

Rosario López Gregoris y Cristóbal Macías Villalobos (eds) **The Hero Reloaded.** **The Reinvention of the Classical Hero in Contemporary Mass Media**

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After the Second World War, Western philosophy turned its gaze towards the triad formed by hermeneutics, metaphysics, and ethics; if the former is presented as the fundamental tool for intercultural and interdisciplinary understanding, especially within the humanities and social sciences, the second one focuses on the most modern aspects such as human dignity, the constitution of the subject, etc., while the third, in relation to what was previously mentioned, is presented as a proposal to understand the new faces of heroism (it should suffice to think about the works of Emmanuel Lévinas in this regard).

This book combines these three disciplines in a masterly way based on the analysis of the representation of heroism – and its changing paradigms and uses – of the classical world in contemporary mass media through the analysis of relevant examples. More concretely, the six chapters that constitute this groundbreaking book study show the representation of the classic hero – and his *humanization*, according to the three philosophical disciplines mentioned above – in TV shows, comic books, videogames, cinema, and music. In this way, they not only give new interpretative clues about how to un-



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derstand these genres, apparently so far removed from the classical world – when in fact they are so close, given that, as *historical beings* that we are, we live among the constant traditions and ruptures throughout the ages, centuries, literary genres, academic disciplines, etc. –, while offering many clues to bring the classical world, its tradition, reception and its uses to the specialist not only to expand research into other examples, but also to facilitate the presentation of these subjects in our university classrooms.

Both the editors, Rosario López and Cristóbal Macías, and the rest of the authors, are world-leading scholars in the field of classics, although they have also made very important contributions to other fields such as digital humanities and new technologies, contemporary literature and culture. Their both deep and wide perspective and knowledge put them on a privileged and almost unique position to offer an outstanding book that will significantly impact not only classics scholars and students, but also scholars of other disciplines and the general public.

In all cases, research has been very well-documented and exposed and the book overall is extremely well presented, written and clearly and logically organized.

The volume opens with a panoramic but at the same time very concrete presentation of the volume by the editors – Rosario López and Cristóbal Macías –, in which they make clear from the very beginning that “[t]he main aim of this volume is to study the different means of adapting the figure of the ancient hero to new mass-consumption formats” (1); therefore, they devote several pages to analyze the birth and subsequent transformation of the representation of heroicity in the classical world to later focus their attention on the literary and cultural tradition, reception, and appropriation of this figure in contemporary Western culture, thus centering their debate between the tension that originates each aesthetic transformation: traditionality v. rupture (or, in other words, tradition v. modernity).

The first chapter, by Luis Unceta Gómez (Autonomous University of Madrid), traces back the roots of comic books superheroes to the classical models, therefore exploring their archetypes; Antonio María Martín Rodríguez (University of Las Palmas, Gran Canaria) analyzes the representation of Hercules in the popular 2017 Disney movie; Helena González Vaquerizo (Autonomous University of Madrid) explores the representation of classical heroicity in music and, more particularly, on heavy metal; Cristóbal Macías Villalobos (University of Málaga) offers an interpretation of the presence of classical heroes in videogames, paying particular attention to the idea of a metaphysical ‘quest’ and search for meaning; in his contribution, Prof. Macías Villalobos offers a new perspective on how to understand heroes from a more ethical point of view; Jesús Bartolomé (University of the Basque Country) offers a new perspective of the

hermeneutics of reading-viewing centering his attention on modern TV production based on epic works; Leonor Pérez Gómez (University of Granada) analyzes Woody's Allen's *Oedipus Rex* focusing on the film's main character, which classical heroic served to explain the well-known Freudian concept that is revisited here; Rosario López Gregoris (Autonomous University of Madrid) closes and completes this excellent monograph analyzing *Fun Home*, a recent graphic novel by Alison Bechdel, from the inclusive perspective of gender and sexuality studies, and more particularly, of the LGBT studies, that she relates to the controverted question of Classical heroicity and its representation in the contemporary world.

Last but not least, an exhaustive and very useful list of bibliographical works that will serve for sure to further research on this or closely related matters closes the volume; this list is supplemented by an *index nominum rerumque* that also facilitates the quick localization of specific names, concepts, and topics covered in the book.

In conclusion, this edited book is an excellent contribution, both within classical studies, as well as its tradition and reception, as well as mass media studies in both the Hispanic and Anglo-Saxon tradition, given the breadth, although carefully linked, perspective of the volume. That is why this book can be of maximum interest not only to specialists in these subjects, but also to students (especially those of classics, reception studies, mass media, film studies, philosophy, Spanish, comparative literature, interdisciplinary humanities and social sciences, critical theory, and religion studies) and a general public interested in this significant issue of heroism, which has regained new relevance as a result of current thinking, especially given its role as 'building blocks' identities of any nation to form copies of behavior to imitate. This book constitutes one of the best examples of how an exemplary work of inter and transdisciplinary research and exposure of a current issue such as heroism should be understood, and more so if we take into account its analysis from the practical creation of the models of Western heroism and how they continue to be valid to understand the current world. Therefore, scholars within a wide range of disciplines, as outlined above, will gladly add this outstanding collection of essays to their list of must-read books.

