



Herakles (Gods and Heroes of the Ancient World)

Emma Stafford

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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.

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