

# A Gluttonous Strongman and Irascible Stoic: Heracles in Greek Epic from Homer to Nonnus

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## [1] Bal 2009, 113

The people with whom literature is concerned are not real people. They are fabricated creatures made up from fantasy, imitation, memory: paper people, without flesh and blood. [...] The resemblance between human beings and fabricated figures is so great that we forget the fundamental difference: we even go so far as to identify with the character, to cry, to laugh, and to search for or with it, or even against it, when the character is a villain.

## [2] Jannidis 2004, 114–115

The prototype of a character is without doubt a human being, but numerous other creatures can be closer to, or more remote from, this prototype because of certain features and therefore can be identified as characters more or less easily. By way of intentional acting, especially by the use of language, as well as by the attribution of mental conditions, close proximity to the prototype and thus unambiguous classification as a character is achieved.

(German original [trans. S.B.]: Der Prototyp einer Figur ist ohne Zweifel ein Mensch, aber zahlreiche weitere Wesen können aufgrund bestimmter ihrer Merkmale mehr oder weniger entfernt von diesem Prototypen und entsprechend leicht oder weniger leicht als Figur zu identifizieren sein. Durch intentionales Handeln, besonders durch Sprachverwendung, sowie durch die Zuschreibung von psychischen Zuständen wird eine große Nähe zum Prototypen und damit eine eindeutige Klassifizierung als Figur erreicht.)

## [3] References to Heracles in the *Iliad*

2.653–670; 2.676–680; 5.381–404; 5.628–669; 8.357–369; 11.690–693; 14.242–269; 14.312–325; 15.24–30; 15.638–641; 18.114–121; 19.91–138; 20.144–148.

## [4] *Iliad* 18.117–121

οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ βίη Ἡρακλῆος φύγε κῆρα,  
ὅς περ φίλτατος ἔσκε Διὶ Κρονίωνι ἄνακτι·  
ἀλλὰ ἐμοῖρα δάμασσε καὶ ἀργαλέος χόλος Ἥρης.  
ὦς καὶ ἐγών, εἰ δὴ μοι ὁμοίη μοῖρα τέτυκται,  
κείσομ' ἐπεὶ κε θάνω. [...] (ed. van Thiel 1996)

For, not even the powerful Heracles escaped the doom [of death]  
although he was dearest to king Zeus, the son of Cronus;  
but destiny and the painful wrath of Hera overcame him.  
Such I too, if a similar destiny is meant for me,  
will be lying there once I've died. [...] (trans. S.B.)

## [5] References to Heracles in the *Odyssey*

8.214–225; 11.266–270; 11.601–627; 21.11–41.

## [6] *Odyssey* 11.601–604

τὸν δὲ μέτ' εἰσενόησα βίην Ἡρακλεΐην,  
εἶδωλον· αὐτὸς δὲ μετ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι  
τέρπεται ἐν θαλίῃς καὶ ἔχει καλλίσφυρον Ἥβην,  
παῖδα Διὸς μέγαλοιο καὶ Ἥρης χρυσοπεδίλου. (ed. van Thiel 1991)

After this one [= Sisyphus] I saw the powerful Heracles –  
[that is to say,] his shadow: he himself is enjoying himself among the immortal gods  
at festivities and has Hebe with the fair ankles [as his wife],  
a daughter of the great Zeus and of Hera with the golden shoes. (trans. S.B.)

**[7] References to Heracles in Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica***

1.122–132; 1.195–198; 1.332–349; 1.394–400; 1.425–431; 1.531–533; 1.850–878; 1.989–997; 1.1040–1041; 1.1159–1357; 2.144–154; 2.762–795; 2.911–914; 2.955–971; 2.1047–1059; 3.1231–1234; 4.537–543; 4.1393–1482.

**[8] Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica* 1.872–878**

ἴομεν αὐτίς ἕκαστοι ἐπὶ σφεά· τὸν δ' ἐνὶ λέκτροις  
Ἵψιπύλης εἶατε πανήμερον, εἰσόκε Λῆμνον  
παισὶν ἐπανδρώση μεγάλη τέ ἐ βάζις ἔχησιν.  
ὧς νεῖκεσσαν ὄμιλον· ἐναντία δ' οὐ νύ τις ἔτλη  
ὄμματ' ἀνασχεθέειν οὐδὲ προτιμυθήσασθαι·  
ἀλλ' αὐτως ἀγορῆθεν ἐπαρτίζοντο νέεσθαι  
σπερχόμενοι. [...] (ed. Vian and Delage 1981)

“Let’s go, each one onto his place! But the one over there [= Jason], leave him in bed with Hypsipyle all day long, until he has populated Lemnos with male children and gets great glory [out of that].”

Thus he scolded the crowd; and no one dared to lift up their eyes against him or to talk to him – but directly from the assembly they prepared themselves to travel along in a hurry. [...] (trans. S.B.)

**[9] 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.

(German original [trans. S.B.]: Apollonios mußte zwar darauf verzichten, Herakles eigens hervortreten und die ganze Fahrt mitmachen zu lassen. Er hat sich aber dennoch bemüht, uns ein möglichst inhaltsreiches, geschlossenes Bild des Helden zu geben.)

**[10] Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica* 1.531–533**

μέσσω δ' Ἀγκαῖος μέγα τε σθένος Ἡρακλῆος  
ἴζανον, ἄγχι δέ οἱ ῥόπαλον θέτο· καί οἱ ἔνερθε  
ποσσὶν ὑπεκλύσθη νηὸς τρόπις. [...] (ed. Vian and Delage 1981)

And in the middle Ancaeus and the big, strong Heracles were sitting, and next to himself he had put down his club; and beneath his feet the keel of the ship sank down deep. [...] (trans. S.B.)

**[11] Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica* 4.1432–1440**

ἦ ἄρα δὴ μέγα πάμπαν ἐφ' ὑμετέροισιν ὄνειρα  
δεῦρ' ἔμολεν καμάτοισιν ὁ κύντατος, ὅς τις ἀπούρας  
φρουρὸν ὄφιν ζωῆς παγχρύσεια μῆλα θεάων  
οἴχετ' ἀειράμενος· στυγερὸν δ' ἄχος ἄμμι λέλειπται.  
ἦλυθε γὰρ χθιζός τις ἀνήρ ὀλοώτατος ὕβριν  
καὶ δέμας, ὅσσε δέ οἱ βλοσυρῶ ὑπέλαμπε μετώπῳ,  
νηλής· ἀμφὶ δὲ δέρμα πελωρίου ἔστο λέοντος  
ὠμόν, ἀδέψητον· στιβαρὸν δ' ἔχεν ὄζον ἐλαίης  
τόξα τε, τοῖσι πέλωρ τὸδ' ἀπέφθισεν ἰοβολήσας. (ed. Vian and Delage 1981)

Truly then, as a very great help for your strains he came hither, the very much dog-like, who deprived the guardian snake of her life, took away the golden apples of the goddesses and went off again – but to us [nothing but] odious pain has been left. For, yesterday there came such a man, abominable in his outrageousness and his appearance, and his eyes were sparking below his ferocious forehead – the merciless! And around his shoulders he was wearing the skin of a giant lion, an untanned one; and he was holding the hefty bough of an olive tree and a bow, with which he shot his arrows against this beast here [= Ladon] and killed it. (trans. S.B.)

**[12] References to Heracles in Nonnus of Panopolis' *Dionysiaca***

10.373–377; 11.224–231; 17.46–58; 17.232–242; 25.174–252; 29.237–242; 34.180–192; 35.314–335; 40.366–580; 43.9–15; 43.246–249.

**[13] Nonnus of Panopolis, *Dionysiaca* 11.226–228**

καὶ θεὸς εἰσαΐων ταχὺς ἔδραμεν εἵκελος αὔραις.  
οὐ τόσον Ἡρακλέης δρόμον ἦνυεν, ὀππότε Νύμφαι  
ἄβρον Ὑλαν φθονεροῖσι κατεκρύψαντο ῥέεθροισι. (ed. Vian 1995)

And as the god [= Dionysus] heard of it [= Ampelus' death], he started running as quickly as the air.  
No such sprint did Heracles accomplish when the Nymphs  
embosomed tender Hylas in their jealous waters. (trans. S.B.)

**[14] Nonnus of Panopolis, *Dionysiaca* 29.240–242**

οὐ τόσον Ἡρακλέης Στυμφαλλίδας ἤλασε βόμβῳ  
χαλκὸν ἔχων βαρύδουπον, ὅσον στρατὸν ἤλασεν Ἰνδῶν  
Τερψιχόρη κτυπέουσα χοροῦ πολεμήμιον ἠχώ. (ed. Vian 1990)

Not like this did Heracles drive off the Stymphalian Birds with his noise  
and with his loudly thundering gadget made of metal, as Terpsichore drove off the army of the Indians  
when she let resound the wacry of her dance. (trans. S.B.)

**[15] Nonnus of Panopolis, *Dionysiaca* 25.174–175**

[...] εἰ δὲ γεραίρεις  
Ἰναχὸν Ἡρακλῆος, ὄλον πόνον αὐτὸς ἐλέγξω. (ed. Vian 1990)

[...] But when you praise  
Inachus and Heracles, then I will personally evaluate his entire record of achievement. (trans. S.B.)

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