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Somewhere I Have Never Travelled: The Second Self and the Hero's Journey in Ancient Epic

Thomas Van Nortwick

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Exploring the hero's journey as a metaphor for spiritual evolution in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Homer's *Iliad*, and Virgil's *Aeneid*, and focusing in particular on the relationship of the hero to one or more "second selves," or alter egos, Van Nortwick demonstrates how the poems address central and enduring truths about human life: that the exertion of heroic will in pursuit of glory can lead to alienation from one's own deepest self and that spiritual wholeness can only be achieved through confrontation with what appears at first to be the very negation of the self. Though addressing issues of interest to classical scholars the book offers an interpretation of the poems which is accessible to students and to others interested in how imaginative constructs reflect life. Because the hero's journey forms the backbone of each poem, the discussion also serves as an introduction to the central themes and historical evolution of ancient epic. An extensive annotated list of sources suggests avenues for further exploration of the ideas raised in the book, and a bibliographical essay aimed at scholars discusses relationship of the book's argument to previous scholarship on the poems.

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