

Blood is Thicker than Water: ἀναιρέω as a Verb of Purification

This poster presentation will seek, through a lexical study of words used for the killing of monsters, to uncover and make sense of crucial differences between the myths of Herakles and Theseus. This presentation will explain research on the frequency of various Greek verbs of killing, which shows that the word ἀναιρέω is most commonly used to describe violent killing. By using examples from the myths of both Theseus and Herakles, this presentation will additionally explore the unique violence, deliberateness, and repetitiveness involved in the myth of Theseus' labors at its sudden appearance in 510 BC. This presentation will identify Athenian ownership of Theseus and his labors as a blueprint for imperial expansion not only in physical space, but also in Athenian literature and culture. In recognizing the verb ἀναιρέω as the common descriptor of violent killing, this presentation will show the verb ἀναιρέω to be a word connected at its core to pollution, with a meaning in line with cleansing or doing away with monsters, and explores themes of ownership, imperialism, and propaganda in Classical Athens. This poster will include sections on the quantitative word frequency research involved in this project, and will then turn to discussions of the specific examples found in the course of these word searches. The presentation will conclude with a synthesis of research findings, explaining that the word ἀναιρέω, as the most common verb of violent killing, serves the purpose of showing not just killing, but absolute power over a victim.

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