

HERACLES IN GREEK EPIC: Studies on the Narrativity and Poeticity of a Hero

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Hercules Farnese

Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli

(http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ad/Herakles_Farnese_MAN_Napoli_Inv6001_n01.jpg)

TOC

- Wide range of the topic
- Goals of my monograph
- Literary hypotheses/premises on (Greek) myth
- Heracles in Greek epic: a *persona non grata*?
- Narratological character analysis
- Heracles in Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica*
- Case in point: *Argonautica* 4.1393–1482

Wide Range of the Topic

Burkert (1986: 14): “Of all Greek mythological figures, Herakles is perhaps the most complicated and the most interesting. He is **by far the most popular of Greek heroes**, a fact reflected by **the formidable mass of evidence**. At the same time there is **not one authoritative literary text** to account for this character – in the way Homer’s *Iliad* accounts for Achilles – but rather **a plethora of passing references**; furthermore, no single place gives him a home and background, but rather the whole Mediterranean provides a changing complex of stories connected to quite different local cults. Yet there is an identity marked by his name and by a canon of iconography that was established at an early date. The attempts to understand the origins and the development of the Herakles figure as a series of literary ‘inventions’ are bound to fail.” (my emphases)

Goals of my Monograph

A narratological analysis
of Heracles in Greek epic
from Homer to Nonnus
(narratological character
analysis)

To be published by Franz
Steiner, Stuttgart
(*Palingenesia* series)

Target length: c. 220 pp.

- I. Zur Einführung
 1. Herakles: Gott, Mensch, (National-?)Held
 2. Mythentheorie und Mythendeutung: Einige Thesen
 3. Narratologie und Figurenanalyse:
Zu den Methoden und Zielsetzungen dieser Studie
- II. Herakles im griechischen Epos von Homer bis Nonnos
 4. Homer, *Ilias*:
Herakles als Vorbote der Trojanischen Katastrophe
 5. Homer, *Odyssee*:
Die programmatische Verbannung des Herakles aus dem Epos
 6. (Ps.-)Hesiod:
Herakles im Dienste des Göttervaters und der *aemulatio Homeri*
 - 6.1 *Theogonie*
 - 6.2 *Frauenkataloge*
 - 6.3 *Aspis*; Synthese
 7. Apollonios Rhodios, *Argonautica*:
Die programmatische Ambivalenz des Helden und das Verhandeln
alternativer Erzählstrategien
 8. Quintus Smyrnaeus, *Posthomerica*:
Herakles im Dienste der *aemulatio Homeri et Hesiodi*
 9. Nonnos von Panopolis, *Dionysiaca*:
Herakles als Gegenbild (und Paradigma?) für Dionysos
- III. Synopsis und Ausblick
 10. Synopsis: Zu Herakles' Narrativität und Poetizität im
griechischen Epos
 11. Ausblick: Anwendungsbereiche der Fragestellung
auf andere Bereiche und Gattungen

Literary Hypotheses/Premises on (Greek) Myth

- Poetische Souveränität des Dichters bzw. Erzählers (cf. Braswell 1971; Radke 2007)
- Duktilität des Mythos (cf. Masciadri 2008)
- Widerspruchsfähigkeit des Mythos (cf. Bär 2012)
- Prinzip der additiven Argumentation
- Poetizität des mythischen Widerspruchs bzw. der mythisch-motivischen Inversion

Narratological Character Analysis (I)

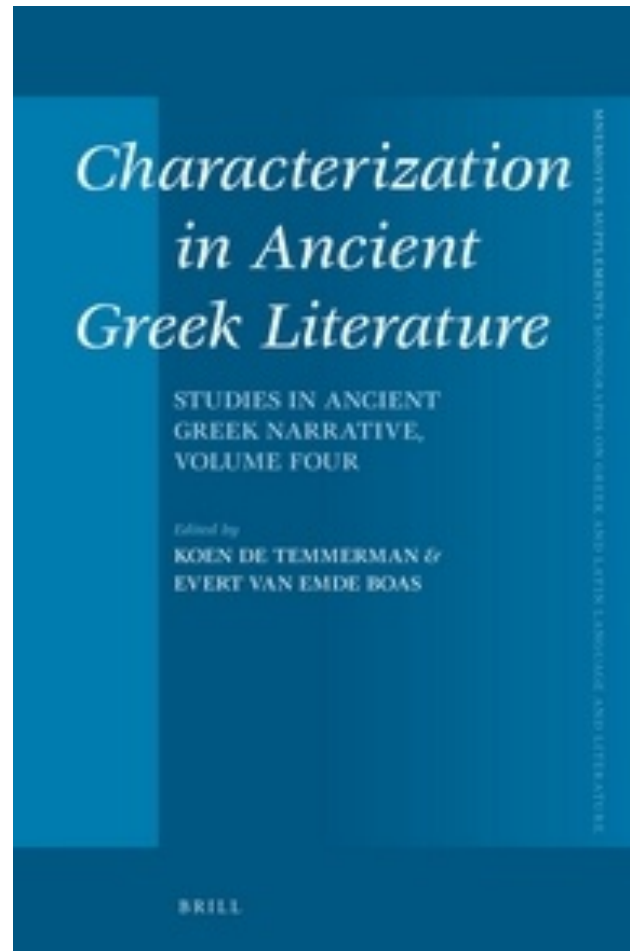
- General idea (simplified): a literary character is a narrative parameter as much as, e.g., time, space, narrative pace, focalisation, etc., and should thus be analysed narratologically.
- Liddell (1955 [1947]: 97): “Yet for all their likeness to real people, fictional characters are not real people: they do not have to function in life, but in the novel, which is an art form.”

Narratological Character Analysis (II)

- Jannidis (2004: 9): “It is a commonplace in literary studies to state that a literary character is a different category than a person in real life perception.” (transl. S.B.)
- Eder (2008: 14): “Analytic approaches tend to examine characters purely intuitively and without method or only briefly, that is, by reducing them to their function in action.” (transl. S.B.)

Narratological Character Analysis (III)

Latest development in
the study of
narratological character
analysis in Classics
(*nondum legi*)



Heracles in A.R. *Argonautica* (I)

- Hübscher (1940: 42): “Apollonius had to abstain from bringing Heracles to the foreground and having him join in the entire journey. However, he made an effort to provide us with a comprehensive and coherent picture of the hero.” (transl. S.B.)
- Pike (1980: 44, n. 11): “Apollonius’ Heracles [...] is [...] slightly comic and incongruous but basically dangerous and destructive.”

Heracles in *A.R. Argonautica* (II)

- ‘Neo-analytic’: The references to Heracles might be seen as pointing to a lost tradition of a Hellenistic Heracles epic (cf. the according neo-analytic school in Homeric scholarship).
- Innerfictional – psychological: Jason’s emancipation from Heracles → Heracles is abandoned by the Argonauts → the references point to the Argonauts’ bad conscience because of the abandonment

Heracles in A.R. *Argonautica* (III)

- Extrafictional – narratological:
 - Character level: Heracles' inherent inconsistency
→ new ways how to look at an 'old' story
 - Level of narration: the Heracles references taken together add up to some sort of *Heracleis* 'behind' the main action ('narrative palimpsest') → via Heracles, the reader is being presented with alternative contents and alternative narrative strategies (meta-textual dimension)

Argonautica 4.1393–1482: Heracles and the Hesperides (I)

- Negative characterisation of Heracles in two steps
- Focalisation through Aigle → *Hercules furens*
- Heracles brings death to the Hesperides <--> saves the Argonauts' lives
- Starke-Hans-Motiv; *Hercules comicus* (drunk)
- *Hercules Stoicus* (drinks only water)

Argonautica 4.1393–1482: Heracles and the Hesperides (II)

- Simultaneity of Heracles' inconsistency (different, inconsistent character traits on one and the same occasion)
- Aigle (who does not even know Heracles) is given a voice → deviates from the mainstream perception of Heracles

References (I)

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References (II)

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References (III)

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