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Herakles: An Immortal Legend?

An analysis of the different
meanings Herakles is given through
time and regions



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INTRODUCTION

Summary

Herakles, a well-known figure from Greek Mythology, is well-beloved by the modern media, in their many recreations of his great tales in the form of movies, comic books, and various other platforms of visual media. The legend, a symbol of human behaviour, but also a demi-god hero, boasts various qualities that reflect the human nature quite well, and yet he maintains a pedestal of godliness in his great acts and heroics. The legend of Herakles has been reused and reshaped since the dawn of its conception in the form of the oral traditions of the ancient Greek society. Before the well-known tales were written down or put into picture, or on the 'big screen' as we see them today, the legend of Herakles – and the many other Greek heroes of myth – were passed on by word of mouth. Through oral traditions, the ancient Greeks passed on the tales of great heroes, such as Achilles, Perseus, and, of course, Herakles. In this time, and countless time over the years that followed, the many tales – and subsequently, many versions of Herakles – were subject to variation and change. The result of this is evident in the written mythology present in the modern age. There is no singular version of the tale of Herakles, and instead, many different stories which present different views of the myth, and of the character. However, there are certain elements specific to Herakles that are recognisable in all recurring versions of him – be it in the stories or visual representations. These elements are parts of his appearance and are common and well-known elements to his visual depiction. The lion-skin cloak and the olive-wood club – in addition to the tall, muscular stature – are traits that are most often present in the visual depictions of Herakles in different forms of media. The variation in this visual depiction is the primary focus of this thesis. In different regions and different times, the visual depictions of Herakles have been subject to change, however, the set features that allow the viewer to recognise him as Herakles are continuously present in those depictions – from the Greek plates to modern movies. Regardless of the changes the story seems to endure, the visual representation of Herakles appears to hold a level of consistency throughout time.

That will be the focus of this research thesis: the visual depiction of Herakles in various forms of media throughout time. What I will be addressing is firstly the elements by which

we recognise Herakles, followed by a discussion of these depictions in the context of the theoretical framework of reception theory. There are many questions that can be asked on this topic, especially in relation to reception theory. The fact that we, as viewers, perceive depictions of Herakles as exactly that indicates that our perception has been influenced to know, to believe, that the Herakles we see is indeed a Herakles, and not some other figure. The focus of this thesis will be to present the visual depictions of Herakles in a short timeline – a brief ‘long-durée’ – that spans from the Greek antiquity through to the modern day. In addition to this, I will be looking at the depictions of Herakles in different cultures and comparing the depictions briefly in each case study. Furthermore, I will be discussing each case study in the context of reception theory; the individual reception these artefacts received from people through time. While previously many people have investigated the depictions of Herakles in these different cultures individually, it is not as common that they are all brought together to respond to an overall question. In addition to that, this thesis is not purely focused on the art-historical elements of Herakles, and the visual element of the artefacts alone. The investigation of this thesis is a study of the materials, not so much in the sense that they are purely visual, but also that they are archaeological artefacts, which impact archaeological study. The case materials present visualisations of Herakles that repeatedly impact narrative tradition, as narrative tradition impacts the depictions in turn, and this changes through time, which adds to the overall intrigue of the immortal myth of Herakles which lives on to this day.

Mythology

The original Herakles myth was never, in fact, a myth specifically about Herakles, but instead part of a wide oral tradition of myths that were verbally told as stories by travelling groups, who memorised entire stories to relay to their audiences. Due to research done by Milman Parry in the early 1930’s, orality and oral traditions have become important concepts in the study of classical literature (Zajko 2017, 1). The importance of the oral tradition was likely local to Greece, as it would have been very difficult for the stories to spread over wider settings – for multiple reasons, such as difference in language and keeping the stories the same. In contrast, written word would have found itself a great many opportunities to spread, to be translated and carried around the world. In this case, however, the stories find themselves less embedded in one specific culture (Zajko 2017, 3). There was a level of engagement that oral tradition

held that is lost in written tradition too. For example, a theatrical production can evoke a much stronger emotion in an audience than a book can, because of the community sharing in the excitement and tears, and because it feels more personal and empathetic. That is not to say that a book or written story could not do the same, however, the effect is much less, because with written word it is difficult to interact, and to share and show empathy. Unlike in oral traditions, with written tradition, the viewer participation is lost (Zajko 2017, 4). Finally, oral traditions were very important because they formed an empathetic bond between the human and the world, which is lost in writing, as the story, the written word, separates the human and the world, with the human as a non-participatory viewer, only receiving and not actively partaking in the story (Zajko 2017, 4).

The myth of Herakles, when oral became written, found itself in the hands of multiple different writers, with Herakles being put into different stories, many involving other great mythological figures, from classical heroes to Olympian gods. Herakles features in many myths, such as the Argonautica, the Prometheus myths – of course, in the role of the hero – and in more written works such as that of Euripides, in a play known as *Herakles Mainomenos* (Riley 2008), or the *Madness of Herakles*. The story of Herakles will be expanded upon in the next chapter.

Reception

According to volume three of the Encyclopaedia of Consumer Culture, “reception theorists argue that meaning emerges processually in the interaction between the text and the socially situated audience” (Southerton 2011, 1202). This theory stands in opposition to the idea that the audience hold a passive role in the observation and consumption of something – for example a book, or a painting, or even an artefact found at a site. Unlike the theories which place the viewer in the passive position, reception theory argues that the meaning of objects are very strongly influenced by the people who are viewing them, and the cultural influences they live in. Depending on where a person comes from, and the culture they grew up in, the environment around them that influenced their growth as a person, their personal interpretation of an object can strongly differ from the next person of a different cultural background. It is an important theory to remember, as it recurs throughout life quite clearly – in more ways than one. In media, for example, the presentations of various characters has been rather

unchanging for several years, only in more recent times experiencing a diversification of roles and stories. Western movies, as a more specific example, has existed as a very white-washed form of media for many years. In recent time diversity has pushed its way into the foreground and is forcing great positive change in our perception of the world. We are being opened to not only marginalised cultures, but also opening our perspectives on many things, and learning to see from more angles than the ones that drove our upbringing. Of course, bias remains. These biases are the ways in which people are receiving media. Due to our cultural upbringing, we as a people may not be entirely in agreement with many new themes being presented in media. But this is not because what is being presented is bad, but because we are unfamiliar with it, due to the previous domination of certain cultures in many forms of entertainment media. Furthermore, this moves on to heavily influence people's perception of history. From the theory that Jesus Christ most likely did not look like he is being represented in images in Christian churches today, to the perception that another historical figure such as Cleopatra was a pale-skinned temptress; these are all ideas which are being argued against, as media influence has made it so that people believe these things to be true, despite evidence that may prove contrary.

Reception theory is, both fortunately and unfortunately, as very broad topic. On the one hand, it provides many angles and applications for this theory, however, on the other hand, it is too wide a scope to entirely describe and discuss in a research not based solely on reception. What I am planning to do in my thesis is not to discuss reception theory in the context archaeology, but to use it as a tool to look at the select case studies I have chosen to use to answer my overall question. Thus, instead of reception theory being the focus of my thesis, it is only a means to an end. The goal is to compare visual depictions of Herakles through time and space, and to then refer to reception to conclude on why it has been decided that all these depictions are, in fact, of Herakles, and how they influence each other, and through that allow people who lived ages apart to impact those in the present. The conclusion I wish to draw from this investigation is to reflect on how our trained reception of things on a whole can influence archaeology in either a positive or negative way, and how the reception of the past is not buried beneath our own perception that is formed by the modern climate.

Research Questions

The primary research question of this Thesis is; “What similarities and differences can be found in a comparison of the visual representation of Herakles throughout time in various different forms of media?” The question is simple, straightforward and encompasses the overall topic of this thesis. The primary aim is to provide a comparison – although somewhat brief – of four case studies of various depictions of Herakles in visual media in four different periods in time, and through this, to provide an idea of how reception influences even archaeology, and how archaeology can influence future perceptions.

Several sub-questions arose in the refinement of the overall research question, as smaller concepts that I will be able to address further into this thesis. These sub-questions are as follows; “what can these varying depictions show us about the reception of Herakles through time?” and “Is every figure we identify as Herakles truly meant to be him?” Finally; “What do these multiple varying interpretations tell us about the flexible nature of myth and depictions, and what does it suggest about people’s reception of that, and of the archaeology and the impact thereof?” To answer these questions, I will introduce four brief case studies, with my goal being to investigate how our perception as archaeologists can influence interpretation, and to conclude on what impact this could have on archaeology and future reception in general. The key feature I am looking for is whether we can even call any Herakles since the classical Greek one the same. Are any of these visual representations, barring the classical one, truly Herakles? Has audience and artist reception through time not changed the meaning, and has our reception of him now not changed it even more? In addition to my primary research question, these are sub-questions that I hope to answer, or at least approach, in my conclusion.

Methodology

The methodology that will be applied in this research will revolve around looking at four specific case studies that I have selected. These case studies focus on visual representation of Herakles – in media such as sculpture, paintings, and movies. These case studies will be from four different time periods. The first will be from the Greek antiquity period, featuring the painted pottery depictions of Herakles – as these were most found on ceramic, the focus will be on a small selection of those. Following this will be the sculpted visualisation of Herakles in India – this being the Herakles-Vajrapani in Gandhara, or at least, an assumed visualisation of Herakles based on the reception of the

scholars who first labelled it as such. The question of whether this can truly be considered a visual depiction of Herakles is something I look forward to addressing. This concept of reception and perception strongly relates to the relevance of this thesis. The next case study in this long-durée will be focusing on a selection of Renaissance era paintings, depicting Herakles. This will provide a strong cultural contrast with both the Indian 'Herakles' and that of the ancient Greeks. Finally, the focus will come to two modern era films depicting Herakles through very contrasting approaches. For these case studies I will mainly be making use of written sources, and – of course – images of the items I will be studying. In each case study I will discuss both the visual features and depiction of Herakles, provide a brief comparison or contrast between each item – from the specific time-period – and discuss why it can be agreed upon that these images are depicting Herakles. Following this I will provide a brief comparison and contrast of the four different periods, to sum up what correlations can be seen, and where the visual depictions diverge from one another. After the comparison I will discuss the importance of reception theory when looking at both archaeology and the modern world. Finally, I shall provide a conclusion, summarising the results of this thesis, and providing an answer to the primary research question, and to the various sub-questions.

Relevance and Limitations

The goal of my thesis is to draw a comparison between each of the case studies I will be looking at, on the basis of reception theory, in an attempt to theorise why Herakles is such a popular and recurring figure in visual media, and why he – despite being subject to variation and possible change – is always made to retain specific recognisable features, if that appears to be the case in each of my case studies. I expect that it will, as the 'recognisable features' are, after all, why we acknowledge Herakles as such, regardless of culture or appearance in the depiction he is present in.

The relevance of this thesis, I believe, is that it has the potential to address more than simply visual depiction and the reception thereof. By looking at a single example of reception in history that can also be seen in the present day, such as the visual media of Herakles, entire avenues of questioning open. Through a question addressing the visual depictions and recognisability of a mythological figure, it is possible to address various aspects of both reception and depiction. For example, in looking at the reception of characters through time and locations, it is possible to theorise that all who are perceiving

are part of reception and play a part in reception. The cultural biases that formed our understanding of the world around us greatly influence the way that we receive things presented to us in the present and will do the same in the future. Looking even further, the idea that we see Herakles as Herakles in varying media because of these recognisable traits could even be used as an example for how we are so accustomed to seeing certain things in media, that we are entirely numb to their implications and their presence. While this strays into more society related theory, I believe that it is important, and that this thesis holds relevance for that reason. With Herakles as an example, we can see how the meaning of a person, a character, or a figure-head can easily be changed through time – how the figure can become something entirely different, simply through the intentions of someone recreating them in art or other media with their own reception in mind.

The main limitation of this thesis is that while not wholly archaeologically focused, it delves strongly into theory. Outside of conservation of archaeology, and the investigation of the human past through that archaeology, the field can and does contribute much more to society. This thesis aims to discover how changing or adapting our perception might influence future contributions to society, and what impact that may have. This investigation is not new; however, it is a different approach that I hope to use to bring light to how reception in archaeology can hold an influence of reception in modern society and culture today. Finally, while this thesis strays into the territory of being too art historical in nature, it must be stated that archaeology is being defined as the study of artefacts, of historical materials, their influence on narrative traditions, and the returning impact of narrative traditions on the visual culture we see in these artefacts. While lacking certain other aspects associated with archaeology, this thesis does focus upon one important point, and that is quite simply the study of the archaeological materials.

Chapter 2: The Myth of Herakles

The Herakles Myths

Due to the oral nature of the original Greek myths, there is no one universal narrative that tells the story of the life of Herakles. Each story brings with it its own individual variation, differing from each other in numerous ways. However, the general narrative of the original myth, as is known today, follows a standard story that finds itself at the centre of unending variation and reconstruction through time. In visual culture, art, sculpture, film – to name a few examples – the story surrounding Herakles has seen change, and yet the visual aspect of this mythical figure has somehow retained a level of consistency regardless of the context he is being observed in. However, before moving on to analyse and discuss the visual representation of Herakles through time, and the influence of cultural and other differences on how he is depicted, I will first provide a summary of the Herakles myth. This chapter focuses primarily on the myth itself and aims to provide context to the character of Herakles, and the visual aspects we expect to see reflected in the visual culture. Additionally, I will discuss the other appearances of Herakles in Greek mythology, lending to the idea that his character is very reusable, easily placed in many different myths and tales of heroes. For this chapter, I will be using a book written by Robert Graves titled; “The Greek Myths: The Complete and Definitive Edition” as an overview to tell the summarised story of Herakles. The stories that Graves used to form an overview all stem from original sources, who I shall also mention in accordance with their contribution to the Herakles myths. Additionally, I will provide further evidence of Herakles in other stories, lending to the title of this subheading – ‘The Herakles Myths’, suggesting that there is no one single myth, but instead a great plethora of tales surrounding and involving this mythical figure.

The Youth of Herakles

The sources from which I draw the story of the youth of Herakles are ancient literary sources. Literature is the only way through which we can still recover the verbal side of these myths, as the oral traditions have long faded in the traditional sense. Sources that wrote about the youth of Herakles were ancient Greek writers, such as Apollodorus – who wrote of the parents of Herakles and Zeus’ infidelity – and Hesiod, who wrote the

Shield of Heracles, which also tells a version of the myth of Herakles. In addition, writers such as Homer, Lucian, and Diodorus Siculus, all contributed to the slew of myths and stories that we are still familiar with today.

In the 'main' version of the Herakles myth, specifically focusing on his birth and origin, the demigod was born to King Amphitryon of Troezen, nephew of Electryon, and Alcmena, daughter of Electryon, son of Perseus (Apollodorus ii.4.7). In the most well-known version of the story, Herakles was not fathered by Amphitryon, but instead by the god Zeus. In the myth, Zeus assumed the form of Amphitryon and wooed his wife, Alcmena. His goal, according to the story, was to create the greatest hero in all of Greece – as a result, following this event, Zeus never took another human lover. Amphitryon, upon learning of this, never slept with his wife again in fear of angering the gods or incurring divine jealousy. Prior to the birth of Herakles, Zeus boasted to the other gods of his new son, who would be the greatest Hero and rule the House of Perseus. Hera caused the labour of Alcmena to be delayed, long enough for another to be born who would rule the House of Perseus. After this, Zeus made an agreement with her, that should Herakles complete a set of tasks given to him by Eurystheus, he would ascend and become a god. Following the birth of Herakles, the tale moves to tell of how he gained his immortality. According to the legend, he gained it through the deception of Hera – in one version of the story it is said that the baby was exposed in a field. In that version, Athene and Hera were walking in the very same field, and Hera, pitying the child, agreed to allow him to drink milk from her. Upon doing so, he gained immortality. This version stems from sources such as Diodorus Siculus (iv.9), and Pausanias (ix.25.2). The second version of the same story is as follows; Hermes, messenger to the gods, brought the baby Herakles up to Olympus, where Zeus laid him at Hera's breast as she was sleeping. Here the child drank more milk than he could take. In the context of both stories, Herakles is styled as the foster-child of Hera in that moment by the Thebans, and it is then said that he had previously only been Alcaeus up until the moment, being reborn as Herakles together with his immortality. The second version of the story comes from sources such as Eratosthenes (*Catasterismoi* 44) and Hyginus (*Poetic Astronomy* ii.43). After he gained his immortality comes the well-known part of the childhood of Herakles; the moment where he killed the two serpents sent by Hera. This part of the myth provides an indication of his enormous strength, even at that young an age. Following this, in his youth, Herakles was raised and taught many skills such as driving a chariot and playing the lyre – in addition to many others. This part of his story likely aims to give an impression of how

human he is, and how flawed this great hero can be – his aggressive nature when aggrieved, for example. In addition to that, the stories tell of his twin-brother, or more accurately his half-brother, who was fathered by Amphitryon. The brother's name was Iphicles, who – unlike his older brother – was mortal. The sons of Iphicles, all excluding one, were later murdered by Herakles in an induced haze of madness, which will be discussed in the following section.

The Madness of Herakles

The Madness of Herakles is one of the myths in which the timeline of the life of Herakles comes into question. Some ancient sources claim that the madness befell him prior to his famous Twelve Labours, which then became the cause for him having to do the labours (Diodorus Siculus iv. 11). Other sources state that the madness only occurred following his return from Tartarus (Euripides *Herakles* 1 ff & 1000 ff). The contributors to this part of the mythology were ancient Greek writers such as Apollodorus, Plutarch, and Euripides. Of course, many more writers contributed to the overall mythos, however, these are the few I have selected to provide historical sourcing for this section.

The 'Madness of Herakles' is the point at which his story turns. There are two different accounts of the timeline of these events. In one account, the madness of Herakles takes place when Hera takes issue with his excessive behaviours and drives him mad. The excessive behaviours in this situation was the brutal murder of foe Herakles had vanquished, named Pyraechmus, who was King of the Euboeans. In the source written by Plutarch, titled *Parallela minora, or Parallel stories*, Herakles had Pyraechmus tied to two colts, who tore his body apart, after which the body was cast away and left unburied and exposed, beside the river Heracleius. Due to this, Hera was displeased, for which she sent a madness upon Herakles. This madness subsequently incites him to attack his family, killing his children and his wife, Megara (Plutarch *Parallel Stories* 7). In this story, it is because of this course of events that Herakles undertakes the twelve labours at the command of Eurystheus. Another account of this is that Herakles went mad following time spent in Tartarus. This account of the madness is the version used in the play *Herakles*, written by Euripides. Here, it is only following his return from Tartarus – or 'beneath the earth' as Megara refers to in the written source – that Herakles falls into a haze of bloodlust. In the play, Madness overcomes Herakles – the goddess Iris was sent at the bidding of Hera to drive Herakles mad and have him slaughter his own children.

The messenger in the play spares no gruesome detail of the slaughtering, bringing across the anguish and fear of the mother and children, as they fled from their husband and father as he strove to kill them, believing them to be children of his foe, Eurystheus. A different ending to that is that he killed his children, but not his wife, and later married her off to another; his nephew, Iolaus. Iolaus also shared in the journeys – the Labours – of Herakles, as his charioteer, or his shield-bearer.

When Herakles finally awoke from the madness, he was overcome with despair and guilt for his violent actions against his family. In his mourning, he closed himself off from the world for several days, after which he journeyed to Delphi – in the play by Euripides this appears to happen almost as soon as Herakles understands what had just happened in his household, however, they do not mention the Labours again. In Delphi, Herakles was advised to serve Eurystheus, for twelve years. He was to undertake any and all Labours given to him. After this was completed, Herakles was promised to be awarded with immortality. Initially, Herakles despised the idea of serving an inferior man, however, after some time had passed, he finally agreed, and took the first step towards attaining his immortality.

The Twelve Tasks

The Twelve Labours of Herakles are perhaps the most well-recognised and yet least known part of the myth. While one might immediately associate the name Herakles with the Twelve Labours, it is not so common that people tend to remember all the works aside from the most popular few, such as the slaying of the Nemean lion, or the Lernaean Hydra. If one were to briefly consider why these are the easiest two to name, the answer would be because of their over-representation in the retellings of Herakles and the visual representation of the figure. This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters. This section presents the overall story for the first of the labours, as it is the focus of much visually recurring representation, based on the ancient Greek written sources, and the summary of Greek myths provided by Robert Graves in his book *The Greek Myths* (2011) – as a more general overview to the specified information of each Greek author. Once again, key writers who formed the sources for this chapter are predominantly the same as in the previous chapters. These authors include Apollodorus, and Diodorus Siculus, who provide the most mention of Herakles in their works. My

primary source will be Apollodorus, who writes extensively on the topic of Herakles, and of his myths and Labours.

When Herakles set off to begin his Twelve Labours, he was gifted by the gods with numerous weapons and armour. Apollo gave him a bow and arrows, Hermes gifted him a sword, and Hephaestus a breast plate. There is slight uncertainty about whether it was Hephaestus or Athene who gave Herakles the breastplate, as in the alternative where Athene gifts the breastplate, Hephaestus may have given Herakles a helmet and greaves instead. Poseidon gave to Herakles several horses, and Zeus gave him an indestructible shield. Despite these gifts to help him through his tasks, his most well-known weapon is the olive wood club, and his armour is known to be the skin of the Nemean lion. This club, first cut from wild-olive wood from Helicon, was eventually replaced by one made of olive wood from Nemea, likely during the first Labour. The third, was created from wild olive from the shores of the Saronic Sea. It is said that this club – upon a visit to Troezen, when Herakles leaned it against a statue of Hermes – struck root and grew into a tree. Prior to his creation of his own clubs, Herakles had been gifted a bronze-tipped club from Hephaestus. However, the armour and weapons Herakles is most famous for wielding are his olive-wood club, of which there have been multiple, and the impenetrable lion-skin pelt. The focus of chapters three to six of my thesis will focus on the importance of this visual depiction, and its presence through time and culture.

The twelve tasks of Herakles, in the order that they are told in, are as follows; the slaying of the Nemean lion, and the Lernaean Hydra, the capture of the Cerynitian hind, as well as the Erymanthian boar, followed by the cleaning of the stables of Augeias, and the removal of the Stymphalian birds. Following this comes the capture of the Cretan bull and of the mares of Diomedes and obtain the girdle of the Amazon Queen Hippolyte. The tenth Labour was for Herakles to fetch the cattle of Geryon, and the eleventh Labour was to retrieve the apples of the Hesperides. His twelfth and final task was the capture and bring back the beast Cerberus, the guard dog of the underworld.

In the first Labour, Herakles was commanded to kill the Nemean lion, a beast which had been terrorising the people of Nemea and neighbouring land. Initially, Herakles shot at the lion with his bow and arrows, only to realise that the creature appeared indestructible, after which he attacked it with his club. Finally, he choked the lion to death, and used its hide as an impenetrable armour. It can be argued that the focus within the retellings of these myths lies mainly on the first, second, and twelfth labours, as in

most recreations of the 'Legend' of Herakles, these are the most mentioned ones. This trend is clear in the visual representations of Herakles, as will be discussed in the following chapters of this thesis. When given an image of a male figure fighting a lion, or a multi-headed serpent, most people would immediately associate that image with Herakles, especially in European culture. It is also in the very first labour that we first witness the appearance of his 'typical' visual representation. In the first Labour Herakles adorns the lion hide and olive-wood club that so often go hand in hand with the mention of his name and visual representation of him. It is these traits that lend to us as viewers identifying a figure as Herakles when we notice that they are present, and that is perhaps why the first Labour is given so much importance in visual representation – for example in modern media, where the slaying of the lion is quite a recurring plot point.

Further appearances

Following the completion of his Twelve Labours, the myths of Herakles only continue. Aside from his own story, the figure of Herakles is present in many other myths and epics. After the tasks, Herakles joined the part of the Argonauts who were searing for the Golden Fleece, and is present in the *Argonautica*, which tells the story of Jason and the group who searched for the fleece. Herakles also fell in love with a woman named Iole, who was promised to him after he defeated her brothers in an archery contest. However, her father, King Eurytus, was unwilling to give her to Herakles. In return, Herakles killed him and his sons – barring Iphitus – and abducted Iole. However, Hera sent the madness upon Herakles again, causing him to murder his friend Iphitus. To purify himself, Herakles spent three years in servitude to Queen Omphale of Lydia, where he wore women's clothes and performed a woman's work, while Omphale wore his lion skin and carried his club. Eventually, she freed and married Herakles. There is also a myth in which Herakles, after defeating the Dryopes, was offered their Prince, whom he took as a squire and possibly lover. Together they were a part of the crew of the *Argo*, however, they were not part of the whole journey. In Mysia, Hylas, the squire, was taken away by local nymphs. Herakles searched for him, but never found him, as Hylas had fallen in love with the nymphs and vanished forever. Thus, the *Argo* left without them, and that concluded Herakles' presence among them. Furthermore, Herakles appears in the Prometheus myths, specifically *Theogony* by Hesiod and *Prometheus Unbound* by Aeschylus. These two authors both write of how Herakles killed the eagle that tormented bound Prometheus and freed him from his chains and the torture placed upon him by Zeus. In

addition, Herakles also took part in sacking Troy, not in Homer's Trojan War, but instead in an event that occurred prior to that. This is mentioned in the Iliad in various digressions in the story and can also be found in Apollodorus' Bibliothekē.

All in all, his appearance in such a variety of myths outside of his own indicates how easily reusable the character of Herakles was. With his most recognisable and eternally retained features, he was taken and placed within various stories, most often in the role of the hero – and on occasion, the tragic hero – with his olive wood club and lion skin pelt. Despite him appearing in so many different myths, visually it is possible to argue that he is always clearly Herakles, as his most recognisable traits are always present, regardless of context or time. That is where my archaeological case studies come in; to help further investigate and show how reusable and recognisable Herakles is, and how media and culture influences our perception as the receivers to these things. We know the story of Herakles and think of the man with the club as him – yet, to another culture perhaps, this burly, bearded man with the club and lion skin may be representative of a different figure entirely. That, and the impact of this in archaeology, is what I aim to investigate in this thesis.

Chapter 3: Herakles in Art and Archaeology

Introduction

In the following section, I shall introduce the case studies of my thesis, and proceed with the main goal; analysing and comparing two artefacts – or images – from four different contexts to provide a cultural biography for the mythical figure Herakles. Through this I hope to address my primary research question of “What similarities and differences can be found in a comparison of the visual representation of Herakles throughout time in various different forms of media?” I will be approaching this question through my four case studies, in which I will describe two artefacts, each depicting Herakles – or a figure assumed to Herakles – and provide a cultural context for each. I shall follow this by briefly discussing the role they played at the time of their creation, and through this context shall provide the base on which I shall argue the importance of reception in archaeology. My aim in this section is to provide the visual depictions, a description for each, and the contexts that come with their era of conception. Through this I hope to lead into the following section to answer the question; “Is it possible to label every Herakles that we can identify in media outside of Ancient Greece as the same Herakles and is it possible that that Herakles no longer exists?” I will proceed with a comparison of the following four case studies to provide an answer to that question.

This chapter of my thesis will be divided into four sections; each will contain two case studies for one period of time. The order of the periods is as follows; Herakles in Ancient Greece, Herakles in Gandhara, Herakles in Renaissance art, and finally, Herakles in modern entertainment. I will first provide an empirical description of the individual artefact, followed by a description of what we see happening in the image or sculpture. Following this I will discuss the cultural context for the artefacts. In the following chapter I will proceed with a comparison of all the case studies.

Herakles in Ancient Greek Culture

Artefact 1:

Artefact 1 is a jug depicting two humanoid figures in orange-red colours, as seen in Figure 1. The background is a shiny black. There are only two figures that are depicted here. The figure on the left is taller than the figure on the right, with a more built frame, as the arms and legs are thicker, and they are draped in garments. The figure on the left has a striped garment covering the upper half of their torso and upper thighs, with a cloak made of a feline animal. In the left figure's right hand, they are holding a club with numerous points above their head. Their left hand is



FIGURE 1. HERAKLES FIGHTS GERAS. RED-FIGURE PELIKE, 500-450 BC. NAME VASE OF THE GERAS PAINTER (STAFFORD, 240).

holding the right figures head. The figure on the right is diminutive, frail, and hunched over, unlike the larger figure on the left, who is standing tall and taking up most of the space on the surface of the jug that is visible in the picture of Artefact 1. The right figure holds a cane in their left hand, with their right outstretched towards the taller figure, palm one appendage pointing upwards. While the left figure is leaning forward and standing firm, the figure on the right is not standing firmly on his legs and stands weakly.

This artefact hails from Classical Greek culture and presents a depiction of Herakles that most would consider to be the 'classical Herakles', or the 'traditional Herakles'; the original against which all other depictions are held in comparison. This depiction finds itself on a Pelike, an amphora-like ceramic container, decorated in red figure. While the provenance is uncertain, the dating of this object falls between 500 and 450 BC, which fits within the timeframe that most consider to be the Classical period of Ancient Greek culture. This artefact currently resides in the Paris Louvre collection.

The scene that we see here depicts Herakles in a one-sided battle against an old man. This foe is in fact Geras, the ancient Greek god of old age (Stafford, 240). Herakles, on the left, is clearly identifiable with his large frame, lion-skin pelt, and what appears to be a wooden club hefted above his head in preparation of striking down upon the old man standing opposite him. His left hand is gripping the other figure's head. Geras, on the right, stands weakly, almost as if stepping back from Herakles, with one hand holding a cane and the other raised – palm up – towards Herakles, appearing to be asking for mercy. This ties into the hints in his story that lead up to his ultimate immortality, as in the beginning he strays more to the side of being mortal than divine. As Herakles fights Geras, the personification of Old Age, in this depiction, it indicates that Herakles will overcome it (Stafford 239), as seen in the aggressive and dominant posture Herakles is given here. He is clearly the strongest, and he shall overcome. That is what we can see by looking at this ceramic.

Artefact 2:

The second Artefact depicts two figures inside of a decorated circle. The circle is decorated with square swirls interspersed with crosses. Inside this circle there are two figures, one seated and the other standing. Behind them is a twisting line that breaks apart into multiple vines with small, circular offshoots. The figure on the right wears short clothing and a cloak, their head appearing from inside the mouth of a lion. The figure is seated, with one hand holding onto a cup,



FIGURE 2. HERAKLES AND ATHENA. ATTIC RED-FIGURE KYLIX, 490-470 BC. ATTRIBUTED TO DOURIS (THEOI.COM)

while the other is held up, facing the opposite figure with the palm. Beside the seated figure there is a long stick with bumps lining each side. The figure on the right is wearing long robes, with a long stick resting in their left arm, which is also holding a bird. The robes are more intricately designed than those of the figure on the right, and on the head of the figure there is a headdress. Behind the right figure, a helmet rests on a square shape. The standing figure holds in left hand a jug, from which a line goes straight down into the cup of the seated figure.

This artefact also stems from Ancient Greece, dating back to between 490 and 470 BC. This puts its creation somewhere close to that of the previous artefact. The artefact itself is a kylix, decorated in Attic Red figure. It is attributed to the Greek vase painter Douris and can currently be found in the Staatliche Antikensammlungen museum in Munich, Germany (theoi.com). This image is found on the tondo of the kylix, while the outside is decorated with the image of Peleus wrestling with Thetis, and the other Nereids fleeing to tell their father Nereus (theoi.com). On the tondo we can see Athena serving Herakles from an oinochoe jug – seen by the clover shape of the mouth of the jug. In her left hand she is holding an owl and her spear, donned in an aegis cloak with snake trimming (theoi.com). Herakles is seated opposite, with a kylix in one hand, being served wine. He is wearing his 'familiar' lion-skin pelt, and beside him rests his olive wood club.

This scene is showing us Herakles and his connection to the other gods, or at least a small glimpse of it. Athena favoured him and helped him at the time that he was enduring his Twelve Labours, and ultimately came to retrieve him to join the gods on Olympus (theoi.com). One literary example of Athena's favour for Herakles can be found in Pseudo-Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca* 2. 69 and 2. 121, where she not only provided Herakles with weapons to defeat his foe Erginos when he attacked Thebes, and also after he had retrieved the golden apples of the Hesperides, where Athena returned them and prevented Herakles from breaking any divine laws. These examples indicate that throughout his labours as a man, he remained touched by the gods and was gifted with their favour and assistance, a trait that is shared amongst many of the well-known Classical Greek Heroes, such as Achilles, Perseus, and Theseus.

Who – or what – was Herakles to the Ancient Greeks?

In these two artefacts from Ancient Greece, we see Herakles being depicted with what can be considered his 'primary traits'; the lion-skin pelt adorns his body while his olive wood club is present as well, in both works. They show him in different states, from seated and at rest to engaged in combat, and what they are doing is providing a visual aide to go alongside the narrative of his exploits, from his time as a man to his journey to becoming a god. In archaeology it occasionally seems as if only these observable facts are important when recreating the cultural biography of Herakles – the same situation repeating when applied to other gods, legends, or cults. Even in looking at the polytheistic nature of the Greek religion, scholars prefer to focus on the anthropological aspects, looking towards how the humans interacted, their cult behaviours and rituals, instead of engaging with the gods to whom those rituals were performed (Henrichs 2010, 28). Objectivity is used as the only form of approach, leading to the history being studied from a 'safe distance'. However, it is important to note that this 'safe distance' is impossible to attain, as personal influences that control the way in which we receive stimuli – for example, these visual depictions of Herakles – will always be present. This leads us to the question; who was Herakles to the ancient Greeks?

Herakles was a man, yes. But he was also above men, with his divine heritage that split his being between god and mortal. By 500 BC, the heroic deeds of Herakles and eleven of his Twelve tasks were solidified in the mythology, and his exploits really bring him across as a modern-day superhero who kills huge and horrific monsters (Stafford 2010, 238). However, that was not the limitation of who Herakles was to the people of the Classical Greek culture. Unlike today, where heroes are actors in bodysuits fighting a one-dimensional villain, only holding meaning until the end of the movie, in Ancient Greece, Herakles – and the other demigod heroes like him – were something more concrete, and more real. In Classical Greek culture, the nature of Herakles was more ambivalent than it is in the modern day. While today the general populace views Herakles as a hero, in the modern sense of the word, in ancient Greece, Herakles filled many roles. Depending on what information one chose to look at, the divine nature of Herakles could vary from immortal god to human hero. He was worshipped as such, as well (Henrichs 2010, 31). Herakles served a role as both a god, and as a hero, when it came to sacrifice and rituals. He was given both sacrifice as a 'god', and as a 'hero' (Henrichs 2010, 31). This is, of course, perplexing, as gods were immortal beings, while being a cult hero was a title only bestowed upon the deceased (Henrichs 2010, 31). This is the enthusiasm with which the

people of Ancient Greece surrounded Herakles and his stories. Despite beginning as an oral tradition, by the time he was written into literature, he was treated as someone who needed to introduction (Jensen 2002, 102). Herakles was not made by the authors nor the oral stories that told his legend, but by the people that loved and celebrated him and his heroic endeavours (Jensen 2002, 103). Because of how celebrated Herakles was, he was far more a part of every-day life back in Ancient Greece than he is in the present. With that in mind, why is this one depiction always treated as the standard to which all other depictions that come even remotely close are related back to. While they seem to share the same appearance, can we call them the same Herakles? Do they merely share the same appearance, or is it possible to consider all the depictions labelled as Herakles embody the same being as the 'Classical' Herakles? Are all recreations following that point inspired by the original, or were they merely recreations designed to fulfil different purposes? Ultimately, the biggest question to consider is this; are our perspectives on the cultural context of figures such as Herakles forged by our own understanding of what the culture 'should' have been like, or are they entirely objective and true to the archaeology, the evidence, and the 'facts'?

Vajrapani – Herakles of Gandhara?

Artefact 3:

In the image below, we can see eight figures, three to the left – from the perspective of the viewer – and four to the right, and one seated in the centre of the panel. The other figures are all standing and are all – barring one – facing the figure in the centre, whose face is tilted slightly off-centre towards the left. The seated figure is physically larger than the others, and has a smooth face, while the other figures have half their faces covered with detailed, thick lines. The figure directly to the right of the central body is more exposed than the other figures, standing tall with one arm raised over their head, and the other to their side – both hands occupied by items. The outer sides of the panel are balanced by the presence of two standing figures on either side – all of whom are clad in similar clothing, with the same facial structure and hair. They balance the foreground, while two figures, elevated above the standing quartet – excluding the figure posed beside the central focus of the panel – balance out the background. Both of those figures possess no facial hair, and their clothing is less clearly depicted. The figure in the background on the viewer's right has a cloth draped over their shoulder, while the figure on the left appears as only a head. Above the head of the central figure is a symmetrical arrangement of leaf-like shapes, and behind that figure's head there is a circular line on the panel. The central figure is covered by draped fabrics – only exposing the head and hands, unlike the other figures present on the panel, who are all clothed in much lighter dress. The left hand of the seated figure is at rest, while the right hand is raised, palm facing the viewer. Finally, the figure to the far left, in the foreground, is seated, holding a crooked object with one hand.

This artefact finds its origin in Gandhara, Pakistan, and stems from the Kushan period. The panel was likely produced somewhere in the 2nd to 3rd Century AD (britishmuseum.org). The relief was carved out of schist, a type of metamorphic rock, and was produced using the style of the Gandhara school – well known for the creation of Buddhist art. What we see here is a scene depicting Buddha, in the act of performing a miracle. Buddha is seated in the centre, with a halo behind his head. His face is smooth, and his hair is tied up atop his head. His left arm rests in his lap, while his right is raised to one of the ascetics. Directly to his left stands Vajrapani, with a bearded face, muscled body, and cloth hanging from his left side down his right. Above his head he holds a flywhisk, and in his left arm he holds a vajra (britishmuseum.org). This relief depicts



Figure 3. Buddha performing a miracle, with Vajrapani at his left (viewers right). Carved schist panel, Gandharan school, 2nd – 3rd Century AD. Currently in the British Museum collection. (britishmuseum.org)

Buddha performing his miracles before six ascetics, with Vajrapani standing by his side – the ‘protector’, or ‘spectator’ to this event, posed in a powerful stance with exposed genitals, depicted with strong muscles and a face reminiscent of Herakles in Greek art. This is likely because of the beard, but also the posture the muscular man brings across.

Artefact 4:

In Figure 4 we see four figures, two in the foreground and two in the background. The panel is broken and has only two sides showing the decoration on the frame of the relief. The decorations are circular, natural shapes carved in a repeating pattern along the outside of the panel. On the main part of the fragmentary panel, the four figures are crowded together. The figure in the top right corner is covered in a cloth that drapes from their shoulder to the wrist of their hand, which is raised with three fingers up and two down to the palm. The figure in the top left is also draped in similar flowing garments, but has an intricate decoration upon their head, unlike the figure beside it. The figure in the bottom right is fully clothed in yet again the same draping cloth, with no further decoration. The figure in the bottom left, however, stands apart in their state of undress. This figure is clad only in a cloth around the hips, and the pelt of an animal tied across the shoulders. In their right hand, which is resting against their thigh, they



Figure 4. Vajrapani and other attendants. Carved schist panel, fragmented. Gandharan school, 2nd – 3rd Century AD. Currently in British Museum collection. (britishmuseum.org)

hold a diamond-shaped object, and a belt-like object is strapped around their waste. The belt connects to a straight object that stands in the foreground between the two figures in the front. The bottom left figure's upper torso is entirely exposed, as well as their legs, and they have a muscular physique. Unlike the other figures present on the fragmented relief, the figure dressed in the animal skin is bearded. All four figures are facing towards the left, from the perspective of the viewer, toward the missing part of the panel.

Artefact 4 stems from the same origins as Artefact 3. The panel is carved from schist stone and was produced somewhere in the 2nd or 3rd Century AD, in Gandhara, Pakistan. This relief also comes from the Kushan Dynasty period and the style used is that of the Gandharan school (britishmuseum.org). The four figures present in this panel are Vajrapani and three other figures; two monks and a prince (Homrighausen 2015, 32).

Vajrapani is in state of undress like that of his depiction in the previous artefact (see figure 3), where his entire torso and genitalia were exposed. In this relief he is clad in a lion's skin and a very short loincloth – the paws of which are tied around his neck. The maw of the lion acts as a hood, and the teeth, ears, nose, and eyes of the lion can be seen in this detailed rendering of Vajrapani. He has a muscular neck and a moustache – or a beard (britishmuseum.org). In his right hand he holds a vajra, which has the resemblance of a diamond, and in his left hand he holds the pommel of his sword (britishmuseum.org), which is tied to his waist with a thin belt. Vajrapani looks to his right, presumably to where Buddha was located at the centre of the original panel. The three other figures look in the same direction. Vajrapani and the monk in the top right corner both have their hands held up with the middle and index finger raised, with the thumb flat along the index finger the fourth and fifth fingers flat against the palm. In the case of Vajrapani, the hand performing this gesture is also holding the sword (britishmuseum.org). What is very fascinating about this fragmented panel is the resemblance Vajrapani holds to Herakles here – more so than in the previous artefact. While in artefact 3 he held the resemblance to Herakles in terms of that of a strong, bearded man, in this artefact the likeness stems more from the distinct similarity between the iconic appearance of Herakles, and the presence of one such element in this relief. The question is, why do these artefacts depict a guardian of the Buddha in a way that so strongly reflects a Hellenistic figure, as there is no denying that Vajrapani bears the resemblance to Herakles, especially with the animal-skin pelt, which looks like that of a lion.

Who was Herakles to the people of Gandhara?

While today we view Vajrapani as protector, or bodyguard, to the Buddha, according to Monika Zin that was never directly evident in the pictorial representations of conversion stories where depictions of Vajrapani, standing beside the Buddha, could be found (Zin 2009, 74). He is the holder of the vajra, a 'lightning bolt' or 'diamond shaped' weapon, which is what vajra means in Sanskrit (Homrighausen 2015, 29). Zin questions what Vajrapani, the bearer of the vajra, is the protector of, as he only begins to appear in the later life of the Buddha, and is absent from his childhood (Zin 2009, 74). He is often found participating in the conversion scenes he is depicted in, and in the two artefacts above is depicted standing by the Buddha's left side. In the 19th century, Vajrapani was subject to numerous interpretations speculating the nature of the warrior figure before it was finally settled that he was Vajrapani. In any case, it is clear that Vajrapani holds an active role in – most likely – the protection of Buddha, and a role in the conversions, as there are scenes where he is actively engaged, with his arms raised, as can be seen in Figure 3. But why does he look like Herakles in Gandharan stupa reliefs? This leads into the question of who Herakles was to the people of Gandhara.

Initially thought to be Herakles-Vajrapani by European scholars eager to find Hellenistic influences in the more eastern countries, it was later proven that Herakles and Vajrapani were, in fact, two separate beings. Jonathan Homrighausen describes a journey of Herakles as a figure into India, and his transformation into the bodyguard of Buddha, Vajrapani (Homrighausen 2015, 26). Homrighausen goes on to state that "Heraklean Vajrapani serves as a sacred icon embodying the Buddhist community's aspirations to royal patronage under the Kushan dynasty." (2015, 26). This interpretation suggests that Herakles – or at least his visage – was used as a symbol under a quite different context than that in which he was originally created. Due to the influence of the trade between Greco-Roman culture and Gandhara, Herakles – as well as other gods from the Hellenistic pantheon – found themselves represented in the Gandharan art. Herakles himself, when present in Gandharan art, was depicted as a character who had a weakness for women and wine (Homrighausen 2015, 29). Herakles was associated with drink and revelry in the Gandharan world, according to Homrighausen, much like in the Greco-Roman world. However, if there already was a Herakles figure in the Gandharan culture, recognised as the Herakles of Hellenistic lore, why is it that scholars associated Vajrapani – a Buddhist figure – with Herakles? Scholars argue that the image of Vajrapani was inspired by Herakles and his imposing figure, stating that Gandharan sculptors 'adopted' Herakles as

an improved embodiment of Vajrapani (Tanabe 2005, 377) over that of Indra, king of the Vedic gods (Homrighausen 2015, 32). This Herakles-Vajrapani is clearly only from Gandharan Buddhist art, as this depiction is not present in any reliefs from other ancient Indian regions, or even present prior to the Kushan period – indicating that this popular Vajrapani is not inspired by exclusively Indian origin (Tanabe 2005, 367). From all of my case studies, this one presents a figure that stands furthest from Herakles, despite the similarity in their visual attributes, and obvious historical association that the figures have been assigned to one another. It is difficult to argue that Vajrapani was not in some way inspired by Herakles, but I do not believe that Herakles was ‘adopted’ by Gandharan sculptors to become the new Vajrapani, as we can see clear stylistic differences in stupa architecture depicting Vajrapani and Herakles (van Aerde, forthcoming, 16). While certain European historians may have drawn the connection that Vajrapani was meant to be Herakles because his visual representation was so strikingly similar to the Hellenistic representations, it has been proven that at best Herakles was an inspiration for Vajrapani, but not the actual embodiment of the guardian of the Buddha. In short, Vajrapani can be an indication of the cultural diversity of Gandhara during the Kushan period, and the range that their stylistic devices in art possessed, but not as an indication of pure Greco-Roman influence and impact in the East. In addition, the existence of the Herakles-Vajrapani debate provides evidence of the powerful impact of visual culture in historical artefacts, both in history, and in more recent archaeology.

Herakles and the Renaissance

Artefact 5:

In this image – see figure 5 – we see one humanoid figure, and three non-humanoid figures. There are two figures in the foreground, the central focus, and two figures in the distance in the background above them. The figures in the back have wings and are surrounded by a mixture of dark lines and empty spaces in unnatural, rounded shapes. The background is comprised of hills and in the distance are some structures. The figure in the foreground, on the viewers right, is humanoid. This figure wears no clothes, except for an animal skin that is tied around their hips – covering the genitals – and holding on to their head. The animal skin has a tail and curly hair that mixes with the hair of its wearer. The naked figure has no shoes and is standing in a tense stance, left leg to the back and right leg bent beneath the torso. This figure is leaning in towards the figure on the viewers left, and holds one arm above their head, wielding in a long, knotted branch-like object. The figure on the left side of the engraving is serpentine and more unnatural in shape. This figure has no hind legs, only two legs on its torso, and a long tail. The figure has webbed appendages attached to its back, and multiple heads attached to its torso by thin, winding necks. The figure on the left is smaller than the bipedal figure on the right. While most of the background is clear space, behind the heads of the creature on the left, the shading becomes very dark and thick, leaving a dark, triangular space around – or behind – the heads of the serpentine figure.



Figure 5. Hercules and the Hydra. Engraving. ca. 1500-1520. Cristofano di Michele Martini (Il Robetta). Currently at The Met museum. (metmuseum.org)

Artefact 5 is an engraved print stemming from circa 1500-1520 AD, the time of the Renaissance. The engraving was made by Cristofano di Michele Martini (Il Robetta), an Italian from Florence (metmuseum.org). The full title of this piece is “Hercules and the Hydra; wielding a torch he attacks the winged, multi-headed Hydra in a rocky landscape, a hawk attacks a heron in the sky”. It is currently in the collection of The Met museum, and not on display. Robetta made this engraving based on the work of Antonio Pollaiuolo from 1460, who originally painted three canvases, each depicting labours of the great hero Herakles, who had been adopted as the legendary founder of Florence (metmuseum.org). While those works have been lost, Robetta brings them to life once again in his own engraving of Herakles engaged in battle with the Hydra, one of the heroes more famous tasks. Here we see Herakles, dressed only in his well-known lionskin pelt, engaged in battle with a more draconic style of Hydra – this one possessing a long, snake-like tail, the claws of a lion, wings, and multiple dog-like heads. The hero Herakles wields a torch high as he cauterizes the headless necks of the Hydra, preventing more from growing in their places. The torch in this engraving bears a striking resemblance to the wooden club Herakles is known for wielding. Once again, we see a Herakles with wild hair and a bearded face, muscular and imposing, towering over the Hydra that spreads its wings and cries out. The style of the Hydra takes a step away from the more serpentine style of the Greek Hydra and brings forth a more draconic appearance than before. It is a depiction of an idealized figure overcoming evil in mythic and glorious labours (Simons 2008, 632).

Artefact 6:



Figure 6. Three Labours of Hercules. Red chalk. Ca. 1530. Michelangelo Buonarroti. The Royal Collection (rct.uk.)

Artefact 6 consists of three highly detailed scenes on a blank background. There are three figures, all naked but not fully exposed. The figure on the left of the image is very well-built, as the muscles are more defined than in the other three figures. All figures are male, and the one on the left is wrestling with a large animal. Their legs are on either side of the creature's head, and their hands are pulling apart the jaw of the beast. The beast has wild hair that flows to the floor, and a tail curling in around its back paw. The creature looks up at the figure engaged with it, while the figure looks down. This figure's face is beardless, their hair is curly, and behind them is a shroud of lines that resemble the hair of the beast being subdued. In the scene in the middle there are two humanoid figures, one curled up in the grasp of the other, who stands with both feet still on the ground. The figure that remains standing has their arm around the torso of the other figure as they are held upside down, head pressed to the hip of the standing figure. The hanging figure has their hands on the thighs of the one holding them, and the standing figure looks down over their shoulder. Unlike the figure in the sketch on the left, the standing figure here has no curly hair, and has less well-defined muscles. Finally, in the sketch on the right side, there is a figure – also a man – battling vague, snake-like heads that surround him on all sides. The figure's right knee is bent, obscuring the genitalia of the otherwise naked body. The figure's hips are angled to the side, while the chest rotates

back to the viewer. Both arms are raised above this figure's head, one hand wrapped around the neck of one of the snake heads, and the other occupied as well. This figure appears less muscular than the one on the far left fighting the lion, as here the stomach sinks inwards, and the chest no longer swells taut with muscles. However, the figure remains well-built. Also, unlike the figure on the left, this man has a beard, and is not looking down upon the beast that he is fighting, but instead up towards the heads that look down at him.

This artwork was produced by Michelangelo Buonarroti, at the time of around 1530, during the period of Renaissance in Italy. It is called the Three Labours of Hercules – the Roman name for Herakles – and the medium used to produce it was red chalk on a sheet of paper. What Michelangelo created here are three scenes, each isolated from the other, each presenting a different age, position, and quality of finish (rct.uk). From left to right we are shown a fully rendered Herakles, facing the viewer, youthful and battling the Nemean lion. He is already adorned with a lion-skin, to which Michelangelo added that this was the second lion Herakles had slain (rct.uk). Next to this we see a partially rendered, slightly older Herakles – lacking the curly hair and taut musculature of the one on the left – battling another man, body angled sideways towards the viewer. This man is recognised as Antaeus, a giant who gained his power from touching Gaia, his mother. Finally, on the right, there is the least detailed of the three drawings: Herakles, now appearing much older, with a beard and less youthful physique, battling the Lernaean Hydra. Unlike the other two drawings, where Herakles triumphantly defeats – or appears to be defeating – his foes, in this third drawing he seems almost at a loss. He looks up at the faces of the Hydra, as one sinks its teeth into his flesh – the beast almost seeming to overwhelm the hero. The drawing can be interpreted to represent the struggle of Michelangelo's life, from his simple youth as a gifted artist to the growing competition as he aged (rct.uk). Another interpretation of this drawing is that it was one among many of Michelangelo's explorations of his inner self – the battle between his soul and his own mortal passion, the enemy within himself (Simons 2008, 651). With Antaeus being held aloft by Herakles, an inverted foe, his face close to the genitalia of the other man, this could represent the battle between the mind and the body – the seat of reason against the core of lust. As Herakles is the victor here, we are shown the triumph of 'rationality and reason' against the desires of the flesh (Simons 2008, 652).

Herakles in Renaissance Italy

When looking at these drawings from the Renaissance, an immediate association between Classical Herakles and the man being depicted here can be made. This is due to the nature of the drawings, and the way that he is presented. In each drawing, an element tied into the myth of Herakles is present – for example, Herakles performing some of his most famous Labours, such as slaying the Lion or the Hydra. The Hydra we see here in both images, in fact. In addition to that, Herakles is clad in his lion-skin cloak, which can also be associated back to the Herakles of the Hellenistic period. In Renaissance Italy, there already existed a connection with Herakles, or Hercules, as that was his Roman name. In Florence, Herakles was adopted as the legendary founder of the city, and the Medici family used him as a symbol to support their claims to power, associating themselves with the civic heroic traditions that were tied in with the image of Herakles during that time (Simons 2008, 634). In the Renaissance, Herakles became a blend of “Christian fortitude and civic heroism”, in the words of Patricia Simons (2008, 632), and this was embodied in the way that he was depicted; nude, idealized as a muscular, powerful man, overcoming his enemies in legendary labours, or celebrating in victory. In the period of the Renaissance, Herakles was rebirthed to become the embodiment of ‘*Virtù Heroica*’ (Simons 2008, 632), a hero able to keep his temper, stave off worldly lusts and not succumb to pleasures; the face of reason and virtue. He became an example of moral strength – while this held symbolic connotations in daily life, he was also used politically, as the indomitable hero against rebellion, or tyranny (Simmons 2008, 632). This draws a divide between the Herakles of this period and the Herakles of legend; how could they possibly be the same character when the original was displayed as a cult hero, or immortal deity, and this version is being used as a symbol for justice, and a political symbol of power and heroism? On the other hand, how could this be a different character when the well-known traits are present? Herakles, a muscular man with wild hair and a beard, engaged in combat with the serpent – the Hydra – and the lion with impenetrable hide; these are hallmarks of the well-known legend, and certainly in the visual depictions of him. With the stylistic development of the time, we are no longer only given the story of Herakles, but also a more ‘idealized’ version of Herakles.

Here he is no longer the cult symbol Hero in the classical Greek sense, but a political and popular figure who now represents themes that he was not initially associated with. Who Herakles was in Ancient Greece no longer fit the model of the time, and his meaning

evolved into something closer to the modern-day interpretation of Herakles, which I shall address in the following case study on Herakles, the Modern Hero.

Herakles, the Modern Hero

Film 1: *Hercules* (2014)



Figure 7. Hercules wearing the lion-skin pelt. Photograph. 2014. By Kerry Brown. Paramount pictures and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer pictures. (imdb.com)

In the above image we see one central figure, male, standing in front of a background of wood and earth. In the background is smoke and fire, and trees. The figure in the foreground is muscular, dressed in a dark brown item that covers their torso, decorated with a highly defined musculature, a thick belt and a short sword attached to it. The man has brown items around their wrists. He has a beard and wild, shoulder-length hair. The man in the image also has the head of an animal on top of his head – small teeth can be seen coming from the mouth of the animal above the man's eyebrows. The animal skin head has a large, wide nose, and dark fur coming from the side of its head, almost mixing with the hair of the man. In Figure 8 (below), we see the same man, this time engaged in combat. He wears a short loincloth, and the rest of the animal skin is visible. The man stands on a field, battling an opponent that is painted green, also wearing a loincloth that is longer, and holding a shield. In his hands, the man on the left – the same man from Figure 7 – is holding a wooden stick, with a knotted end that has sharp spines attached



Figure 8. Hercules engaged in combat. Photograph. 2014. By Kerry Brown. Paramount Pictures and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures. (imdb.com)

to it, two on either side of the head of the weapon. In the background, there is a mass of people, also fighting, surrounded with dark smoke.

These two pictures come from the set of *Hercules* starring Dwayne Johnson, which was released in 2014. These images are photographs, taken by photographer Kerry Brown (imdb.com). The film was produced by the production companies Paramount pictures, and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and directed by Brett Ratner. The movie stars actors such as John Hurt, Ian McShane, and Rufus Sewell, but the leading role of Herakles is played by none other than Dwayne Johnson, an actor also known for the role of Mathias in the *Scorpion King*. The plot takes place in 1400 BC, where the hero Hercules leads a tortured life after supposedly murdering his wife and children in a drunken rage. He has already performed his Twelve Tasks, or so the audience is led to believe, and at the beginning of the movie already is in the company of five companions who are with him throughout the film – thus following the story as told by Euripides in the *Madness of Herakles*. In this movie, Herakles is described as the son of Zeus and a mortal, however, the entire movie goes without evidence that suggests that monsters are real; instead, the monster that Herakles faces here is the darkness and evil of man instead of some great beast (imdb.com). A brief article from the *Hollywood Reporter*, it is explained that the movie is based on a graphic novel; *Hercules: The Thracian Wars*, and is a revisionist take on the original myth (McClintock 2013). In the world of this film, the supernatural is not present.

We are, however, presented with the lion-skin pelt and visual imagery that holds a strong resemblance to the Classical depictions of Herakles, and throughout the movie the clothing, scenery, armour, and weaponry all possess a resemblance to visual depictions that have been found on Hellenistic ceramics. Despite this resemblance, however, the visuals are still treated with the 'spark of fantasy' one would expect to see in entertainment media, and are clearly designed to entertain more than educate or be historically accurate to either the tale of Herakles or the period the tale comes from.

It is clear here that Herakles is little more than an interesting character to remix into an action movie, as in no way is this movie treated as anything more than entertainment – actors are actors, and the impact of the story only goes as far as the run-time of the film. This film, however, is a good example of a well-portrayed Herakles. Dwayne Johnson is suited up to fit the look perfectly and performs the role of tortured hero very well. While this is clearly not the Herakles of ancient Greece, it is at least a particularly good reinterpretation of him, as a modern-day action movie hero.

Film 2: *The Legend of Hercules* (2014)

In the picture to the right we see two main figures, and several people in the background. The colour gradient of the image is very yellow in hue, as is the sand beneath them and the walls behind them. There are two figures in the centre of the image. One figure is lying on the floor, on their back, while the other straddles them over the chest. The figure on the floor is wearing a yellow-brown tinted plating, and the helmet has the same colour. Beside their right hand there is a blade, also a similar colour to the



Figure 9. Hercules fights six gladiators. Photograph. 2014. Photography by Courtesy: Summit Entertainment. 2013 Summit Entertainment. (imdb.com)

armour. The figure straddling the prone body is wearing armour that covers one shoulder in layers of plates and is strapped around the other shoulder which remains bare. In his left hand he holds a shield, and in his right a blade. Around his waist is a wide belt with a decorated centrepiece, that is also the same colour as the armour. Beneath the belt he wears a red cloth. His chest and visible legs are otherwise bare. He has short hair and stubble, but not a full beard. His body is muscular and is facing the viewer. In the image below (see Figure 10) we see the same person who was on top of the body in Figure 9. Here he is chained by the arms and legs to two large, white pillars. Behind him is a wood and metal gate. His legs are covered in dirt, and he is wearing only sandals and a torn green cloth tied around his waist.

What we have here with the second film is, yet another take on the origin story of Herakles, the 'mythical Greek hero'. In this incarnation, Herakles is portrayed by Kellan Lutz, and strays far from the original mythos in both story and character portrayal – unlike the previously mentioned *Hercules*, which came out six months after this movie was released in the same year (imdb.com). Unlike the previous film, which acknowledges the



Figure 10. Hercules acknowledges his father Zeus and gains inhuman strength. Photograph. 2014. Simon Varsano. 2013 Summit Entertainment. (imdb.com)

Twelve Labours of Herakles, this movie goes in a different direction. Here the movie begins with the story of Zeus seducing Alcmena, this time at the suggestion of Hera – already straying far from the original mythos – to punish the war-mongering King Amphitryon, as in the myth of the youth of Herakles. Taking place in 1200 BC, in Ancient Greece, Herakles begins this movie as Alcides, son of Amphitryon and secret son of Zeus. He falls in love with Princess Hebe of Crete, who is later forced to become betrothed to his brother Iphicles. Hercules – as he is called in this movie – has only one encounter with any reference to his Twelve Tasks. A Nemean lion attacks him and his brother, which Hercules proceeds to kill when weapons fail to harm it. When his brother claims the kill, he is sent away – to die in war – but returns a gladiator slave, later becoming the leader of the revolution against his father. Upon watching his allies being killed, he acknowledges his father Zeus, and takes on the mantle of Hercules truly – this is the scene captured in figure 10. The movie concludes with Hercules defeating the ‘evil’ of his father and brother and achieving his Heroic task. The plot explanation alone has little to do with the original story of Herakles, or even the symbolic nature of the hero. The visual representation brings little to no traits forward that would allow the viewer a chance to connect it with the iconic appearance and story of Herakles. Here the story and visual

depiction feed little into one another, and the disconnect can be received by the viewer. There is no striking Herakles depiction that leaves an impact, or at the very least suggests the thought of the legendary hero of Greek times. Unlike the previously mentioned film, *Hercules*, starring Dwayne Johnson, this movie brings across both very little impact as a modern movie, but also very little impact as a reinterpretation of Herakles, making it near impossible to identify this as something depicting the Greek hero at all.

Herakles of the Modern World

There is little that can be said of Herakles in the modern world. Unlike in the previous case studies, where his presence and imagery still held important connotations, in the modern-day Herakles has become little more than an icon of a hero. However, this is not the Hero title given to men of legend who died in glorious and epic battle. Herakles has evolved into a modern day hero, a hero who is viewed as only a myth, as a character played by famous actors, as a story retold in many forms and styles – all of which retain enough of the original to be recognised as such. Of course, there are exceptions to this, as there could be situations in which the visual image of Herakles still represents something more than a legend, however, those depictions then relate back to how he was visualised in the past, and do not call to the manner in which he is visualised in the present. Grander connotations behind the visual interpretations of Herakles cannot be drawn from the silver-screen action hero that he has become – if one were to speak of Herakles as more than just a movie figure, historical depictions are referenced. The story, the myth of Herakles, is referenced. However, as far as the modern action hero Herakles, he exists as a fascinating example of how humans have evolved a figure through time, a source of entertainment and wonder, and a character played by a well-known actor.

Chapter 4: Comparison and Discussion

In this section, the comparison will be to highlight the similarities and differences between the four different case studies I have presented in the previous chapter, and briefly discuss them. This is primarily to move towards answering my main research question. Following the comparison, I shall go into an in-depth discussion on the visual and material depictions of Herakles through time and region, and to address not only my primary research question, but to discuss and answer the sub-questions that I had posed in the introduction.

Comparison

The key similarity between each of the case studies is the link formed by the visual characteristics that can be found in the different forms of media. In the artefacts – the ceramics and engraved stone panels – we see a similar figure who possesses traits that hold a resemblance to one another. An interesting similarity that can be seen between the visual depictions of Herakles in Classical Greece and the Vajrapani of Gandhara is that they are both found deeply imbedded in the culture and life-style of the time periods from which they stem. Herakles in the Hellenistic period was commonly found depicted on ceramics – repeatedly, he possessed an image that was present in many areas of common, everyday life. Herakles was a part of the lifestyle, as much a part of the mythology and culture as he was of the daily lives of people in that time. We see in the first two case studies that Herakles is present on an amphora and a kylix, two objects that would have been involved in the life of even the common man. While such complex portrayals may have been more for the elite, depictions of Herakles on ceramic – as well as many other mythical figures – were not a rare, or even uncommon sight. In Gandhara, this figure who – looking at the cultural connection between Gandharan art and that of Classical Greece – possibly drew inspiration from the figure of Herakles, if not one amongst many sources of inspiration, is also a part of the life of the people who created the reliefs we see in artefacts three and four. Here it is already possible to see the connection the figure of Herakles held with people. In Gandhara, despite the narrative and the fact that Vajrapani is not Herakles as much as his creators may have taken stylistic inspiration from purely the Hellenistic art, we already see Herakles taken and turned into

something else – but only in the extent of borrowing imagery commonly associated with the mythical figure, to present a picture of a strong man, and a powerful protector.

Looking at the more detailed and ‘life-like’ drawings stemming from the Renaissance, a new image of Herakles is born; here we have a human body crafted in perfect condition, the lean and powerful man, with wild curly hair and an athletic, ‘perfect’ body. While many aspects of his visual nature remain the same; for example, the identifying markers such as the lion-skin pelt and olive-wood club and the large and muscular build, the change in his stylistic depiction indicates an evolution in his existence as a figure. Here we see Herakles drawn as a perfect being, with a perfect body, we see him engaged in battle with the monsters of his legends. However, these pictures are no longer simply telling a story, they are filled with sub-context, now holding deeper meanings relevant to the time in which the two artefacts were created – Herakles, no longer an immortal god and a mortal Hero, now a symbol of justice, righteousness, steadfastness, and reason. In the imagery used to depict two very different types of Herakles in modern media, we see one that reflects very strongly the visual elements that are present in depictions such as the ones found on the ceramics in case study One. The movie starring Dwayne Johnson was clearly influenced by the Hellenistic depictions of Herakles, the man with long, wild hair and a large and intimidating body, and the ever-present lion-skin pelt and club to complete the character. The surrounding imagery used in the rest of the movie beckons back to the Classical period most, seeming to have drawn most of its influences there, when looking at the style used to build the world and characters that surround Herakles in that movie. On the other hand, the second movie that was discussed went in the direction of the Roman Hercules, filling the movie with Roman architecture, themes, and visual elements – the clothing, the gladiators, and the structures, none of them reflected the visual depictions of Herakles seen in Classical Greek archaeology, at least compared to the artefacts of case study One.

One of the key differences that all the case studies have with each other presents itself in the quality and detail of the visual depictions. As time progresses, the means to produce visual imagery with more detail and different styles becomes more apparent in the biography of Herakles. In the archaeology, we see his style is simple, but well manufactured, and through time, although holding on to key elements of his visuals to maintain a connection to the Hellenistic Herakles, newer forms of Herakles come forward with more detailed interpretations of his appearance, yet none are the ‘original’.

Discussion

In the section above I compared my four case studies on their visual elements, and briefly discussed the importance and impact of those visual interpretations. The primary similarity that can be found between all of the artefacts and media that I selected for my case studies is that most of them – barring the second movie case study – appear to be depicting a figure that holds a strong resemblance to the man being depicted in the first case study, the ‘original Herakles’. While the resemblance is present, despite the media of each case study coming from very different periods in time, the visual depiction from each period of time exists with their own unique qualities that set them apart from the original Herakles, although they are visually quite similar. Each case study seems to have drawn inspiration from the visual depiction of Herakles, but taken away the meaning of the figure and given it their own as seen fit – which we see in Gandhara, the Renaissance, and finally, modern cinema. Archaeologically, the evolution of Herakles through time is remarkably interesting, as it provides a cultural biography which can be followed, and through this the change forced onto the legendary figure through time can be clearly seen. The visual impact of Herakles is fascinating to observe, as we can see it in effect even in different cultures – from Greco-Roman to Indian and Western culture. While I have previously stated that I disagree with the theory that Vajrapani was based on Herakles, the resemblance can be seen, especially in the slight similarity in style that the Gandharan artists implemented in the creation of the reliefs of Buddha and the Vajrapani that I discussed in case study Two. In addition to that, the fact that British scholars drew the connection between the two already indicates the impact of the Classical depiction of Herakles – such a vivid and distinct appearance, that finding its likeness elsewhere immediately suggests a connection, even if that connection was simply the adoption of the appearance of a physically strong deity.

While the Herakles-Vajrapani interpretation was likely the unintended consequence of using a visual representation that strongly reflected Herakles, the use of Herakles in the Renaissance and modern media is quite the opposite. Here we see a figure who is designed to be Herakles; he is meant to embody him. However, the perspective from which the viewers consume the works impact the meaning of the works. Herakles in Classical Greece was a living being, so to speak, a deity and hero whose stories and existence held an active role in the lives of people. Herakles-Vajrapani as well, although this was not Herakles but another being who held the same physical appearance – or at least some similar physical traits. This was not the intention of Renaissance artists – to

give life to a hero who existed in day to day lives – as Herakles was reused to symbolise and explore other things, such as the turmoil within man and the struggle of earthly desires against the morality of the spirit, and reinforcing political power through a symbol of justice and strength. In the modern age, Herakles has developed into a Hollywood hero, a character, a ‘superhero’. The word Hero does not hold the same gravity as it did in the Hellenistic period. Ultimately, what we can see is that, despite sharing similar physical traits with each other, these ‘Herakles’ figures are reinterpretations, differing from one another on the basis of their context and meaning, which is impacted heavily by the period and culture that they were born in. Gandharan artists borrow visual elements from Herakles to create Vajrapani, while Renaissance artists take the man in his entirety, but only as a hero, and use him as a symbol of pride and power, strength, and law – as well as a patriotic connection to the rich history of Italy that is more political in nature than it is religious or spiritual. Modern film makers, and modern consumers, hold no patriotic nor religious ties with Herakles, who is now only a myth, and there for either recreate the story in its entirety, or rely heavily on the original depictions – which still hold a strong impact on the way in which Herakles is visually presented.

The overarching similarities between the mythic figure depicted in each of my case studies would suggest that they aim to depict the same man. This is clearly not the case, as the intention that comes with each iteration is vastly different – Vajrapani not even being an intentional Herakles. While we can see that there is meant to be some form of connection, the ability to relate back to a figure that stems from such an ancient culture comes from the visual aspect, and only the visual aspect. The reception of Herakles, the purpose for which he has been recreated, these are all different. On the other hand, the very purpose could have been that the intention was to recreate the original Herakles into a symbol that suited the new ‘creators’ intentions and ideals; that through the association of the imagery, the ancient Herakles could be associated with the newer one. If this were the case, the importance of it has weakened over time, and now, despite knowing the importance of the original Herakles, it is the modern Herakles that appears to set the cultural standard for his meaning and importance, which is far less important than the Herakles who existed in the lives of the people of Ancient Greece.

Through time, individual reception forces change. Nothing can remain the same, as there are always different views given by any consumer of a product or piece of media – no ceramic kylix decorated with Herakles and Athena means the same to anyone in the modern world as it did to even one person in Ancient Greece. Now, as archaeologists, we

question the nature of these interpretations, and try to remain objective when assigning associations and meaning to artefacts. However, in trying to remain objective while forming connections and associations, the bias is inescapable, as the reception of an individual is shaped by their time, and there for understanding the perspective of one person living in the distant past is near impossible. Formulating a knowledgeable theory based on remaining evidence, however, is what can be done, and is being done. While this point is nothing new, it is interesting to see the impact of reception and interpretation through the cultural biography of a well-known figure such as Herakles.

What my case studies indicate is that Herakles, despite changing theme and meaning as time passes, remains a popular and liked figure, reused in periods that fall far apart, and whose legend remains well-known even in the present. The different depictions present in the case study does show that despite being subject to change, the ever-present aspects of Herakles' appearance allow for us to make a connection between these figures, even though the meaning that is given to him is, in the present, nothing like it was when he still existed as purely an oral tradition. While it is clear to see that the religious and cult aspects of Herakles have faded out from his myth, and are no longer tied into his importance, he holds some importance still, as a legendary figure to admire. Even though he is no longer ever-present in the daily life of people, he still receives a 'life' in the stories that are still told of him, and the many ways that he is reincarnated in modern media. This indicates the flexibility of myth, especially when tied in with a distinct visual representation; despite the passing of centuries, and the continuous change in culture, Herakles and his stories are known in more places in the modern world than in Classical Greece – the scope of his presence in the Mediterranean appearing minor when compared to today.

The case studies I have addressed in this thesis show that Herakles possesses a very flexible mythos and use – as do most myths and legends – and it is through his striking visual depiction that he maintains such popularity through reusability – as a political figure, a visual influence for art of a different culture, and entertainment. Through studying the artefacts, we come across the importance of a visual record, as it is easiest to reuse, as seen through the reusability of Herakles. However, it is also very easily changed or altered. This is also seen in the reception of Herakles in the different periods we have encountered him in in this thesis, where he takes on the mantle of many different faces, none as important as the one before, indicating that through time, the spirituality and cult aspect gave way to a more pragmatic style for Herakles, finally coming

to the modern reception of the hero; a very nonchalant reaction to a character who is not so much a part of our lives as he is present to entertain, and only that.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

My primary research question was as follows; “what similarities and differences can be found in a comparison of the visual representation of Herakles through time in various different forms of media”. The conclusion to this question is that the primary similarities we see between the visual representations of Herakles that I have selected for my case studies are exactly that, the visual similarities. The original myth has an impact, amplified by the presence of a clear, distinct visualisation to refer to. Through the different periods we are faced with Herakles wearing the same clothes, with a similar physical structure, engaged in the same tortured or heroic acts. The differences that appear stem from the cultural context we find the artefacts in. Due to the intentions behind the creation of Vajrapani, the Renaissance Herakles, and the modern-day Hercules, the meaning of Herakles experienced change, as well as the way he should be perceived. The summarised answer is that the greatest similarities of Herakles and his depictions through time are amongst the visual remains, while the differences stem primarily from the cultural context and meaning assigned to him at any given moment in time.

This leads into my sub-questions; “whether any Herakles we have seen since the Classical Herakles is truly meant to be the same man”, “what can these varying depictions show us about the reception of Herakles through time”, and finally, “what do these multiple varying interpretations tell us of the flexible nature of myth and depictions, and what does it suggest about people’s reception of that, and of the archaeology?”. To address the first question, my research suggests that no, no Herakles has ever been the same man, for if being the same requires not only the image to be the same, but also the thematic connotations associated with the image, and he is no longer that. The cult hero aspect died out, giving way to ultimately universal indifference, an existence as nothing more than a popular fictional character, where the myth was no longer fed by belief.

Herakles exists now in the same duality that he possessed when he was viewed as both an immortal god and the cult Hero, only now it lies between his existence those two states as a whole, and the modern action hero he has become. This answer also addresses my second question, as it states that the reception of Herakles through time has been subject to great change – an malleable symbol, now still a symbol of heroism and strength, as in the Renaissance, but with less connection to people and their daily lives. This applies to the third sub-question, as it is this flexibility that not only maintains the legend but allows it to follow people through the passage of time, and regions.

Finally, it is important to state it is archaeology that helps assign cultural context to the artefacts that are found, and the artefacts that I have used in my thesis. Without this context, there would be no opportunity to view the visual depictions from any perspective other than that of a modern viewer, as people would not understand the deeper themes and importance of figures such as Herakles, and Vajrapani – without cultural context, a divide might not even have been drawn between them, considering their stylistic similarities. Creating the flexibility Herakles has without his historical context and evolution through time would be far more difficult.

While this thesis was sufficient to briefly answer my research question, I believe that if this topic were to be expanded upon, an interdisciplinary approach combining archaeology and the art history would provide for an interesting research focus. The approach that I used to tackle the primary question of this thesis was a brief exploration of a remarkably interesting topic, and in the future, it could benefit research to be explored more in depth. This would mean using more case studies and bringing more focus to reception theory in the methodology of the essay to broaden the perspective of this specific topic and to provide a greater variety with which to address further developed research questions stemming from the questions posed in this thesis.

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