

CLAS100

LECTURE 15

October 21, 2015

Myth: Heracles as Ideal Hero Definition of Myth

- A story of unknown origin and at least partly traditional. Usually used to explain some kind of practice, belief, institution, or natural phenomenon.

Qualities of a Hero

- semi-divine or divine birth
- opposition from the start
- Assistance
- Test no mortal can complete
- Powers from beyond grave

Heracles

- Son of Zeus and Alcmena(Amphitryon)
- Angered Hera(due to infidelity of Zeus) Sends snakes to strangle Heracles
- Driven insane, Heracles kills his wife and children
- Atonements: Apollo's Oracles at Delphi
- Serve Eurystheus of Tiryns for 12 years
- 12 Labours with help from Hermes and Athena
 - Slay the Nemean Lion
 - Slay the Lernaean Hydra
 - Capture the Golden hind of Artemis
 - Capture the Erymanthian Boar
 - Clean the Augean stables in a single day

- Slay the Stymphalian Birds
- Capture the Cretan Bull
- Steal the Mares of Diomedes
- Obtain the girdle of Hippolyta (Queen of the Amazons)
- Obtain the cattle of Geryon
- Steal the apples of the Hesperides
- Capture the Cerberus

Heracles and Hero Cult

- Heros: a dead man venerated at his tomb for powers beyond the grave
- Chthonic Religion: mortal; life-cycle not the same as Olympian Religion: immortal; linear

Heracles as Ideal Hero

- Heracles' appeal: sympathy, humanity, ideal power, helpful
- Ethical appeals: learn through suffering