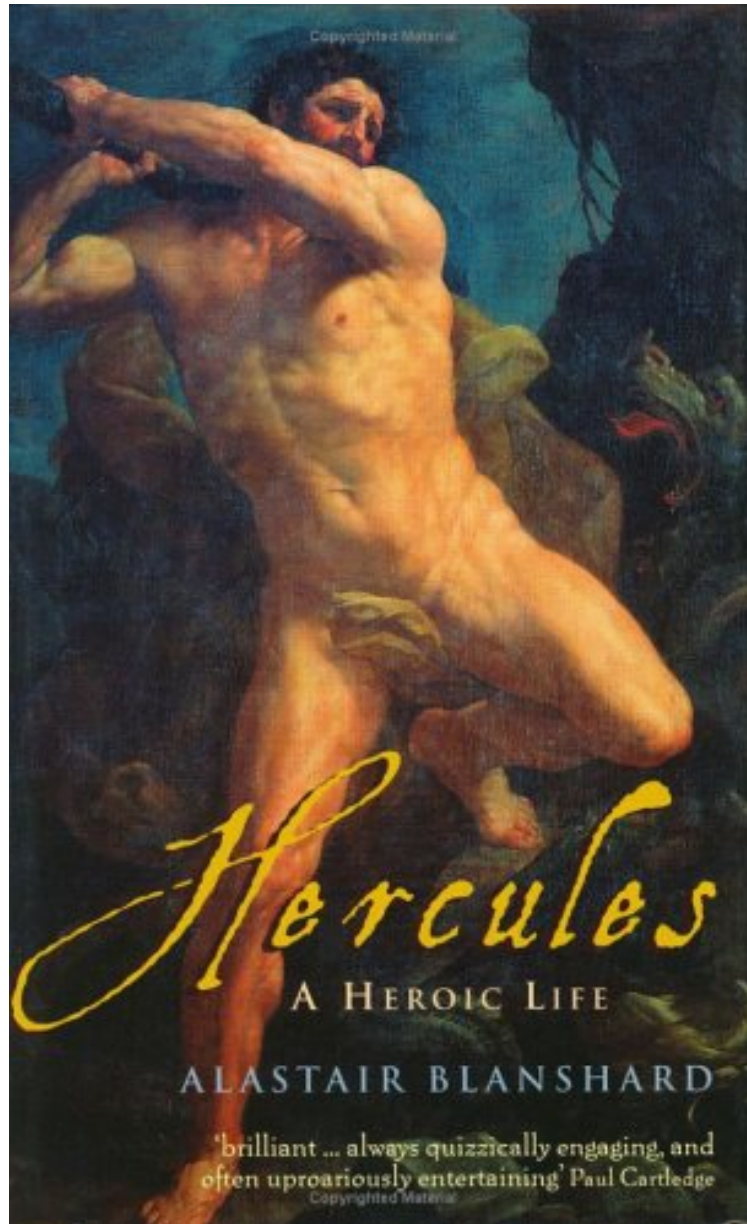


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Hercules: A Heroic Life

Alastair Blanshard

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Alastair Blanshard : Hercules: A Heroic Life before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hercules: A Heroic Life:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Heroic Life - A Winner By Maggie Mae This little known text is a treasure. Blanshard's style and wit open up new and exciting ways to relate to the timeless tale. His reference to the art

and literature draw the reader to seek more information. The organization of the text makes it very accessible. Although not a critical analysis the outstanding chapter on Alcestis makes the text stand on its own. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Not much actually about Hercules in this book. By MizStorge I was looking for a book that related the legends of Hercules in depth; this is not that book. The author has gone to great lengths to avoid focusing on Hercules. He says in the Introduction, Its too easy to get lost in the details, and lose track of the ideas, and goes on to write a book that gets lost in the details and loses track of the subject. We learn about French Revolutionaries, adultery in ancient Greece, the incidence of decorative art in Pompeii, 20th century Italian filmmakers, the origins of bodybuilding, and cover a lot of paintings and sculptures but, amid all this obfuscation, the actual life of Hercules isnt addressed all that well. With full blank pages at the end of many of the chapters, it's as if the author didn't really want to write a book about Hercules, and tried to think up other ways to fill the 160+ page count. Part of the problem is with the title: Blanshard just doesnt see Hercules life as being heroic. He calls Hercules, A dangerous, violent outsider with the blood of his first wife and children on his hands, (p 123 Granta Books paperback edition) and believes that, He gains fame because he can kill, (p 88 Granta Books paperback edition). Theres little time spent trying to understand why the ancient Greeks and Romans saw Hercules as the greatest hero who had ever lived, except for comments like, The Greeks enjoyed the spectacle of the powerful experiencing reverses, (p 66 Granta Books paperback edition). The author misses the point that listeners to the tales of Hercules recognized their own lives in the struggles of heroes and demigods: Challenges are only conquered by those who dont give up. People are glad to have someone else fix their problems, but victories arent always rewarded with gratitude. More is expected of those who succeed. Few pity the strong or successful when luck abandons them. Everyone wants a big, strong guy on their side when theres a threat, but once the dangers over theyre scared to keep him around. Friendship and love are priceless. Fame lasts only as long as memory. If you want to learn about the legends of Hercules, I recommend reading Philip Matyszak's Hercules: The First Superhero instead.

This unconventional biography of Hercules charts his life from his dramatic birth in Thebes to his agonizing death on a flaming pyre. Along the way, it recounts many long-forgotten yet revealing adventures and shows Hercules to be much more than just a muscle-bound hero. His life story, which mixes elements of tragedy and comedy, often makes uncomfortable reading: a rapist, drunkard, and transvestite, Hercules' excesses explore some of the darkest recesses of human nature.

'An acute and often witty study of an enduring figure in European culture, and one that succeeds in raising fascinating questions about our notions of masculinity' Sunday Times 'You learn something on every page, while being entertained by the witty telling and the writer's lightly worn erudition' Independent 'Blanshard provides a fascinating commentary on how Hercules has been portrayed through thousands of years in art and literature, on stage and screen' Good Book Guide 'Hercules - unchained! Alastair Blanshard's brilliant exploration of this quintessential hero's life in myths is always quizzically engaging, and often uproariously entertaining' Paul Cartledge About the Author Alastair Blanshard is a Greek cultural historian who has taught classics at the universities of Oxford and Reading. He has recently taken up a position at the University of Sydney. This is his first book.