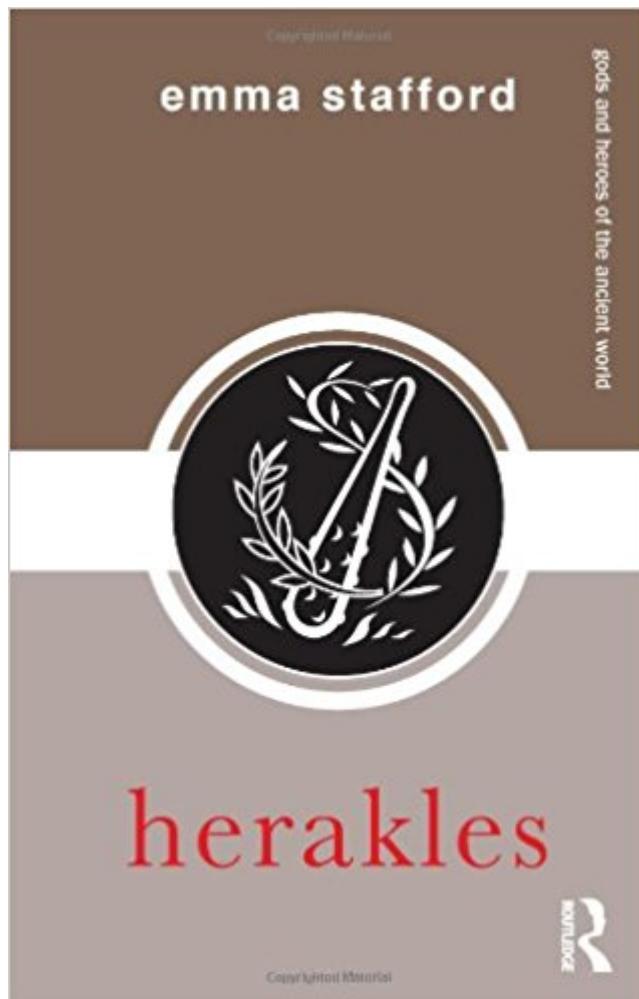


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Herakles



Synopsis

There is more material available on Herakles than any other Greek god or hero. His story has many more episodes than those of other heroes, concerning his life and death as well as his battles with myriad monsters and other opponents. In literature, he appears in our earliest Greek epic and lyric poetry, is reinvented for the tragic and comic stage, and later finds his way into such unlikely areas as philosophical writing and love poetry. In art, his exploits are amongst the earliest identifiable mythological scenes, and his easily-recognisable figure with lionskin and club was a familiar sight throughout antiquity in sculpture, vase-painting and other media. He was held up as an ancestor and role-model for both Greek and Roman rulers, and widely worshipped as a god, his unusual status as a hero-god being reinforced by the story of his apotheosis. Often referred to by his Roman name Hercules, he has continued to fascinate writers and artists right up to the present day. In *Herakles*, Emma Stafford has successfully tackled the Herculean task of surveying both the ancient sources and the extensive modern scholarship in order to present a hugely accessible account of this important mythical figure. Covering both Greek and Roman material, the book highlights areas of consensus and dissent, indicating avenues for further study on both details and broader issues. Easy to read, *Herakles* is perfectly suited to students of classics and related disciplines, and of interest to anyone looking for an insight into ancient Greece's most popular hero.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

'[P]acked with valuable, relevant, up to date and often surprising information, provided with useful

annotations. Anyone who wishes to familiarize himself with the deeds of Herakles could find no better place to start than here ... I strongly recommend Stafford's *Herakles*: this book is now the place to start (and keep returning to) for anyone interested in the world's most famous hero.' - Hugo Koning, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* In her important and stimulating monograph, Stafford achieves [a] Herculean task...both descriptive and analytical, it offers a wealth of material and engages successfully with ancient sources and modern critical research to give an insightful overview of Heracles, the hero with an ever-lasting appeal from antiquity to modern times. It is a pleasure to read. 'She has put much effort into her opus and has also compiled a rich bibliography...In general it is [a] useful book with much effort and industry behind it.' - Jan Bouzek, *Ancient West and East*

Emma Stafford is Senior Lecturer in Classics at the University of Leeds. Her research and teaching interests lie in Greek cultural history, especially religion, myth and art. She is author of *Worshipping Virtues: Personification and the Divine in Ancient Greece* (2000), and *Life, Myth and Art in Ancient Greece* (2004), and co-editor of *Personification in the Greek World* (2005). She has also written numerous articles on Greek religion and iconography.

An extremely informative and useful book. Filled with a multitude of information culled from a wide span of source. All collated with care, scholarly expertise and clearly organized. Highly readable. I found it helpful for my professional work; a complete bibliography and excellent choice of citations. Absolutely essential for anyone working on ancient history, art and philosophy. And also literature.

The author is a good writer (I even enjoyed her PhD thesis) and the material is well organised. The myths are set out clearly and the full range of literary evidence is combined with that from art. The chapter on his cult cannot be comprehensive, but concentrates on particularly interesting evidence. Finally, there is a comprehensive view of how Heracles functions (and still does) outside the cult: tragic hero, moral exemplar, comic character, cinematic hero, and football-club mascot! The reason it doesn't get 5 stars is the format of the series. Firstly a certain amount of space is wasted: every volume has the same series introduction, an introduction telling us what each chapter is going to be about, and a summary at the end of each chapter in case we've forgotten it already. Secondly, the quotations are in very small, faint type, and the illustrations are not much clearer. Thirdly, it attempts to cover too many fields, "from Greek and Roman religion ... to cultural studies". At least this is the

best volume to date.

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