



Super/Heroes: From Hercules to Superman

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Why are audiences so fascinated with heroes? What makes the idea of heroes so necessary in society? The superhero has reached a level of popularity never witnessed before, making a successful and prolific transfer from the comic book and graphic novel into the multi-million dollar blockbuster film. A number of films and their sequels, including Spider Man, Batman, Batman Begins, Sin City, and X-Men represent only a handful of examples that have attained unprecedented box-office success or cult status in recent years. This collection of essays explores contemporary superhero narratives, including comic books and films, in a wider mythic context. This is the first study to evaluate the social function of the super/hero in contemporary, ancient and multiple media contexts, evaluating its continuities, transformations and cultural significance. The exploration of issues and hero types across time, cultures and media will open up the possibilities of hero studies across disciplines. This collection will be, in many respects, a prototype that will reveal the limitless possibilities inherent in truly inter-disciplinary studies in this area. "This collection fills an enormous gap in the study of popular culture and provides exactly what has been missing for too long-a comparative heroism study, driven by close-grain analyses of a wide range of heroes from different national cultures (comic book avengers, professional wrestlers, rock stars, anime heroines, Jesus) all animated by theoretical frameworks that are both rigorous and lucidly articulated. The end result is a collection of fascinating case studies which probe the popular appeal of the super/hero with an unprecedented degree of insight." -Jim Collins, Professor of Film, Television, and Theatre, University of Notre Dame. "Holy smoke! These essays offer a varied and engaging consideration of hero and superhero culture in a variety of manifestations-from Greek heroes and truly 'super men', to anime characters, Mexican luchadors and gangsta rappers. Reaching backwards with mythic, biblical and Jungian approaches to the heroic journey of mutation and transformation, and forward into the role that diverse media platforms and generic hybridity play in the evolution of superhero universes, this timely collection challenges what it means to be a Super/hero." - Roberta Pearson, Professor and Director of the Institute of Film and Television Studies at the University of Nottingham, and co-editor of The Many Lives of the Batman.

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