both now or ever shall have; he may promise me the wealth of Orchomenus or of Egyptian Thebes, which is the richest city in the whole world, for it has a hundred gates through each of which two hundred men may drive at once with their chariots and horses; [385] he may offer me gifts as the sands of the sea or the dust of the plain in multitude, but even so he shall not move me till I have been revenged in full for the bitter wrong he has done me.”
- 22) Phoenix, an older father figure, takes a different tack than Odysseus’ blunt (and unsuccessful) rhetorical maneuver. Reminds Akh. of his childhood, of the impermanence of wrath, and then finally segues into an **ainos** ‘authoritative utterance for and by a social group; praise; fable’ (and related to **ainigma**, ‘riddle’).
- 23) Question for today, how does this **ainos** work in relationship to the setting of Book IX (and indeed, the rest of the *Iliad*)? Look at its beginning, but also the story *in toto*:

Your anger has been righteous so far. We have heard in song the glories [*klea*] of heroes of old time, how they quarreled when they were roused to fury, but still they could be won over by gifts, and fair words could soothe them. [527] “I have an old story in my mind—a very old one—and you are all friends, so I will tell it....

Does the **ainos** work? Why or why not?