Thinking comparatively about Greek mythology IV, Reconstructing He#rakle#s backward in time

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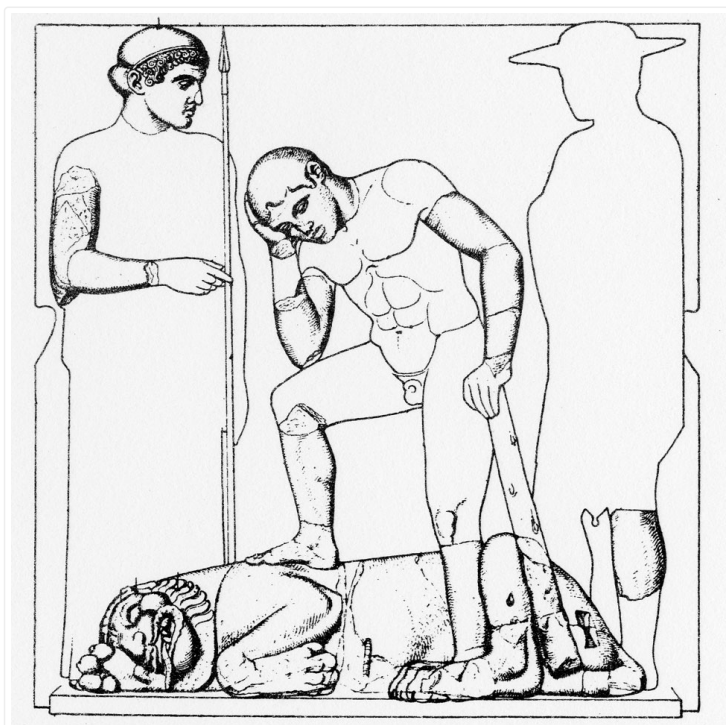Home   About   People   References   The CI Poetry Project

Thinking comparatively about Greek mythology IV, Reconstructing Hēraklēs backward in time

August 15, 2019   By Gregory Nagy listed under By Gregory Nagy   Comments off

2019.08.15 | By Gregory Nagy

§0. As I have argued in the posting for 2019.07.26, "Thinking comparatively about Greek mythology I" (hereafter TC I), the myths about the Greek hero Hēraklēs and the Scandinavian hero Starkaðr are cognate, verbalized in cognate languages belonging to a language-family known to linguists as "Indo-European." Viewed in this light, the term "Indo-European" can be applied not only with reference to cognate language-groupings like Greek and Old Norse, the second of which is a Scandinavian sub-group of Germanic, but also with reference to cognate myths transmitted in Greek and Germanic languages. That is why I could say, in the posting for 2019.08.02, "Thinking comparatively II" (hereafter TC II), that a persona like Hēraklēs as represented in Greek myths is an "Indo-European" hero, in that he is cognate with a persona like Starkaðr as represented in Old Norse myths. And then, as we saw in the posting for 2019.08.08, "Thinking comparatively III" (hereafter TC III), I could also say that Hēraklēs is cognate with the persona of Śiśupāla in Indic myths. After saying all that, however, I must now make a new point here in TC IV: the fact is, such mythological personae are not the same thing as historical persons, since they become different personalities in the course of their evolution in myths transmitted by differentiated populations speaking differentiated Indo-European languages. Accordingly, I need to qualify the idea of Hēraklēs as an "Indo-European" hero. To make this point here in TC IV, I will start to examine a complex of Greek myths conventionally known as the Labors of Hēraklēs. And my ongoing question will be: what is "Indo-European" about these Labors? In my search for answers, I will be reconstructing Hēraklēs—or, better, the role of Hēraklēs—and the reconstruction will proceed backward in time, starting with a narrative that dates from the first century BCE. From there the reconstruction will proceed further back—back to the fifth century BCE, which is the historical setting for a visual representation of the Labors in the sculptures that once graced the metopes of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. The illustration for the cover here shows a prime example of these sculptures: we see here the very first of the Labors, which is the hero's killing of the Nemean Lion.

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Metope 1: Lion, from the Temple of Zeus. Published in Curtius, Ernst, and Friedrich Adler, eds., Olympia: die Ergebnisse der von dem Deutschen Reich veranstalteten Ausgrabung. Tafelband 3: Die Bildwerke von Olympia in Stein und Thon (Berlin, 1894): plate 45.

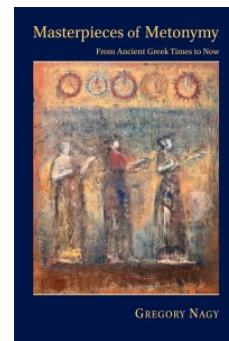
Image after Metope 1: Lion, from the Temple of Zeus. Published in Curtius, Ernst, and Friedrich Adler, eds., Olympia: die Ergebnisse der von dem Deutschen Reich veranstalteten Ausgrabung. Tafelband 3: Die Bildwerke von Olympia in Stein und Thon (Berlin, 1894): plate 45.

§1.0. To grasp in its most complete available form the overall narrative of the 'Labors', the most accurate surviving textual source is a retelling by Diodorus of Sicily, who lived in the first century BCE. In his text, Diodorus attempts a survey of all known myths about Hēraklēs (4.8–30), but I concentrate here only on his retelling of the hero's Labors (4.11.3–4.26.4) as the starting point for my reconstructions. Then I will compare the visual evidence we find in the fragments of sculptures once embedded in the twelve metopes of the Temple of Zeus in Olympia, dating from around 470–456 BCE. For the moment, I will leave out of the comparison a highly poeticized retelling of the Labors in the Herakles of Euripides, first performed around 416 BCE.

§1.1. To start with the Labors in the narrative of Diodorus (4.11.3–4.26.4)…

§1.1.1. Here are the Twelve Labors of Hēraklēs, in the sequence indicated by Diodorus:

Labor 1
Lion
—fights and kills the Nemean Lion (4.11.3–4)

Labor 2
Hydra
—fights and kills the Lernaean Hydra (4.11.5–6)

Labor 3
Boar…
—captures the Erymanthian Boar (4.12.1–2)

Labor 4
Hind
—captures the Hind with the Golden Horns (4.13.1)

Labor 5
Birds
—clears the Stymphalian Marsh of the noxious birds that infested it (4.13.2)

Labor 6
Augeias
—clears the manure from the Stables of Augeias (4.13.3)

Labor 7
Bull…
—captures the Cretan Bull (4.13.4)

Labor 8
Horses…
—captures the man-eating Horses of Diomedes (4.15.3–4)

Labor 9
Amazons
—fights and kills Amazons, captures the 'waistband' of the Amazon Hippolyte (4.16.1–4)

Labor 10
Cattle…
—captures, with the help of an army and a fleet, the Cattle of Geryon (4.17.1–4.18.2)

Labor 11
Hound
—captures Cerberus the Hound of Hādēs (4.25.1–4.26.1)

12
Apples…
—takes away the Golden Apples of the Hesperides (4.26.2–4).

§1.1.2. In my list of italicized one-word or one-name tags that I have given here for these Labors, I have added the sign "…" after the tags for Labors 3 (Boar…) 7 (Bull…) 8 (Horses…) 10 (Cattle…) 12 (Apples…) for the purpose of indicating wherever the sequence of Labors as narrated by Diodorus gets interrupted by insertions of additional narratives about various other deeds of Herakles that are different from the deeds known as his Labors. For reasons I will explain later, I will refer to these other deeds as sub-Labors.

§1.1.3. In the expanded list that follows, I interweave the sub-Labors of Hēraklēs that interrupt the flow of the narrative about the hero's Labors:

Labor 1
Lion
—fights and kills the Nemean Lion (4.11.3–4)

Labor 2
Hydra
—fights and kills the Lernaean Hydra (4.11.5–6)

Labor 3
Boar…
—captures the Erymanthian Boar (4.12.1–2)

sub-Labor 1
Centaurs
—fights and kills Centaurs (4.12.3–8)

Labor 4
Hind
—captures the Hind with the Golden Horns (4.13.1)

Labor 5
Birds
—clears the Stymphalian Marsh of the noxious birds that infested it (4.13.2)

Labor 6
Augeias
—clears the manure from the Stables of Augeias (4.13.3)

Labor 7
Bull…
—captures the Cretan Bull (4.13.4)

sub-Labor 2
Olympics
—institutes the athletic competitions of the Olympics at Olympia (4.14.1–2)

sub-Labor 3
Wars
—fights in unspecified wars, is given rewards by gods at festivals (4.14.3)
—is given his bow and arrows by Apollo, who teaches him archery (again, 4.14.3)
—is purified by Demeter of pollutions committed while killing Centaurs (again, 4.14.3)
Excursus
Hēraklēs is the last son fathered by Zeus with a mortal mother (4.14.4)

sub-Labor 4
Giants
—helps the gods in their battle against the Giants (4.15.1)

sub-Labor 5
Prometheus

—liberates Prometheus, who stole fire for mortals (4.15.2)

Labor 8
Horses…
—captures the man-eating Horses of Diomedes (4.15.3–4)

sub-Labor 6
Argonauts
—joins the Argonauts seeking the Golden Fleece (still 4.15.4)

Labor 9
Amazons
—fights and kills Amazons, captures the waistband of the Amazon Hippolyte (4.16.1–4)

Labor 10
Cattle…
—captures, with an army and a fleet, the Cattle of Geryon (4.17.1–4.18.2)

After Labor 10 is announced at the starting-point of this narrative (4.17.1), a series of sub-Labors is narrated before Labor 10 actually narrated (4.18.2).

sub-Labor 7
Armada
—assembles an army and a fleet for his expedition to capture the Cattle of Geryon (4.17.1–2)

sub-Labor 8
Launch
—sails with his armada to Crete to launch from there the expedition (4.17.3)

sub-Labor 9
Clearing
—while in Crete, clears the island of infestations by noxious beasts (4.17.3)

sub-Labor 10
Libya
—sailing from Crete with his armada, stops over in Libya (4.17.4)

sub-Labor 11
Antaios
—wrestles with and kills the brutish Antaios there (again 4.17.4)

sub-Labor 12
Clearing 2
—clears Libya of all other brutish men and of all noxious beasts (4.17.5)

sub-Labor 13
Bousiris
—stops over in Egypt, kills the brutish king Bousiris (4.18.1)

sub-Labor 14
Pillars
—sails west with his armada, sets up the Pillars of Hēraklēs (4.18.2)

(Labor 10)
Cattle
—at last captures the Cattle of Geryon (4.18.2)

sub-Labor 15
Wanderings 2
—while wandering in Italy, visits the city of Croton (4.24.7)

sub-Labor 16
Wanderings 3
—wanders all the way to the Peloponnese (4.25.1)

Labor 11
Hound
—captures Cerberus the Hound of Hādēs (4.25.1–4.26.1)

Labor 12
Apples…
—takes away the Golden Apples of the Hesperides (4.26.2–4).

after Labor 12, more sub-Labors (I give only a selection here)

sub-Labor 17
Hesperides
—rescues the Hesperides, daughters of Atlas, who had been abducted (4.27.1–4)

sub-Labor 18
Antaios 2 (recycled from 4.17.4)
—fights and kills Antaios (4.27.3)

sub-Labor 19
Bousiris 2 (recycled from 4.18.1)
—fights and kills Bousiris, who had arranged for the abduction of the Hesperides (4.27.3)

sub-Labor 20
Iphitos
—deceptively murders the hero Iphitos, and the resulting pollution makes him ill (4.27.3–4)

sub-Labor 21
Omphale
—is sold as slave to the queen Omphale, to purify the pollution and cure the illness (4.31.5–8)

sub-Labor 22
Troy
—launches a Trojan War of his own (4.32.1–5)

sub-Labor 23
Augeias 2
—wages war against the people of Elis and their king Augeias, but cannot yet defeat him (4.33.1)

sub-Labor 24
Centaurs 2
—at the wedding feast of the daughter of Dexamenos, kills the disruptive Centaur Eurytion (4.33.2)

sub-Labor 25
Augeias 3
—resumes war against Augeias, kills him, installs the king's son Phyleus as new king of Elis (4.33.3–4)

sub-Labor 26
Deianeira
—courts and marries Deianeira (4.34.1)

sub-Labor 27
Centaurs 3
—rescues Deianeira from abduction by the Centaur Nessos and kills the beast (4.36.2–5)

sub-Labor 28
Death
—is painfully burning up inside, is killed/immortalized by the thunderbolt of Zeus (4.38.1–5)

§1.2. Now I continue by contrasting this narrative as we read it in the text of Diodorus with a visual narrative to be "read" by viewing the sculptures that once graced the twelve metopes of the Temple of Zeus in Olympia.

§1.2.1. Again I list the twelve Labors of Hēraklēs—this time, as narrated in the twelve metopes. The sequence of Labors here is slightly different from the sequence found in the text of Diodorus:

Labor 1
Lion

Labor 2
Hydra

Labor 3
Birds

Labor 4
Bull

Labor 5
Hind

Labor 6
Amazons

Labor 7
Boar

Labor 8
Horses

Labor 9
Cattle

Labor 10
Apples

Labor 11
Hound

Labor 12
Augeias

§1.2.2. The sequence of Labors as narrated in the metopes of the Temple of Zeus is confirmed by the eyewitness description of Pausanias (5.10.9), who viewed the temple in the second century CE. He started with the six metopes at the front, in the east, and then he went over to the six metopes at the back, in the west. In the case of the east metopes, he started at the southeast corner, viewing the sculptures from south to north: from Boar to Horses to Cattle to Apples to [Hound to] the Stables of Augeias. In the case of the west metopes, he started at the southwest corner, and the direction for his viewing the sculptures was, once more, from south to north: from Amazons to Hind to Bull to Birds to Hydra to Lion. The narrative sequencing of the Labors, however, requires that the reading start with the west side and then continue with the east side. If you started at the northwest corner of the Temple of Zeus, when it was still standing, you would see looming above you the first six of the Labors, progressing from north to south: from Lion to Hydra to Birds to Bull to Hind to Amazons, and then you would work your way around, counter-clockwise, and resume the visual narrative at the southeast corner, progressing from south to north: from Boar to Horses to Cattle to Apples to Hound to Augeias.

§1.2.3. The visual narrative starts off with Metope 1 at the northwest corner—at the same point where Pausanias had by contrast actually finished off his viewing. This first metope shows the very first Labor of Hēraklēs. We see here the hero in his youth: he is still beardless, and he stands there, exhausted, next to the dead Lion of Nemea. The young wrestler's choke-hold had killed off the beast, as we saw in TC II. His hair was painted blond. Traces of the pigment once representing the blondness of the youthful Hēraklēs are still visible today on the surface of the marble. Most striking overall in this piece of painted sculpture is the adolescent appearance of the hero. And, as I just noted, he is shown beardless. I find him most comparable to the sculpted figure of the beardless youth who is represented at the center of the west pediment looming above the west metopes of the temple: this figure is holding a bow in his left hand, ready to engage in a fight with Centaurs who are disrupting a wedding feast (on traces of the bow held by the figure, I cite Ashmole and Yalouris 1967:17). This comparison brings me back to my argumentation at §7B in Nagy 2019.05.10, following up on §8 in Nagy 2019.04.19: I had argued there that this "Apolline" youth is perhaps not Apollo but rather a youthful Hēraklēs. And, in terms of that argument, I would now link the disrupted feast that we see represented in the sculptures of the west pediment with what I listed as sub-Labor 24 as reported in the narrative of Diodorus (4.33.2). As we saw in my description there, under the heading Centaurs 2, Diodorus is recounting how a wedding feast had been arranged by a hero named Dexamenos for his daughter—a feast that got disrupted by Centaurs—and how Hēraklēs killed the leader of those beasts, Eurytion. Besides the version of the myth reported by Diodorus, there are also other versions, analyzed at §§2–3 of 2019.04.19, and in one of those versions, as I noted in my analysis there, the daughter of Dexamenos was Deianeira herself (Hyginus Fabulae 31 and 33). Also relevant here, at least indirectly, is what I have listed as sub-Labor 27 in the narrative of Diodorus (4.36.2–5). As we saw in my description there, under the heading Centaurs 3, Diodorus is recounting how, in another situation, Hēraklēs rescued Deianeira from another Centaur, Nessos, and how he killed the beast.
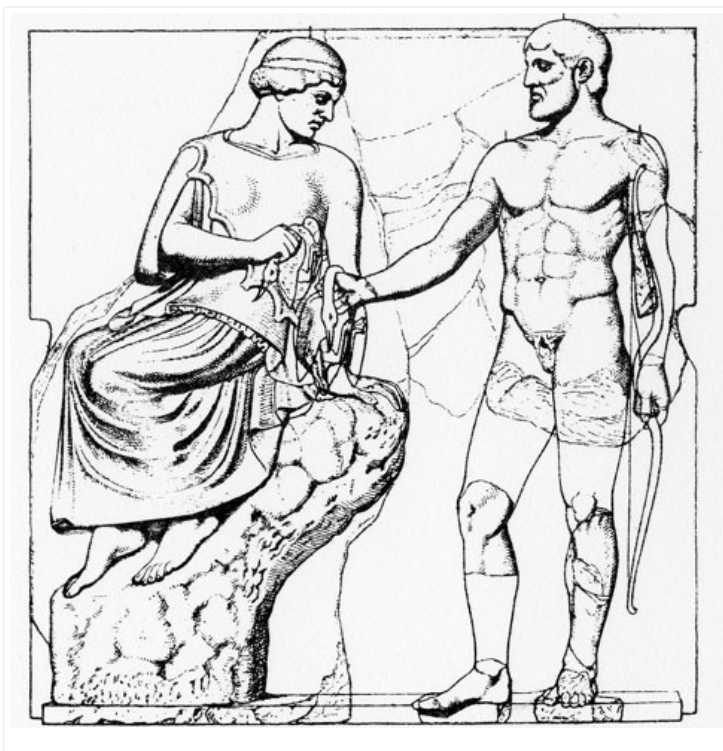
§1.2.4. I add here a further remark about the beardless "Apolline" youth at the center of the west pediment, who is shown holding a bow in his left hand. I think that this pose is analogous to the pose of Hēraklēs in Metope 3, who is likewise shown holding a bow in his left hand—after having shot his arrows at the Stymphalian Birds, and now he is displaying their lifeless bodies, held in his right hand. And I recall a detail from sub-Labor 3 in the narrative of Diodorus (4.14.3). As we saw in that narrative, Diodorus is recounting how a youthful Hēraklēs is given his bow and arrows by the god Apollo himself, who then proceeds to teach the young hero the skill of archery.

§2. Having surveyed twelve Labors of Hēraklēs and another twenty-eight deeds of his that I have described so far as sub-Labors, I now confront a basic question: what is the difference between the Labors and the sub-Labors? In the case of the narrative provided by Diodorus, the answer is simple: the use of the word āthloi, which I normally translate as 'labors', is restricted by Diodorus to the deeds that I have designated here as the twelve Labors of Hēraklēs, and he never uses this word with reference to the other twenty-eight deeds, even though those deeds of the hero often seem to be just as important or even more important than the Labors. This pattern of restriction is linked to a basic fact about the twelve Labors of Hēraklēs. The fact is, this hero is literally 'commanded' by Eurystheus, king of Mycenae, to perform all twelve of the deeds called āthloi, and the words regularly used by Diodorus in all such contexts are the verb pros-tattein 'command' and the noun pros-tagma 'command'.

§3. So, here is where we see the "Indo-European" aspect of myths about deeds performed by Hēraklēs: when this Greek hero performs deeds at the command of a king, his role is cognate with the role of the Scandinavian hero "Starcatherus." As we saw in TC I, with reference to Scandinavian stories retold by Saxo Grammaticus about the deeds of Starcatherus, this hero is at times under the command of the king of Denmark and, at other times, of the king of Sweden, or, at still other times, of some lesser king. Such parallelisms in the roles of the Greek hero Hēraklēs and the Scandinavian hero Starcatherus have been studied by Georges Dumézil, especially in two books, the English titles for which are The Destiny of the Warrior (1970; in French, Dumézil 1969, second edition 1985) and The Stakes of the Warrior (1983b; in French, Part 1 of Dumézil 1971). And the second of these books of Dumézil is actually the source for my using the term sub-Labor as distinct from Labor, following his use of the term sous-travaux as distinct from Travaux (Dumézil 1971:118; the English translation likewise has "sub-Labor": Dumézil 1983b:124).

§4. For Dumézil, as I read him, it is primarily the Labors and not the sub-Labors of Hēraklēs that derive from an "Indo-European" mythological tradition. Unlike the sub-Labors, which are voluntarily undertaken by the hero, the Labors are divinely imposed, and they are at first resisted by Hēraklēs. As Dumézil shows, such resistance is a typical "sin" for a warrior, and it leads to divine punishment. The story of such a "sin" is explicitly retold by Diodorus (4.10.6–4.11.1). In the story, the king Eurystheus 'commanded', as expressed by the verb pros-tattein, that Hēraklēs must perform twelve 'labors', as expressed by the noun āthloi (4.10.6), and then the god Zeus himself authorized the royal command by sending word to Hēraklēs that he must obey and perform these Labors (4.10.7). But the hero at first hesitated, aware as he was that Eurystheus, despite that man's social superiority as king, was inferior as a man (4.11.1), and now the hero's "sin" of resistance is punished: the goddess Hērā, consort of Zeus, inflicts a mental illness on Hēraklēs, leading to his slaughtering of his own wife Megara along with their children (4.11.1–2); after a period of grieving, Hēraklēs steels himself to undertake his Labors in the service of the king Eurystheus (4.11.2).

§5. This "Indo-European" aspect of the traditional mythology about the Labors of Hēraklēs, where the hero commits a "sin" of defiance against the authority of kingship as authorized by Zeus, is missing from a parallel retelling of the Labors in the Library of "Apollodorus" (2.5.1–12), which is conventionally dated to the second century CE. In that version of the retelling, the mental illness experienced by Hēraklēs is not a punishment for any "sin"—a punishment inflicted by Hērā acting jointly with Zeus. Rather, as the narrative of "Apollodorus" states bluntly (2.4.12 p. 183 ed. Frazer 1921 I), this mental illness of Hēraklēs is caused simply by the antagonism of the goddess Hērā toward the hero. To be contrasted is what we have already seen in the narrative of Diodorus (4.10.6–4.11.1), where the antagonistic goddess is acting coefficiently with the god Zeus in punishing Hēraklēs, thus enforcing a divine authorization of a king's commands.

§6. In the narrative of Diodorus, it is made clear that the idea of an antagonism between the goddess Hērā and the hero Hēraklēs is linked with the idea of a mandate, imposed indirectly by Hērā on the hero, to obey the orders of a king. I offer here a paraphrase (via H24H 1§42) of the mythological background, as retold by Diodorus, for the linking of the two ideas, (1) antagonism of Hērā toward Hēraklēs and (2) the role of Hēraklēs in obeying the orders of the king Eurystheus:

> The supreme god and king of gods, Zeus, impregnates Alkmene, a mortal (4.9.2). The wife of Zeus, the goddess Hērā, is jealous; she decides to intervene in the life of the hero who is about to be born, Hēraklēs (4.9.4). If this hero had been born on schedule, on time, in time, he would have been the supreme king of his time; but Hērā makes sure that Hēraklēs is born not on schedule, not on time, not in time. Hēraklēs' inferior cousin, Eurystheus, is born ahead of him and thus is fated to become king instead of Hēraklēs (4.9.4–5). During all of the lifetime of Hēraklēs, Eurystheus persecutes him directly; Hērā persecutes him indirectly. The superior hero has to spend his entire lifespan obeying the orders of the inferior king (4.9.5). Hēraklēs follows up on each one of the orders, which are

authorized, however reluctantly, by Zeus as the divine consort of Hērā, and the hero's accomplishments in the process add up to the Labors of Hēraklēs.

§7. So, as we see in the version as retold by Diodorus (again, 4.9.4–5), the Labors of the hero Hēraklēs were originally caused by the goddess Hērā, who had an antagonistic relationship with this hero, but it was the god Zeus who actually authorized the deeds that are traditionally known as the āthloi or 'Labors', and these Labors were actually formulated for the hero not by the goddess or even by the god but, instead, by the king Eurystheus (again, 4.9.5).To be contrasted is the version as retold by "Apollodorus" in his Library (2.4.8–2.7.7): here the role of the god Zeus in authorizing the Labors of the hero Hēraklēs is elided, but the role of the king Eurystheus in formulating the actual details of the Labors is maintained (2.4.12–2.5.1). This way, there is no real "sin" committed by Hēraklēs. Granted, even in the version of "Apollodorus" (2.4.12 p. 183 ed. Frazer 1921 I), we read that Hērā afflicts Hēraklēs with a mental illness that causes him to slaughter Megara and the children he had with her—which is the same affliction that the hero suffers in the version of Diodorus (4.11.1–2). But the difference is, the affliction in the retelling of "Apollodorus" is not a punishment caused by any act or attitude of defiance against the idea of serving a king. There cannot be a punishment when there is no defiance.

§8. Despite the absence of a punishment for a "sin" in the version of "Apollodorus," other aspects of the traditional mythology about the Labors are very much present. As in the version of Diodorus (4.11.3–4.26.4), so also in the version of "Apollodorus" (2.5.1–12), the words āthloi 'labors' and pros-tagmata 'commands' are used only in the context of the twelve Labors, which are narrated in this order: Lion Hydra Hind Board Augeias Birds Bull Horses Amazons Cattle Apples Hound.

§9. What we see in this version of "Apollodorus," just as we saw in the version of Diodorus, is that these two words āthloi 'labors' and pros-tagmata 'commands' are never used with reference to the sub-Labors, which in the narration of "Apollodorus" are often significantly divergent from the sub-Labors narrated by Diodorus. I will have much more to say in TC VI about the sub-Labors as narrated by "Apollodorus."

§10. Given the divergences between the two sets of sub-Labors in the narratives of Diodorus and "Apollodorus," I find it all the more remarkable that the two sets of actual Labors converge, all twelve of them—even if the sequences of these Labors diverge slightly. And there is another remarkable convergence between the two narratives. It is reported by Diodorus (4.10.1) and by "Apollodorus" (2.4.12 p. 183 ed. Frazer 1921 I) that Hēraklēs, before he started to perform his twelve Labors, had a different name: he was called respectively Alkaîos and Alkeídēs. The basic meaning of both these names, derived as they both are from the root alk– as attested in the noun alkê 'strength', is 'Strong Man'. So this hero is treated as a generic Strong Man in the general context of narratives about his sub-Labors, and he becomes a particularized hero named Hēraklēs only in the particular context of narratives about his actual Labors.

§11. Such a particularization of this hero's identity is relevant to the actual etymology of the name Hērakléēs, which can be analyzed morphologically as meaning 'he who has the glory [kléos] of Hērā', as I argued in H24H 1§45 (and, earlier, in Nagy 1996b:48n79, following Davidson 1980). Also, in the same argumentation at H24H 1§§45, I added that the problem of the short accented a in the second syllable of the form Hērăkléēs can best be addressed by comparing the short accented a in the second syllable of the form Alkáthoos (Alkăthoos), the name of a hero of Megara (as in Theognis 774) who figures in myths that are closely related to myths about Hēraklēs. This name Alkáthoos, the meaning of which I interpret as 'running [verb theein] with strength', points to yet another generic 'Strong Man'—like Alkaîos and Alkídēs as analyzed at §10 above.

§12. This etymology of Hērakléēs, 'he who has the glory [kléos] of Hērā', is actually validated in Homeric poetry: the narrative about the birth of Hēraklēs in Iliad 19.95–133 makes it clear that, after all is said and done, this hero actually owes to the goddess Hērā the glory he got from the songs that were sung about him, since it was the original antagonism of the goddess toward the hero that caused her consort Zeus to authorize, however reluctantly, the 'Labors', called āthloi (aethloi) at line 133, which were imposed on Hēraklēs by the king Eurystheus. And it was these Labors that earned for Hēraklēs his glorification by way of song. Thus the evidence of Homeric poetry confirms the explanation for the meaning of the name Hērakléēs as formulated by Matris of Thebes (FGH 39 F 2, by way of Diodorus 1.24.4; restatement by Diodorus at 4.10.1). And this meaning in turn confirms the etymology, 'he who has the glory [kléos] of Hērā', as reconstructed by way of Indo-European linguistics.

§13. Georges Dumézil, in tracking the myths about the antagonism of Hērā toward Hēraklēs in the two books I already mentioned, The Destiny of the Warrior (1970) and The Stakes of the Warrior (1983b), did not use the relevant evidence from Homeric poetry in Iliad 19.95–133, relying only on the prose texts of Diodorus and, secondarily, of "Apollodorus," both of whom I have cited above. In a volume edited by Jacques Bonnet, published in 1981, which was a collection of essays paying tribute to the wide-ranging intellectual influence of Dumézil (I look back with some nostalgia at the title given to that volume: Cahiers "Pour un temps": Georges Dumézil), I contributed a piece (Nagy 1981, rewritten in Nagy 1990b:7–17: "Homer and Comparative Mythology") arguing for the importance of adding the comparative evidence of Homeric poetry in reconstructing the Indo-European heritage of myths about Hēraklēs, and I focused on Iliad 19.95–133 (Nagy 1981:140 and 145n16; also 1990b:12n32), following the earlier work of Olga Davidson (1980) on this same Homeric passage. I quote here what can serve as a summary of my findings in that piece (again, Nagy 1990b:12n32): "the compressed retelling of the Herakles story in Iliad 19.95–133 is a clear attestation of the same Indo-European pattern that Dumézil has reconstructed from such nonpoetic retellings as in Diodorus [of Sicily] (4.8–30)."

Bibliography

See the dynamic Bibliography for Comments on Comparative Mythology.

Tags: Alkaios, Alkides, athlos, Comments on Comparative Mythology, Diodorus of Sicily, Eurystheus, Georges Dumézil, Hera, Herakles, Herakles of Euripides, Indo-European, kingship, Labors of Hēraklēs, Library of Apollodorus, Olympia, Pausanias, Temple of Zeus, Twelve Labors

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