Susan Deacy, "Entry on: Hercules' Twelve Labours Today by The Hercules Project , Emma Stafford ", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1120. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

The Hercules Project , Emma Stafford

Hercules' Twelve Labours Today

Great Britain and Northern Ireland (2019)

TAGS: Heracles Hydra Nemean Lion Twelve Labours of Heracles





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Hercules' Twelve Labours Today
Country of the First Edition	Ireland, United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2019
First Edition Details	Be Curious Festival, University of Leeds, March 30, 2019.
Official Website	herculesproject.leeds.ac.uk (accessed: August 12, 2020).
Available Onllne	herculesproject.leeds.ac.uk (accessed: August 12, 2020).
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton,ac,uk
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaounde 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



The Hercules Project

The Hercules Project is a University of Leeds-based project, tracing post-classical, mostly Western, receptions of Herakles-Hercules. One stimulus for the Project was the discovery by its Principal Investigator, Professor Emma Stafford, of the richness and range of uses of Hercules since Antiquity while writing an overview of the subject's postclassical 'afterlives' for her book *Herakles* in the *Gods and Heroes of the Ancient World* series (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012). The project has brought together academics from various disciplines for a series of conferences and books. There has also been a focus on public engagement events including a musical drama on the Choice of Hercules and an exhibition on the Labours of Hercules.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: August 12, 2020).

Prepared by Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton,ac,uk



Emma Stafford (Author)

Emma Stafford is a British academic whose areas of expertise include ancient Greek culture and religion in the postclassical reception of Herakles/Hercules. She graduated from the University of Cambridge with a degree in Classics in 1990 and moved to the University of London for her PhD, writing her thesis on personified abstractions in ancient Greek religion and culture. She has worked at the University

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of Leeds since 2000 and became Professor of Greek Culture in 2020. Her many books and articles include *Herakles* in the *Gods and Heroes of the Ancient World* series (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

Sources:

ahc.leeds.ac.uk (accessed: August 12, 2020).

Bio prepared by Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton,ac,uk

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Additional information

Summary

This webpage concerns a family-friendly exhibition, organised by the University of Leeds-based Hercules Project as part of the University's 2019 public engagement "Be Curious" festival. The exhibition presented representations of the Labours of Hercules in ancient and postclassical art, culminating in recent appropriations of the hero as a coloniser and a world leader. After looking at how others have depicted Hercules, visitors were invited to become creators of their own receptions by drawing a picture of Hercules tackling a modern issue on a postcard. The resulting postcards showed Herakles vying with issues including climate change, corruption and politics and – above all – Brexit.

Analysis

This event speaks to the appeal of Hercules in children's culture which, while stretching back centuries, has taken on new resonance since the 1990s in the wake of Disney's *Hercules* (Maurice 2019). The event exemplifies the ongoing adaptability of the figure of Hercules, for both adults and children. For example, on postcards created both by adults and by children, Heracles is made to stand variously for "Remain" and for "Leave" in the Brexit debate. On one striking example, created by a ten-year-old participant, Hercules is battling a six-headed Hydra whose heads spell out B-R-E-X-I-T (accessed: August 14, 2020).

This event exemplifies the pedagogic potential of Hercules and the ongoing potential for the Labours of Hercules to be adapted in fresh ways in response to contemporary concerns. In this regard, the exhibition is in a line of explorations – since antiquity – where the figure of Hercules has been recast in relation to particular scenarios, often politically-charged ones (see notably Blanshard 2005, Stafford 2012), as where Vladimir Putin is shown facing a set of opponents including the "Hydra" of EU, US, Canadian and Japanese sanctions (Rosenberg 2014).

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and

Heracles Hydra Nemean Lion Twelve Labours of Heracles

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Concepts

Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adversity Animals Conflict Environment Good vs evil Heroism Humour Violence

Further Reading

Blanshard, Alistair, *Hercules: A Heroic Life*, London: Granta, 2005.

Maurice, Lisa, "From Elitism to Democratisation: A Half-Century of Hercules in Children's Literature", *Journal of Historical Fictions* 2.2 (2019) 81–101.

historicalfictionsjournal.org (accessed: March 17, 2020).

Rosenberg, Steve, "In pictures: The 12 Labours of... Putin", available at bbc.com (accessed: July 23 2020).

Stafford, Emma, *Hercules*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2012.

Addenda

Genre: Webpage for public engagement event

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