

HERCULES REBORN: THE AFTER-LIFE OF A CLASSICAL HERO

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As each age has renegotiated its notion of the hero, Hercules has been there to mark that change. Stories about Hercules do far more than just recount amazing exploits, they take us into the heart of the culture that celebrates them. (Blanshard 2005, xviii)

1. HERAKLES/HERCULES AND THE CHRISTIANS

Justin Martyr, *Dialogue With Trypho* 69.3: When it is said that Herakles was strong, that he travelled the whole world, that he was born of Zeus and Alkmene, that after his death he was taken up to heaven, do I not understand that this is an imitation of the Scripture which says about Christ that he runs his course as strong as a giant?

Origen, *Contra Celsum* 7.54: But since he refers us to Herakles, let him present us with examples of this man's sayings and justify his unholy servitude to Omphale, and let him demonstrate that he was worthy of divine honours who, having taken an ox from a farmer by force and like a brigand, feasted and delighted in the imprecations which the cursing farmer said to him as he ate; thus even to this day it is said that the demon Herakles receives sacrifice accompanied by curses.

Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 1.9: For he is not to be thought braver who overcomes a lion, than he who overcomes the violent wild beast shut up within himself, i.e. anger; or he who has brought down the most rapacious birds, than he who restrains most covetous desires...

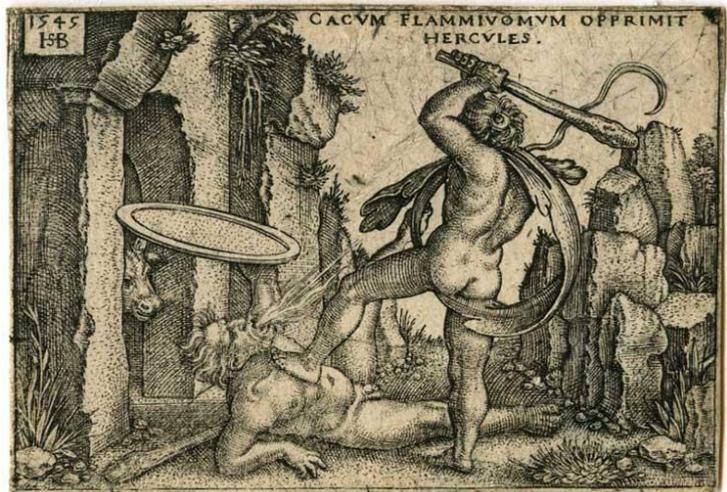
Saint Basil, *On the Value of Greek Literature* 5.55-77: And indeed the sophist from Keos somewhere in his writings taught philosophy concerning virtue and vice just like these men... When Herakles was quite a young man, and close to being in his very prime, as you are now, as he was deliberating which road to turn his steps to, the one leading through toil towards virtue, or the much easier path, two women approached him, and these were Virtue and Vice... [Cf. Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.1.21-34, Cicero, *De Officiis* 1.118]

Fulgentius, *Mythologies* 2.4 (Hercules and Antaeus): For when virtue holds on high the whole mind and denies it the sight of flesh, it immediately emerges as victor. Thus too he is said to have sweated long in the contest, because hard is the battle which fights with desire and vices.

Fulgentius, *Mythologies* 2.3 (tr. Whitbread): If thieves give out smoke, anyone can spot the despoiler even when he denies it. Thus he thrusts out blackness or smoke so as not to be observed, and the very property which came by theft disappears in smoke. Cacus is said to have driven off some cattle of Hercules, which he concealed by having dragged them by the tails into his cave; but Hercules throttled him to death. For *cacon* is the Greek for what we call evil. Thus all evil gives out smoke, that is, puts out either what is contrary to the truth, that is, light, or what is offensive to those who see it, as smoke is to the eyes, or what is dark and dismal raillery. And so evil in its manifold forms is two-faced, not straightforward: evil does harm also in three ways, either as aggressive when observed or subtly like a treacherous friend or secretly like an invisible thief. Thus he leads off the cattle, dragging them so that their tracks may be reversed, because every evil person, in order to seize another's property, depends for his protection on the reversing of his traces. Thus he covets the property of Hercules, because all evil is opposed to virtue. Finally he hides them in his cave because evil is never frank or open-faced; but virtue slays the evil ones and redeems its own possessions.

Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* Book 4 poem 7.13-35 (tr. H.R. James):

His labours for Alcides win
A name of glory far and wide;
He tamed the Centaur's haughty pride,
And from the lion reft his skin.
The foul birds with sure darts he slew;
The golden fruit he stole—in vain
The dragon's watch; with triple chain
From hell's depths Cerberus he drew.
With their fierce lord's own flesh he fed
The wild steeds; Hydra overcame
With fire. 'Neath his own waves in shame
Maimed Achelous hid his head.
Huge Cacus for his crimes was slain;
On Libya's sands Antæus hurled;
The shoulders that upheld the world
The great boar's dribbled spume did stain.
Last toil of all—his might sustained
The ball of heaven, nor did he bend
Beneath; this toil, his labour's end,
The prize of heaven's high glory gained.



Hans Sebald Beham, engraving
Hercules killing Cacus at his cave (1542-8).

Dante, *Inferno* 6.13-19 ('Cerberus fierce and monstrous beast / barks from three gullets like a dog...'), **17.7-27** (Geryon 'the foul image of fraud'), **25.25-33** (Cacus, subdued 'under the club of Hercules'), **31.132** (Antaeus, holding Virgil in 'the mighty grip once felt by Hercules'). See Princeton Dante Project (<http://etcweb.princeton.edu/dante/pdp/>) for full text and facing translation.

Pierre de Ronsard, *Hymn to the Christian Hercules* (1555), II.173-82: Ah, what are these foul monsters, these dragons by Hercules defeated? What the thousand horrors, the thousand strange beasts, this terrible serpent with seven heads, this lion, the centaurs overcome, Geryon, Busiris, and Cacus, who all lived as misshapen monsters, if not the Vice and the enormous Sins which Jesus Christ, by the celestial effort of his great Cross, put to death at a single blow?

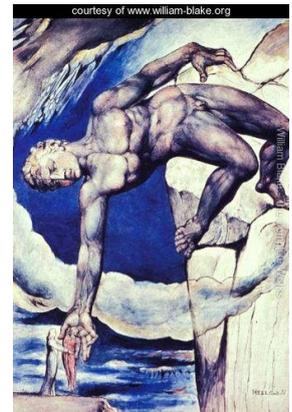
Francis Bacon, *On the Wisdom of the Ancients* (1609), ch.26: [Hercules] seems to represent an image of the divine Word, hastening in the flesh, as it were in a fragile vessel, to the redemption of the human race.

Alexander Ross, *Mystagogus Poeticus* (1648) s.v. 'Hercules': By Hercules may be meant every good Christian; who must be a valiant Champion to encounter against the Snakes of malice and envy, the Lion of anger, the Boar of Wantonness, and to subdue the Thespian daughters of Lust, the Centaurs and wild horses of Cruelty, the Hydra of Drunkenness, the Cacus of Theft and Robbery, the Busyris of Tyranny, yea Hell itself, and the Devil that great Dragon.

Milton (1671) *Paradise Regained* (4.562-71):

But Satan smitten with amazement fell
As when Earths Son *Antaeus* (to compare
Small things with greatest) in *Irassa* strove
With *Joves Alcides* and oft foil'd still rose,
Receiving from his mother Earth new strength,
Fresh from his fall, and fiercer grapple joyn'd,
Thrott'l'd at length in the Air, expir'd and fell;
So after many a foil the Tempter proud,
Renewing fresh assaults, amidst his pride
Fell whence he stood to see his Victor fall.

Right. William Blake's illustration of Antaeus setting Dante and Virgil down in the 9th Circle of Hell.



2. TELLING HERCULES' STORY I: RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

Petrarch, *On Illustrious Men* (1337-8) 2.12.1-4: While it is very easy to tell stories about Hercules, it is extremely difficult to compose a history... [*there are many Herculeses and variations in the story*] so that the reader, as if entangled in the windings of a labyrinth, cannot find his way out.

Other Renaissance 'biographies' of Hercules: Boccaccio *Genealogy of the Gods* 13.1, cf. *Famous Women* no. 24 'Deianeira' (1360-74); Coluccio Salutati's *De Laboribus Herculis* (1406), four substantial books; Enrique de Villena, *Los doze trabajos de Hercules* (1417); Pietro Andrea de Bassi, *Le fatiche d'Ercole* (1475); Giambattista Giralaldi Cintio, *Dell' Ercole canti ventisei* (1557); Raoul Le Fèvre's *Recueil des hystoires de Troyes* (1464), translated William Caxton as *The Ancient History of the Destruction of Troy*, abridged version published as *The Book of the Strong Hercules*).

Lilio Gregorio Giraldi, *Life of Hercules* (1539): It is a Herculean task to cover the whole story of Hercules.

Galinsky (1972, 201) on Giraldi: ... both Herakles' moral monstrosity and the author's monotonously monumental erudition smother whatever *vita* there was left in Herakles by that time.

3. HERCULES' IMAGE REBORN: ART FROM THE RENAISSANCE ONWARDS (examples selected from hundreds!)

i) Cycles of labours/other exploits

Paintings: Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Labours of Hercules*, seven of which survive (post-1537, Braunschweig); Francisco de Zurbarán, cycle of ten Hercules scenes for Salón de Reinos, Palacio del Buen Retiro (1634, Prado).

Tapestry: set of labours, Albrecht V of Bavaria's Dachau Palace (1577); single tapestry made for Pope Leo X (1513-21), *The Triumph of Hercules* (The Royal Collection).

Frescoes: Vasari, Sala d'Ercole, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence (1558; see Vasari, *Ragionamenti* 7); Annibale and Agostino Carracci, Camerino of the Palazzo Farnese, Rome (1595-7); A and A + Ludovico Caracci, Palazzo Sampieri, Bologna (c.1593-4); Toussaint Dubreuil, twenty-seven Herculean scenes, Gallery of Diana, Fontainebleu (1595); Algardi 'Galleria di Ercole', Villa Doria Pamphili, Rome (1647), cf. rock-crystal intaglios by Annibale Fontana to adorn a casket (c.1560-70, Vienna); Christoph Unterberger, Sala di Ercole, Villa Borghese, Rome (1784); Salon de la Paix of the Hôtel de Ville in Paris likewise had a set of eleven *Episodes From the Life of Hercules* by Eugène Delacroix (1851-2).

Fountain: Vincenzo di Rossi, *Fountain of the Twelve Labours*, for Cosimo de Medici, Florence (1560).

ii) Individual labours/other exploits

Painting: Durër, *Hercules Killing the Stymphalian Birds* (1500, Nuremberg); Rubens, *Hercules Fighting the Nemean Lion* (c.1608, Bucharest) and *Hercules in the Garden of the Hesperides* (c.1638, Turin); Joshua Reynolds, *Infant Hercules Strangling the Snakes* (1786, St Petersburg); Gustave Moreau, *Hercules and the Lernaean Hydra* (1869-76, Chicago); Lord Frederic Leighton, *Hercules Fights Death for Alcestis* (1869-71, Hartford), cf. Robert Browning, *Balaustrian's Adventure* (1871).

Engraving: Hendrik Goltzius, *Hercules Victor* (c.1592 but published and dated 1617).

Sculpture: Giambologna, *Hercules and Nessus* (1599), Loggia dei Lanzi, Piazza della Signoria, Florence; Canova, *Hercules and Lichas* (c.1795, Paris).

iii) Vice or Virtue revisited

Choice story revived: Petrarch, *Life of Solitude* (1346) 1.4.2, 2.9.4; Salutati, *De Laboribus Herculis* 3.7.1-4.

Paintings: Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Hercules at the Crossroads* (c.1500, Munich); Veronese, *Allegory of Virtue and Vice* (c.1580, Frick Collection, New York); Annibale Carracci, *Choice of Hercules*, commissioned for Camerino of Farnese Palace (1595-7, now in Naples); Paolo de Matteis, *Choice of Hercules* (1712, Temple Newsam House, Leeds; cf. Anthony Ashley-Cooper, *Notion of the Historical Draught of Hercules*); Joshua Reynolds, *Garrick Between Tragedy and Comedy* (private collection, 1760-1).

iv) Emblem books and the eloquent 'Gallic Hercules'

Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia* (1593), 'Heroic Virtue' (no. 317): The Lion and Club denote the *Strength* of Virtue, that is immovable; secondly, the Apples, bridling Anger, *Temperance* in Riches; thirdly, the generous Despising of *Pleasure*, which is heroic. The Club is knotty, to shew the great *Difficulties* to be met with in living virtuously.

Lucian, *A Foreword: Herakles* [= ephrasis of painting supposedly in villa in the Rhône valley, tr. Fowler]: Our Herakles is known among the Gauls under the local name of Ogmios; and the appearance he presents in their pictures is truly grotesque. They make him out as old as old can be: the few hairs he has left (he is quite bald in front) are dead white, and his skin is wrinkled and tanned as black as any old salt's... Such as he is, however, he has all the proper attributes of that God: the lion's-skin hangs over his shoulders, his right hand grasps the club, his left the strung bow, and a quiver is slung at his side; nothing is wanting to the Heraklean equipment... However, I have yet to mention the most remarkable feature in the portrait. This ancient Herakles drags after him a vast crowd of men, all of whom are fastened by the ears with thin chains composed of gold and amber, and looking more like beautiful necklaces than anything else... Nor will I conceal from you what struck me as the most curious circumstance of all. Herakles's right hand is occupied with the club, and his left with the bow: how is he to hold the ends of the chains? The painter solves the difficulty by boring a hole in the tip of the God's tongue, and making that the means of attachment; his head is turned round, and he regards his followers with a smiling countenance.

Andrea Alciato, *Emblematum liber* (1612 Padua edition) no.138, 'The Twelve Labours of Hercules': Eloquence surpasses the fame of untamed strength and unravels the sayings of sophists and their vain tricky problems. No rage nor madness of any sort has more power than virtue. Because of his continual exertion, wealth comes the way of the wise. Virtue scorns avarice and takes no pleasure in theft or usury. It overcomes the wiles of women and robs them of their triumph. It cleans out filth and brings culture to the mind. It hates illicit unions and repels them, with all their harm. Barbaric acts and godless savagery in the end pay the penalty. The virtue of one man scatters massed enemies. Virtue brings many good things from abroad to its own country. It passes from one man's learned lips to another's and does not perish ever.

Andrea Alciato, *Emblematum liber* (1531 Augsburg edition) 'Eloquence superior to strength': His left hand holds a bow, his right hand a stout club, the lion of Nemea clothes his bare body. So this is a figure of Hercules. But he is old and his temples grizzled with age - that does not fit. What of the fact that his tongue has light chains passing through it, by which he draws men along with ready ears pierced? The reason is surely that the Gauls say that Alceus' descendant excelled in eloquence rather than might and gave laws to the nations. - Weapons yield to the arts of peace, and even the hardest of hearts the skilled speaker can lead where he will. [see Alciato at Glasgow project, <http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/index.php>]

Geoffrey Whitney, *Choice of Emblems* (1586), 'The crossroads of virtue and vice' (no. 40; see image right >):

When Hercules, was dowtfull of his waie,
Inclosed rounde, with vertue, and with vice,
With reasons firste, did vertue him assaie,
The other, did with pleasures him entice...



Erasmus, *The Antibarbarians* (1520), Jacob Batt boasts: You yourself, a witness to those troubles, saw how far I have acted the Hercules — how many lions, how many boars, how many Stymphalian birds, how many bulls, how many Antaeuses, how many Geryons, how many Diomedes, how many Nessuses I slew; how I exposed Cerberus to the daylight, having dragged him out of his lair, where he was wont to terrorise the bloodless shades; by what great virtue I only just managed to overcome by Greek fire the Lernaean hydra, prolific in its deaths, and I do not know whether that once most dangerous pest yet breathes. [Cf. *Adages* (1500-36), no. 2001, *Herakleioi ponoï*, and Holbein's portrait of Erasmus (London, 1523).]

v) The comic Hercules

With Omphale: Lucas Cranach the Elder, 10+ versions (e.g. 1537, Braunschweig); Abraham Jenssens (1607, Copenhagen); François Lemoine, *Hercules and Omphale* (1724, Paris).

Other subjects: Lucas Cranach the Younger, *The Sleeping Hercules Beset by Pygmies* and *Hercules Awakes and Drives off the Pygmies* (Dresden, 1551); Lorenzo Lotto, portrait of Andrea Odoni (1527, Hampton Court); Rubens, *Drunken Hercules* (c.1612, Dresden).

4. HERCULEAN POLITICS

Ferrara: Three of ruling d'Este family named 'Ercole', and works of Bassi, Giralidi and Cintio composed at Ferraran court for d'Este family occasions. Ercole I's wedding (1473) to Eleonora of Aragon featured life-size sugar-sculptures representing the labours, and a dance on theme of Hercules and Deianeira as lovers. Ercole II commissioned statue of Hercules by Sansovino (1553) for Piazza Matteotti of Brescello, proposing to rename the town 'Ercolea' when it came under Ferraran control.

Florence: city motto 'Florence subdues depravity with a Herculean club'; Porta della Mandorla, Florence cathedral (c.1391-1405); 1409 snowman of Hercules along with 'a great quantity of beautiful lions', Piazza di San Michele Berteldi; Antonio and Piero Pollaiuolo's paintings for Sala Grande, Medici palace (c.1460); Michelangelo, 7-foot statue of Hercules (1492, lost); Bandinelli, colossal statue group *Hercules and Cacus* (1534), Piazza della Signoria; Michelangelo, red chalk *Labours of Hercules* (c.1530, Windsor).

Venice: reliefs on west façade of Saint Mark's Basilica (1267); Veronese, paintings for the Palazzo Ducale (c.1575), *Venice with Hercules and Neptune* (Budapest) and *Venice Receives the Homage of Hercules and Ceres* (Venice).

Spain: Seville supposedly founded by Hercules and Julius Caesar, figures on town hall of (1527); Tarrazona built by Biblical Tubal-Cain, re-built by Hercules, figure on sixteenth-century town hall; Charles II of Spain's Hercules link celebrated in Juan Fernandez de Heredia's *Labours and Endeavours of Hercules* (1682).

Burgundy: Le Fèvre's epic composed at court of Duke Philip II of Burgundy (1419-67); performance of Hercules' labours in mime at wedding of Charles the Bold to Margaret of York (1468); Charles V (Duke of Burgundy from 1506, king of Spain from 1515, Archduke of Austria and Holy Roman Emperor from 1519) adopted depiction of Pillars of Hercules + motto *plus ultra* from 1516.

England: anonymous poem *Les douze triomphes de Henry VII* (1497).

Sweden: king Gustavus Adolphus Magnus (1611-32) represented as the Gallic Hercules; late seventeenth century, Olaus Rudbeck's *Atlantica* identifies the Öresund as location of the Pillars of Hercules, Hercules as Swedish, Sweden as Atlantis.

Denmark: king Christian IV (1588-1648) adorns 'Giants' Tower' of Koldinghus with classical heroes, Hercules representing Sweden, has desk decorated with Hercules' labours at Rosenborg Castle in Copenhagen, where Frederik IV (1709) installs statue of Hercules and lion by Giovanni Baratta, after which 'Hercules Pavilion', built in 1773, named.

5. FROM MONARCH TO REVOLUTIONARY: HERCULES IN FRANCE

Diodoros (tr. Oldfather, 5.24.1-3): Now Celtica was ruled in ancient times, so we are told, by a renowned man who had a daughter who was of unusual stature and far excelled in beauty all the other maidens. But she, because of her strength of body and marvellous comeliness, was so haughty that she kept refusing every man who wooed her in marriage, since she believed that no one of her wooers was worthy of her. Now in the course of his campaign against the Geryones, Heracles visited Celtica and founded there the city of Alesia, and the maiden, on seeing Heracles, wondered at his prowess and his bodily superiority and accepted his embraces with all eagerness, her parents having given their consent. From this union she bore to Heracles a son named Galates, who far surpassed all the youths of the tribe in quality of spirit and strength of body. And when he had attained to man's estate and had succeeded to the throne of his fathers, he subdued a large part of the neighbouring territory and accomplished great feats in war. Becoming renowned for his bravery, he called his subjects Galatae or Gauls after himself, and these in turn gave their name to all of Galatia or Gaul.

Claude Fauchet, *Collection of Gallic and French Antiquities (1579) 2.35:* ... Hercules achieved his enterprises by fine language; and that being wise and prudent, he made great conquests.

Claude Chappuys, *The Great Gallic Hercules Who Fights Against Gods (1545), on a statue of François I at Rouen:* From his mouth issue four chains, two of gold two of silver, which lead to being attached to the ears of figures named below [Nobility, the Church, Advice, Labour]. But they are so loose that everyone can judge that they do not serve as constraints, and so that they are voluntarily pulled by the eloquence of the new Hercules...

Ronsard, *Odes V, To King Henri II* ('... the Hercules of the French, who purges vices...'); ***Sonets divers, To King Charles IX*** ('... imitate the deeds of this great prince: purge your domain of all error, then like him you will be amongst the gods'); ***Les Parques, To Henri III*** ('... drink nectar at the table of the gods, like the valiant knight Hercules').

Henri Pierre Matthieu, *The Entry of the Very Great Prince Henri IV into his Fair City of Lyon (1595):* Hercules having conquered the triple pride of Spain made himself the father of the king of this mountainous corner, which has always taken its law from the sons of his sons. Henri, unique terror of the land of the Hesperides, you could have no greater ancestor than Alcides; he could have no greater descendant than you. [Cf. Valladier's *Royal Labyrinth of the Triumphant French Hercules* (Henri IV's life presented in seven parts, each with engraving of a triumphal arch, celebrating corresponding labours of Hercules and Henri).]

Louis XIII: engraving by Abraham Bosse, *Hercules the Emperor* (1635). **Louis XIV:** at the crossroads, engraving by Pierre Daret (1650), exhorted by Virtue to 'imitate another young Alcides, keep far away from sensual pleasure'; crowned by Victory (over Triple Alliance) in relief by Étienne le Hongre on Paris' Porte Saint-Martin (1668); vanquishing Cerberus in statue by Martin Desjardins in Place de la Victoire. **Louis XV:** imagined at crossroads in pamphlet commemorating accession in 1723; oversaw completion of 'Salon d'Hercule' at Versailles (1736), including François Le Moyne's *Apotheosis of Hercules*.

Revolutionary Hercules: Jacques-Louis David, 24-foot high plaster statue for festival (August 1793), reproduced in engraving *The French People Overwhelming the Hydra of Federalism*. 46-foot high statue of Hercules proposed by David (November 1793) for Pont Neuf; sketch for state seal by Dupré, nude male with club and two small winged female figures, Equality and Liberty; words to be inscribed on statue's body ('light' on its forehead, 'nature' and 'truth' on its chest, 'force' and 'courage' on its arms, and 'work' on its hands); plaster version in Festival of the Supreme Being (June 1794), reproduced in engraving *View of the Mound of the Champ de la Réunion*.

6. TELLING HERCULES' STORY II: LITERATURE FROM THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ON

i) Sophokles and Euripides revisited

Re-workings of Sophokles' *Women of Trachis*: *Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD)* lists c.80 (1635-2010), e.g. Jean de Rotrou, *The Dying Hercules* (1635); Pier Francesco Cavalli, *Hercules in Love* (Paris 1662); Handel, oratorio *Hercules* (1745), libretto Thomas Broughton; ballets/musical entertainments include Jean Favier, *The Apotheosis of Hercules* (Milan, 1768), Francesco Clerico, *The Death of Hercules* (Florence, 1792); Ezra Pound, radio-play *Women of Trachis* (1954); Martin Crimp, *Cruel and Tender* (2004-5), directed Luc Bondy; George Rodosthenous and PVAC team, *Heracles' Wife* (May 2010).

Re-workings of Euripides' *Herakles*: *APGRD* lists c.40 productions (1657-2006), e.g. musical entertainment, *Hercules Persecuted* (1657), score Domenico Sciava; performance of Greek text at Reading School (1818) and in Greece (1879); Wilamowitz's German translation performed Vienna (1902); Frank Wedekind, *Herakles* (Munich 1919); Archibald MacLeish, one-act *Herakles* (Ann Arbor 1965), revised version in two acts (1967); Simon Armitage, *Mister Heracles* (Courtyard Theatre, Leeds 2001)

Wedekind, *Herakles (Act 1, scene 2):*

HERAKLES: The fury, unleashed in Herakles by ever more violent monsters, raged on.

Armitage, *Mr Heracles (Armitage 2000, 54):*

HERACLES: Oh, my children and my wife, that your death Were in me all the time, waiting to hatch.

Re-workings of Sophokles' *Philoktetes*: *APGRD* lists c.130 productions (1540-2009), but NB Hercules often omitted, e.g. in André Gide, *Philoktetes* (1898), Heiner Müller, *Philoktetes* (1968), Seamus Heaney, *The Cure at Troy* (1990); does appear in Oscar Mandel, *The Summoning of Philoktetes* (1961).

Re-workings of Euripides' *Alkestis*: *APGRD* lists 260+ productions (1539-2010), e.g. Jean-Baptiste Lully, opera *Alceste, or the Triumph of Alcides* (Paris, 1674), libretto later translated into German for Georg Caspar Schürmann, *The Faithful Alceste* (Hamburg, 1719); Handel, *Admetus, King of Thessaly* (London, 1727); Christoph Martin Wieland libretti for operettas *Alceste* and *The Choice of Hercules* (1773), parodied by Goethe in farce *Gods, Heroes and Wieland*; T.S. Eliot, *The Cocktail Party* (Edinburgh 1949); Thornton Wilder, *The Alcestiad, or A Life in the Sun* (Edinburgh 1955), later made into opera, score Louise Talma.

ii) Other dramas

Aspects of life-story: Thomas Heywood, *The Silver Age* and *The Bronze Age* (1613); Ben Jonson, masque *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* at court of James I (1617-18); versions of Plautus' *Amphitryon* by Molière (Paris, 1668) and Dryden (London, 1690, music by Purcell); Jean Giraudoux, *Amphitryon 38* (Paris 1929).

Individual exploits: André Destouches, opera *Omphale* (Paris, 1701); J.S. Bach, cantata *Hercules at the Crossroads* (Leipzig, 1733); Handel, oratorio *The Choice of Hercules* (London, 1751), music from never-performed play *Alcestis*; Vincenzo Righini, chamber opera *Alcides at the Crossroads* (Trier, 1790); symphonic poems by Camille Saint-Saëns: *The Youth of Hercules* (1877), and *Omphale's Spinning-Wheel* (1869), the latter based on a poem by Victor Hugo.

The labours: Claude Terrasse, comic operetta *Les Travaux d'Hercule* (Paris, 1901); Friedrich Dürrenmatt, *Hercules and the Augean Stables* (radio-play 1954, adapted for stage 1962); Tony Harrison, *The Labourers of Herakles* (Delphi 1995); Helen Eastman, *Hercules*, commissioned by Chester Performs for Chester's Grosvenor Park Open Air Theatre, July 2010.

iii) Poetry and prose

Poems: Friederich Hölderlin, *Hymn to Hercules* (1796), *The Only One* (1802), *Chiron* (1801); Leconte de Lisle, *The Centaur's Robe* (1845), *Chiron* (1852), *The Childhood of Hercules* (1856), *Solar Herakles* (1862); Sully Prudhomme, *The Stables of Augias* (1867); José Maria de Heredia, 'Nemea' and 'Stymphale' in *The Trophies* (1893); Carl Spitteler, *Olympian Spring* (1900-10); George Cabot Lodge, dramatic poem *Herakles* (1908); Emile Verhaeren's *Hercule* (1910).

Prose: Charlotte Yonge, *My Young Alcides* (1875); Agatha Christie, collection of short stories *The Labours of Hercules: the legend of Poirot's retirement* (1947); Jeanette Winterson, novella *Weight* (2006), Atlas' story.

7. HERCULES THE MOVIE STAR

i) The *peplum* and after (1957-85)

- *Hercules* (1957, aka *Le fatiche di Ercole*) – directed Pietro Francisci, starring Steve Reeves and Sylva Koscina; marketed in the States by Joseph E. Levine.
- *Hercules Unchained* (1959, aka *Ercole e la regina di Lidia*) – directed Pietro Francisci, starring Steve Reeves, Sylva Koscina (Iole) and Sylvia Lopez (Omphale); marketed in the States by Joseph E. Levine.
- Around 120 films produced over the next 10 years had Hercules as hero, e.g. *Hercules Against the Mongols* (= sons of Ghengis Khan; Mark Forrest, 1960), *Hercules Conquers Atlantis (rescue of a damsel in distress leads to the destruction of the famous island; Reg Park, 1961)*, *Hercules Against the Moon Men* (Alan Steel, 1964), *Hercules Against the Sons of the Sun* (Mark Forrest, 1964), *Hercules and the Princess of Troy* (Gordon Scott, 1965).
- *Hercules in New York* (1970) – directed Arthur Allan Seidemann, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger
- *Hercules (1983) and The Adventures of Hercules (1985)* – directed Luigi Cozzi, starring Lou Ferrigno and Sybil Danning

Hercules on immortality: exchange between Hercules and the Sibyl (c.36 minutes in):

HERCULES: I can't stand being superior. Let me experience the real things – love, or hate.

SIBYL: Those are mortal states, Hercules.

HERCULES: If it's my immortality making me unhappy, then I'll do without it!

SIBYL: That's dangerous, Hercules. Don't you know how foolish you'd be to renounce it? To be born a man and see everything die is not to be immortal. Stay as you are, be a god – don't exchange immortality for fear, pain and sorrow

HERCULES: I want to live like any other mortal man. It is my prayer to have a family. I want children of my own. To see the children growing up.

ii) A hero for the 1990s

- *Hercules the Legendary Journeys* TV films, 1994 (starring Kevin Sorbo, director Bill Norton, filmed New Zealand/US, NBC Universal): *Hercules and the Amazon Women*; *Hercules and the Lost Kingdom*; *Hercules and the Circle of Fire*; *Hercules in the Underworld*; *Hercules in the Maze of the Minotaur*
- TV series, 6 seasons originally released 1995-2000; Series 1-2 re-released on DVD 2010-11
- Two spin-off series: *Xena, Warrior Princess* (1995-2001), *The Young Hercules* (1998-9)
- *Disney's Hercules*, 1997 (directors: John Musker and Ron Clements)

Sexuality in *Legendary Journeys* (wrestling scene in *Hercules in the Maze of the Minotaur*):

SMALL CHILD: Mommy, what's Daddy doing to Uncle Iolaus?

DEIANEIRA: I don't know sweetie, I was wondering the same thing myself.

Nisbet (2008, 64) comments *ad loc*: Hercules and Iolaus are doomed to be just good friends.

What makes a hero? Opening voice-over to Disney's *Hercules*:

NARRATOR (Charlton Heston): Long ago, in the faraway land of ancient Greece, there was a golden age of powerful gods and extraordinary heroes. And the greatest and strongest of all these heroes was the mighty Hercules. But what is the measure of a true hero? Ah, that is what our story is...

The strongman domesticated? Pomeroy 2008, 48: Disney's *Hercules* (1997) may be seen as indicating the now complete domestication of the strongman. While Hercules may battle numerous monsters, it is his stalwart heart displayed in his willingness to sacrifice himself for true love, not his physical strength, that earns him immortality.

Disney's *Hercules* on immortality:

HERCULES: Father, this is the moment I've always dreamed of. But...

[*he comes to Megara and takes her hand*]

A life without Meg, even an immortal life, would be... empty.

I-- I wish to stay on Earth with her. I finally know where I belong.

[*Zeus nods, they finally kiss and Hercules stops shining*]

8. HERAKLES/HERCULES NOW

Art: Marian Maguire, *The Labours of Herakles*, first exhibited Blenheim, NZ, in 2008 > still touring.

Things called 'Hercules': city of Hercules, California (after C19th Hercules Dynamite Company); Greece's cement company Iraklis, founded 1911; the Lockheed Martin Super Hercules C130J transporter plane; aircraft-carrier HMS Hercules, launched 1945 and decommissioned 1995 (cf. Hercules class of 74-gun ships of the line, designed Sir Thomas Slade, mid eighteenth century); the Hercules Cycle and Motor Company, founded Birmingham 1910, bicycles produced until 2003; Thessaloniki's first-division Iraklis football club, founded 1908 (other sports under club's aegis too); Netherlands' second-division Heracles Almelo, founded 1903; Spain, Alicante's second-division Hércules Club de Fútbol, founded 1922.

***Hercules and Love Affair's* founder Andy Butler (<http://pitchfork.com/features/interviews/7133-hercules-love-affair/>):** I was attracted by the Hercules story because it was about embracing the feminine within the hyper masculine. [Performances in Leeds March and summer 2011.]

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- <http://www.fanpop.com/external/1998679> – an unofficial but fairly complete transcript of Disney's *Hercules*.
- <http://www.archive.org> – the Internet Archive, whence a good selection of the 1950-60s *Hercules* films can be downloaded free. Various clips are available on You-Tube, e.g. 'Hercules in New York – Best parts' (!).