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### ***Thirty-Five Years of Hercules for Children***

Many elements of the Hercules myth are unpalatable to modern eyes, particularly when writing for children and young adults; the rape of Alcmena, Hercules' madness and subsequent murder of his children, the episode with Omphale, to give but three examples. Nevertheless, the story has long been beloved of authors of juvenile literature, and over the past three and a half decades, the story has appeared in multiple versions for children from two versions in the early 1980's (I. M. Richardson's *The Adventures of Hercules* (1983) and Bernard Evslin's *Hercules* (1984)), through a rash of post-Disney Hercules' in the late 1990s, e.g. Kathryn Lasky and Mark Hess, *Hercules: The Man, the Myth, the Hero* (1997), Jan Carr, *Hercules: The Hero* (1997), James Riordan and Christina Balit, *The Twelve Labors Of Hercules* (1997), Georges Moroz, *Hercules - The Complete Myths of a Legend/ Hercules: The Twelve Labors* (1997), Rc Cerasini, *Twelve Labors of Hercules* (1997), John Whitman, *Hercules: Mighty Chronicles* (1998), Nancy Loewen, *Hercules* (1998), Robert Burleigh and Raul Colon, *Hercules* (1999). A further, approximately thirty, versions have appeared since 2003, the latest of which have been influenced by recent screen depictions of the Greek hero. This paper investigates the ways in which the Hercules myth has been altered in these books, considering all of these works in their social contexts, and focussing on the method and nature of the adaptations, the illustrations used and the didactic or moral messages imparted. It thus aims to examine the moral and ethical messages being transmitted to children, providing an insight into the moral values and ideals of the Western world in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.



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