**MINORITIES MYTHUNDERSTOOD**

**CLASS NOTES 2019-20**

**INTRODUCTION**

**Myth Definition**

From *Oxford Dictionaries online* (http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/myth)

* 1. a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events:

"ancient Celtic myths"

**synonyms:** [folk tale](https://www.bing.com/search?q=define+folk+tale) ·[story](https://www.bing.com/search?q=define+story) ·folk story ·[legend](https://www.bing.com/search?q=define+legend) ·[tale](https://www.bing.com/search?q=define+tale) ·[fable](https://www.bing.com/search?q=define+fable) ·[saga](https://www.bing.com/search?q=define+saga)

[allegory](https://www.bing.com/search?q=define+allegory) · [parable](https://www.bing.com/search?q=define+parable) · [tradition](https://www.bing.com/search?q=define+tradition) · [lore](https://www.bing.com/search?q=define+lore) · [folklore](https://www.bing.com/search?q=define+folklore) · [mythos](https://www.bing.com/search?q=define+mythos) · [mythus](https://www.bing.com/search?q=define+mythus)

* 1. a widely held but false belief or idea:

"the belief that evening primrose oil helps to cure eczema is a myth, according to dermatologists"

**synonyms:**·[belief](https://www.bing.com/search?q=define+belief) · [old wives' tale](https://www.bing.com/search?q=define+old+wives'+tale) · [notion](https://www.bing.com/search?q=define+notion) · [legend](https://www.bing.com/search?q=define+legend) · [story](https://www.bing.com/search?q=define+story)

From *The Free Dictionary* by Farlex (the freedictionary.com/myth)

**1. a.** A traditional, typically ancient story dealing with supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes that serves as a fundamental type in the worldview of a people, as by explaining aspects of the natural world or delineating the psychology, customs, or ideals of society: *the myth of Eros and Psyche; a creation myth.*

**1.b.** Such stories considered as a group: *the realm of myth.*

**2.** A popular belief or story that has become associated with a person, institution, or occurrence, especially one considered to illustrate a cultural ideal: *a star whose fame turned her into a myth; the pioneer myth of suburbia.*

**3.** A fiction or half-truth, especially one that forms part of an ideology.

**4.** A fictitious story, person, or thing: *"German artillery superiority on the Western Front was a myth"* *(Leon Wolff).*

*American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*, Fifth Edition. Copyright © 2011 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.

* Myth as: didactic (entertainment), aetiology, tradition, empowering-unifying identity

Bronislaw Malinowski’s “charter myth”

Émile Durkheim’s “collective [clan] consciousness to individual consciousness”

Jane Harrison’s institutionalization of religious ritual

* Myth as symbolic/literary enactment of “deeper” abstract truth

Sigmund Freud’s “Oedipus/Electra complex”

Carl Gustav Jung’s archetypes (in ritual and art)

Mircea Eliade’s “hierophany-eternal return”

Lord Raglan’s “the monomyth” (22 traits fit all)

Joseph Campbell’s “quest cycle”, the “Ur-myth”

**Why is myth a particularly good vehicle for minority claims?**

* Myth both celebrated repository of culture and “obsolete” carrier of falsities, itself elite *and* marginal
* Transformation, disguise, diversity motifs favor the underdog
* Authority not perfect in classical myths (gods anthropomorphic, heroes fall into hamartia)
* Can accommodate both status-supportive and subversive meanings
* Need for heroic self- and projected image
* “subaltern” discourse: a common, respected language for both minority and majority
* Past, tradition: non-threatening, status-bearing
* Relatable thanks to archetypal motifs, characters

**THORNTON WILDER, “Proserpina and the Devil”**

-Effect of rendering gods as Christian/secular puppets, handled by inept “manipulators”

a. continuity, universals of myth (e.g. the psychopomp Hermes/Michael)

b. parody, debunking of status and prestige of classical figures

-Re-definition of “passion play”: not religious martyrdom, but petty/vicious “passions” of manipulators, “passionate” self-destructive desires of nubile daughter

-Symbolic meaning of setting: upsetting of ethical expectations by equalizer death

-Renegotiation of the role of women vis-à-vis the original myth (Proserpina given agency, though still victimized by gendered norms, Demeter handicapped by gender and religious restrictions)

-The end as allegory: power of heaven/hell debunked, innocence as self-destructive, mother-daughter bond destroyed by social strictures

CONTINUED FROM LAST TIME:

* Myth as heuristic tool

Claude Lévi-Strauss’s primal formalism (“bundles” of mythemes” composed like language to offer “solution to a cultural contradiction”); what matters are patters of repetition in the structuring of mythemes, a “leitmotiv” that offers the deeper meaning of the story

T.S. Eliot’s “mythical method”

Northrop Frye’s “archetypes of literature”, mythopoetics, myth criticism

* Myth as a systemic mechanism
* Myth as versatile “truth”

(Jack Zipes)

Lévi-Strauss: “the mythical value of the myth remains preserved, even through the worst translation” (430).

* Myth myth-understood…(Gayatri Spivak’s “subaltern” discourse🡪 for minorities)

**Myth today**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * **(Post)modern myth:** * comic-book heroes * memes, urban legends, * conspiracy theories, * cyberpunk technology * post-apocalyptic visions | **1.Old models still operant (e.g., Harry Potter)**  **2.“Traditional” myths revised (critique, parody, alternative p.o.v.)** |

**Difference between myth and folktale**: folktales are self-contained, autonomous, while myth is systemic, rhizomatic, cannot be understood unless viewed in its most extensive associations possible.

**MYTHANALYTIC CRITICISM—THE ARCHETYPE**

**SIGMUND FREUD (1856-1939)**



Structure of the mind—the unconscious

Psychoanalysis (“talking cure”) and resistance to interpretation

*The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900)

*Totem and Taboo* (1912)

Myth as a formulation of immanent & personal unconscious schemata (**pleasure** principle of the id: libido & death drive, repetition compulsion)

Cultural myth: 3 taboos from murder of Primeval Father as basis for civilization (=**repression**): murder, incest, cannibalism

🡪Personal myth: The Oedipus complex during the phallic developmental stage (about 5 years)

Literature as

a. therapy (forepleasure and catharsis)

b. analysis material

c. map of human being through “universals” (in “bad” literature especially!), modified by “markers” (e.g., Hamlet)

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**CARL GUSTAV JUNG (1875-1961)**

“On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry” (1922)

Myth as one of the sites for the manifestation of schemata from our collective unconscious known as **archetypes**

Df: “a primordial image… be it a demon, a human being or a process that constantly recurs in the course of history, culture and civilization and appears wherever creative fantasy is freely expressed.”

Archetypal symbols (original subconscious language, nontranslatable yet immediately recognized) expressed in art by **extraverted** artist drawing from/being taken over by “autonomous creative complex” to heal cultural blanks

Four major archetypes

Self (Hero)

Shadow (Trickster, Adversary)

Animus (Father/God, Wise Old Man)

Anima (Mother/Earth Goddess, Triple Goddess, Terrible Mother)

**NORTHROP FRYE (1912-1991**

*Anatomy of Criticism* (1957)

-Literature analyzed via a system of archetypes, primal patterns derived from myth, that form the “order of words”:

“Archetypes are associative clusters, and differ from signs in being complex variables. Within the complex is often a large number of specific learned associations which are communicable because a large number of people in a given culture happen to be familiar with them.”

-5 phases of literary development: myth🡪romance🡪high mimetic mode🡪low mimetic mode🡪irony

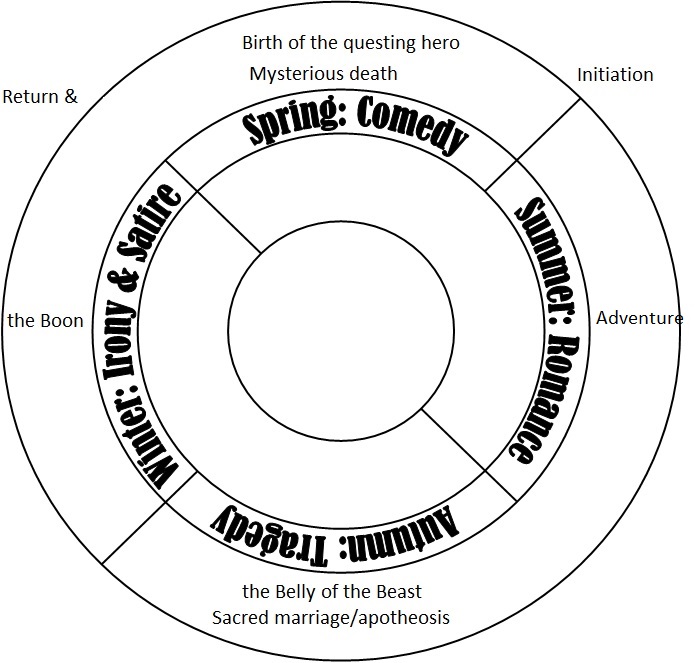
-Myth retelling a sign of “self-referentiality” of literature; masterworks “revert” to mythic phase, for strength and renewal (“rhythm” in narrative, and oracular “pattern” of meaning)

-All literature retells the “sun-hero quest”

Four categories (“mythoi”) of 12 traits in combinations of 3+3:

* Spring: comedy (*anagnorisis*; idyllic, self-contained)
* Summer: romance (*agnon*; idyllic, innocent)
* Autumn: tragedy (*pathos*; bleak, innocent)
* Winter: Irony and satire (*sparagmos*; bleak, self-contained)

**Frye’s schema as Joseph Campbell’s heroic quest cycle motif:**



**Woody Allen (1935- )**

“Oedipus Wrecks” from *New York Stories* (1989)

* Genre classification
* Sheldon Mills as Oedipus or as Hamlet?
  + No origin (denies Jewishness, cuts off name)
  + Man of logic (lawyer, self-analytical, doesn’t believe in magic, only reason)
  + Finally defeated by the gods/his own unreasonable impulses
* “the Jewish mother” as archetype vs the “shiksa” first fiancé
* Where is the father?
* Symbols: Manhattan skyscrapers (camera p.o.v.)

The suicide mode

The responsive crowd of NYorkers

The mother sky image

The magician’s act (box and swords)

The psychic as successful mate

The “eye/I” of psychoanalysis

* Conclusion: resolution or resignation?

(esp re: Jewishness within *goy* tradition)

**HEROISM**

* Definition of a hero
  + Archaic
  + Classical
  + Tragic
  + Contemporary (anti-hero; superhero; virtual avatars and selfies)
* Lord Raglan: 22 traits of the monomyth
* Heroic cults
* Liminality and hubris

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**UMBERTO ECO (1932)**

Semiotician, cultural critic (from middle ages to hyperreality), philosopher, author (*The Name of the Rose*)

“The Myth of Superman” (1972)

Superman

-created in 1936 NY by Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster

-American cult Messiah idol🡪 world cliché

-Modern society (techno-carceral) demands *super*-heroes to compensate for increased stress-reducing fantasy needs

-Why super-*man* and not god?

-Difference between:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| MYTHIC HERO | NOVEL HERO | SUPER HERO |
| Eternal, “fixed” | temporary | Time-bound stories but without aging |
| Predictable (pity and fear generated by plot twists, but end known) | Unpredictable  (plot as aesthetically-charged) | “new” stories but predictable scheme |
| Godlike | Human (universal) | Godlike, but with alter ego |
| Consumed by glory | Consumed by time | Unconsumable |
| Mythical time, closed and metaphorical | Realistic or manipulated time, but for didactic purposes | Closed causal chain of plot, kills causality 🡪 time🡪 iterative scheme (endless, pointless reboot) |
| Beyond morality | Subject to morality | Moral |
| Stands for grand truths (archetype) | Stands for human condition (historic/ social type) | Stands for politics of apathy, confusion, non-responsibility🡪 “paternalistic” control |
| Universal | Civic | Status quo (property) |

-Destruction of causality via: indeterminate time between “episodes,” alternate/imaginary times, “reboots,” “parsifalism”

COMICS/POP CULTURE HEROES OF ALTERNATIVE ITERABILITY?

-X-Men: allegory of actual events (Shoah, apartheid, AIDs epidemic)

-Xena: consumed

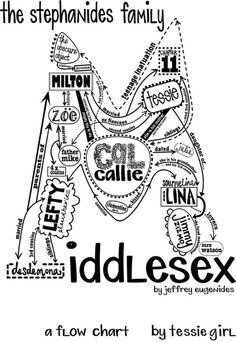
**JEFFREY EUGENIDES (1960-)**

Author of *The Virgin Suicides, Middlesex* (Pulitzer Prize 2003), *The Marriage Plot*, and short stories

-*Middlesex* plot elements

-an author and protagonist of Greek descend

-transgressive behavior  
-queer bodies and sexualities as a metaphor for Greek minority ethnicity   
-a quest for identity between the individual and the multi-collective, the fabulistic and the realistic, the exigencies of present and past.



-Diaspora as a mythic Quest Cycle motif:

The Main Traits of Diaspora acc. to James Clifford, “Diasporas,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9.3 (1994)

-a history of dispersal,   
-myths/memories of the homeland,   
-alienation in the (bad?) host country,   
-desire for eventual return,   
-ongoing support of the homeland,   
-a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship

-mythological elements in *Middlesex*:

-“in medias res”, end known,

muse invocation

-the myth of Hermaphroditus

-the myth of Narcissus and Echo

-the myth of T(e)iresias

-the myth of the Minotaur

-the myth of the Olympians

-divination (silver spoon)

-metamorphosis (silkworm)

-the Melting Pot

-Hercules Hot Dogs

-the Nation of Islam Temple

-the Minotaur (birth-line maze)

-the myth of Utopia (USA)

**🡪 what is “Middlesex”?**

Woodcut: John Buckland Wright,

“Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, 1951”

**MIKHAIL BAKHTIN (1895-1975)**

“Epic and the Novel” from *The Dialogic Imagination* (1941; 1975)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **EPIC** | **NOVEL** |
| Complete, antiquated | developing |
| Elite (gods, heroes) | Carnivalesque (all people) |
| Voice of authority | Heteroglossia, polyglossia, popular laughter |
| Past-oriented (memory) | Bourgeois, present-oriented (knowledge) |
| Destiny | Growth, plot twists |
| “postmodern” (plays with other genres) | Harmonious (interacts decorously with o.g.) |
| Status quo | Parody |
| National tradition | individuality |

What kind of a hero is Cal Stephanides in the Eco-Bakhtin schema?

**ERICH AUERBACH (1892-1957)**

New Criticism manifesto in *Mimesis* (1946): textual focus, but cultural extension in context

“Odysseus’ Scar” (chapter I of *Mimesis*)

-Homeric digression as ideology, not just artistic gesture

-Western civilization/literature’s representation of reality a Hegelian dialectic between

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| HOMERIC MODE | BIBLICAL MODE |
| Clear, detailed setting, thoughts, action | No details, obscurity, hints, abstraction |
| Eternal present (retardation) | Teleological divine drive above all else; suspense |
| Rational, composed logos | Elliptic speech, prophecies, mysterious plan of God |
| Lucidity, straightforwardness | Complexity, deep levels of God’s mind |
| Delight in human life | Awe in focus on God’s plan |
| Realistic, sweet fiction | Confusing meaning🡪midrashic interpretation needed for complex Truth (only 1 p.o.v) |
| Myth, legend | history |
| Charming, sublime | Mixed style (sublimitas et humilitas) |
| Elite | People focus (macrocosmic) |
| Stands by itself as fiction | Needs constant reinterpretation to fit new developments in human knowledge |
| Horizontal development (episode-rich) | Vertical development (all plot as God’s diachonic plan) |
| Beautiful lie, surface | Ugly truth, depth |

CYNTHIA OZICK (1928- )

NY Jewish-American essayist, novelist, short-story writer

*The Messiah of Stockholm* (1987)

*The Puttermesser Papers* (1997)

*The Pagan Rabbi and Other Stories* (1971)

*The Shawl* (1989)

*Fame & Folly: Essays* (1996)

“The Pagan Rabbi”

-Desire for knowledge vs desire for life (books vs bodies)

-What kind of a hero is Isaac?

-Symbols:

Trilham’s Bay park (war monuments, fetid clam bay)

The highway construction

Narrator’s abandoned shiksha wife, fur business

Narrator’s father’s aphonia

Sheindel’s hair, asterisk scar

Isaac’s seven daughters and their fairy tales about inanimates having souls, emotions (Baruch Spinoza)

Potted plants at windowsill vs tree

The prayer shawl (tallit)

The (homo?)sexual encounter with Pan

The Dryad

The Law

-Meaning of ending: for Isaac; for narrator

-What is the role of the narrator?

-Parable of Jews in a gentile world

-Parable of Otherness in a heteronormative world



EDGAR LEE MASTERS (1868-1950)

Lawyer, poet, autor, essayist, playwright, biographer

*Spoon River Anthology* (1915)

“The City”

-Ballad rhythm and rhyme

-Diurnal course of Helios (why “like a red balloon”?)

-blend of ancient and modern (Achilles and Thersites; Wall Street; early delta vs later city)

-final image—why most terrible? (“crone”, “cloak”, “crucifix”)

-Was the replacement of Greek gods by Jehovah a good thing? How is Jehovah presented?

**GENDERED ODD-YSSEYS**

The mock-epic VS mocking the epic (ideological conventions)

“**Mock-epic,** also called mock-heroic,  form of [satire](http://www.britannica.com/art/satire) that adapts the elevated heroic style of the classical [epic](http://www.britannica.com/art/epic) poem to a trivial subject. The tradition, which originated in classical times with an anonymous [burlesque](http://www.britannica.com/art/burlesque-literature) of [Homer](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Homer-Greek-poet), the Batrachomyomachia (Battle of the Frogs and the Mice), was honed to a fine art in the late 17th- and early 18th-century Neoclassical period.” (britannica.com)

**H.D. (1886-1961), “Helen”**

-meaning of “still eyes in the white face”, “white hands”, “wan face” “cold feet”

VS “God’s daughter, born of love” (l. 13)

-why does Greece hate Helen?

-how is epic mentality questioned here?

**Dorothy Parker (1893-1967), “Penelope”**

-form of the poem: 5 male lines, 4 female, final line uncoupled

--how is *The Odyssey* questioned here?

**Margaret Atwood (1939- )**

**“Siren Song”**

-how does the siren’s perspective mock the epic?

Femininity as mysterious riddle, helpless, *fatale*

***The Penelopiad***

-a female epic or something else?

-Form: écriture feminine, herstory + burlesque, dirty para-Homeric tales + tragedy + postmodern insertions in contemporary tunes

-Dead p.o.v. (Hades an allegory; Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Dead*) VS “in medias res”—effect?

-does the final punishment bring any justice? Any respite?

-social commentary: P’s story of aristocratic daughter, wife and mother VS “Kiddie Mourn” and other chorus songs (class)

-gender trouble: marriage, in-law relations, suitors as war: a woman’s position

“the Battle of the Sexes” for 10 years

swan (Helen), wild duck (Penelope), geese (maids), owls (dead)

“An Anthropology Lecture” insertion: impact?

-Does P. blame herself? Should she?

**CUPID AND PSYCHE**

From: Lucius Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* (2nd century AD)

story of Hindo-European origin (*Panchatantra*), extant in Greece at least since 4th century BC

author an initiate to Dionysiac mysteries and cult of Asclepius, philosophy of Plato

**Story elements:**

Animal bridegroom motif (🡪Beauty and the Beast)

Aphrodite Ourania / Pandemos

Psychological interpretation (love+soul=bliss, “love is blind,” “love hurts”)

Two kinds of love (instant lust, “in the dark” vs. constant, divine, proven love)

Psyche as philosopher (must see/know bridegroom, open box)

Seeing prohibition (common divine injunction) vs. Psyche’s active quest

1. Orpheus and Euridice
2. Actaeon and Artemis
3. Lot’s Wife
4. Narcisssus
5. Psyche and Proserpina’s box
6. Pandora’s box
7. Medusa
8. Garden of Eden
9. Oedipus
10. Teiresias
11. Zeus and Semele

Image of Eros (c/c Plato’s *Symposium*): why a fearsome “serpent”?

Parable of family dynamics (sibling rivalry; mother-son bond; mother-in-law vs. bride)

The four tasks (grains; golden wool; fetching water; beauty secret)=?

🡪Meaning of story re: role of woman

Bottingheimer’s point: different times/attitudes “date” myth from bawdy iconoclastic (re: gender) farce to courtly patriarchal romance

Capricious gods vs. rules of exogamous society

Psyche vs. Beauty (soul vs. looks)

Avoidance of vs. submission to the “beast”

Blindness and passion vs. sober acceptance, appreciation

**PATRICIA ROZEMA**

Award-winning Canadian film director; preoccupation with women’s issues, art-life relation



*When Night Is Falling* (1995)

**Themes and myth motifs:**

* Constancy and change (opening split scene)
* Forbidden love; Desire vs. rules
* Myth vs. religion
* The circus run by Timothy and Tory (locus amoenus) and the Christian college (Dionysian vs. Apollonian)
* Petra’s trailer
* Petra’s bow and arrow
* Picture on Camille’s desk
* Bob the dog
* Switched laundry; blouse with zipper
* Snow
* Paragliding
* The politics of vision

**PHILOCTETES I: MINORITY POLITICIZED**

**The Philoctetes myth and its connections:**

-Lemnos history

-The unhealable wound motif (Spear of Longinus)

-The Hieros Gamos/Divine Pair motif

-Sophocles’ innovations and personal/political investment

-the role of the archer in antique warfare

**Edmund Wilson (1895-1972)**

Author and literary critic, proponent of New Criticism and Marxism

“The Wound and the Bow” (1941)

-“The myth itself has not been one of those which have excited the modern imagination” (272).

-a psychological play without tragic ending or peripeteia

-relation of wound to bow: “superior strength as inseparable from disability” (287), psychological aberration as a source of offbeat “nobility”

-body VS nous: *painful* honesty VS political sophistry

-The personal as political: a projection of old Sophocles on Philoctetes (409BC) and Oedipus Coloneus (406BC) AND KING LEAR?, or/and Philoctetes as Alcibiades, the brilliant but side-shifting general

-personal grievance (Ph. and Neo) VS patriotic duty, kleos (Odysseus. Herakles)

-Neoptolemus leads Philoctetes to relent because he recognizes their common humanity in the abject invalid

-Prophesied relation of Neoptolemus+Achilles’ armor and Philoctetes+Herakles’ bow

=>Sophocles’ introduction of Neoptolemus to play AND DESERTED LEMNOS

**Rachel Hadas (1948- )**

Poet, critic, teacher and translator of modern Greek poetry

“Philoctetes”

-Why irony and hostility from a modern audience?

-“a god swung in on a high crane/ awkwardly booming” (ll. 7-8);

“the mumbling boy” (l. 9); “the old scene, Troy” (l. 11);

“turn your back…/ address” (ll. 25-26)

=> theatricality, artificiality?

-the question of the Greek language (VS American slurs)

-the role of nature (foot/root; wound as “rooted tentacle”)

-meaning of last line?

-Who/what is Philoctetes?

Marginal people

Old natural rhythms in a modern world

Myth as subaltern language/ unstable discourse (bow as language)

The professor herself, speaking to those who can’t understand

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**François-Xavier Fabre,**

**“Ulysses and Neoptolemus Taking Hercules’ Arrows from Philoctetes”**

**Oscar Mandel**

Belgian-American poet, playwright, CalTech English Professor, translator and critic

*The Summoning of Philoctetes* from *Philoctetes and the Fall of Troy* (1961-81)

-Human being as “zoon politikon”—but at a price

-title addition=?

-The roles of Demodocus (name?) and Medon INSTEAD of Neoptolemus—why?

-Arrows+bow not given, but led by Gods to fashion in solitude (meaning?)

-Hercules’ appearance at start, not end: “master” chain of command, “war” as human existence, “beautiful and brutal”, manipulator of all virtues (family, poetry, friendship, love, patriotism) into traps

-First choral: brutality of war hideous to the simple, poor soldiers; yet brainwashed to “banality of evil”

-War as dirty rapine: “A man stops being a bandit only when he’s alone”

**-Odysseus VS Philoctetes**

-O: Paranoid fear of the Trojans getting hold of “the weapon” first=>?

-Ph’s first soliloquy: “no masters and servants here,” “I am now, good sir, become worthy of being a slave, having learned to work”

-Guest-friending the stranger (Ph) VS fearing, preying on the friend (O)

-O watching from afar VS Ph experiencing first-hand

-O commands, hides motives VS Ph asks, trusts, shares

-O universally admired, respected “almost a god” (why not just evil? Why soldiers thuggish + pitiful?) VS Ph. abject to nigh all

-Ph ironic VS Odysseus’ “doublespeak” and lies

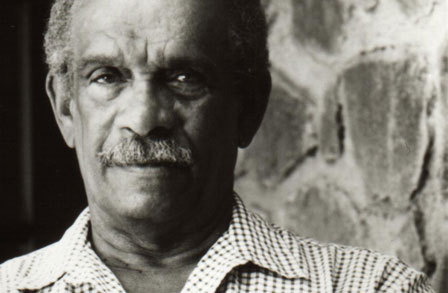
-what does Philoctetes represent? Why is he hounded? Why does he break the bow (symbolic of?)?

-irony (?) of broken, humiliated Ph. hailed as “master”

-role of poet (with/out an audience), esp. in the end: “Now my peace begins. And to begin it, Demodocus must bury a man.” (Whom?)

**PHILOCTETES—RACE**

**Derek Walcott (1930-)**



Afro-Caribbean poet (Nobel prize 1992) and playwright

Blend of Caribbean themes (slavery, poverty, multicultural identity) and European high canon in literature and art (studies)

Classics interest:

*The Isle Is Full of Noises* (1982)

*Omeros* (1990)

*The Odyssey: A Stage Version* (1993)

***Omeros***

-Considered as Walcott’s masterpiece

-Dantesque *terza rima* (ABA-BCB-CDC…) and heteroglottic different stories cut up and mixed

-Blend of *The Iliad* (Achille-Helen-Hector) and *The Odyssey* (Achille’s and narrator/Walcott’s vision quest for their true past; Major and Maud Plunkett) with St. Lucia everyday lives

-Philoctete:

Opening and closing story of *Omeros*

Meaning of wound (“moi blessé”)

Symbols: Philoctete’s narrative and wound-show

rusty anchor

Stinking flower

Line of ants

Sulphur cauldron bath

Ma Kilman’s name/bar VS legacy/ clothes during epiphany

Meaning of cure in relation to Ma Kilman (obeah woman/bar owner)

-The mixed ontology of the Caribbean person

**PHILOCTETES—GENDER**

-Use of Philo. as gay icon: Mark Merlis, *An Arrow’s Flight*; Adrienne Rich reference.

-“Queer” myth links to Philo. myth:

Unhealable wound: menstruation, AIDS, emasculation

The status of archers (Scythian archers in comedy)

Bow and arrow symbolism (Artemis)

Lemnos as Amazon island (Apollonius Rhodius, “stinking” Amazons)

Suffering as feminine loss of control

Relation to Herakles’ death/poison, Hera-Chryse

**John Jesurun (1951- )**

Playwright, director, multi-media artist; gay activism and postmodern techniques (e.g., serial play)

Occasional interest in “queering” legendary/mythical figures: Faust, Joan of Ark

***Philoktetes* (1994)**

-Written for actor friend Ron Vawter, dying of AIDS

Praised for its focus on linguistic aesthetics; Peter Campbell’s Derridean “freeplay of language” as unhealable/infinitely deferred wound

-beginning: “Listen to me” from beyond the grave; mix of “true” and mythic story

Why does Philo insist that Philo “is dead” or other?

-the meaning of the island

-Philo’s metamorphoses: Goddess Cybele/Rhea

“Moonstruck” monologue

-Prayer: acceptance of all life, ecstasy of Job:

For there is beauty in the center of all ugliness.

Remember that I am in everything.

Even in the ugliest thing,

Which is what I made you,

And I made you to discover that. (Jesurun 75).

The Baghavad Gita (“Song of the Blessed One”) from the Indian epic *The Mahabharata*

Also: “The First Day” narrative (barren bird as symbol of?)

-Why does Philo beg to be killed, declare his self-loathing?

What was his transgression? (“Sweetness”)

- Odysseus’ ideology:

references to Iraq war (attitude twds war?)

+ conservative homophobia (the Bush years)

“afraid of losing”

Why does he bleed and wither in the end?

-Role of Neoptolemus (“such a fag”; “Does it have anything to do with love?” “Kiss me”)

-Ending: what is the door leading out to the light?

**POST-MODERNIZING MYTH**

Jean-François Lyotard, “Defining the Postmodern”

-implications for myth

-Mircea Eliade’s notion of “eternal return”

**Caridad Svich (1963- )**

Latina-New Yorker playwright, translator and editor

Themes on transculturality, myth “transposed”

Divine Fire: Eight Contemporary Plays Inspired by the Greeks. New York: Back Stage Books, 2005.

Iphigenia Crash Land Falls on the Neon Shell That Was Once Her Heart: A Rave Fable

-Elements of Iphigeneia in Aulis and the Atreidae myth

How is this configuration postmodern?

-Diversification:

Adolfo’s incestuous desire

Aulis as airplane hangar/maquiladora rave party

Achilles as “a transgendered glam-rock star, beautiful and damaged”(3)—why does he sing the chorals?

Orestes as a drug-addicted infant with an adult voice weaned in a Gucci shoebox

Virtual MC

Use of video screen

Violeta Imperial and the Fresa Girls

Obsession with clothes and makeup

--What is the meaning of the “rave fable”?

Ciudad Juárez (border/narco)violence, Mexican culture of machismo, history of juntas

Meaning of title

“postmodern condition”: angst, apocalyptic nihilism