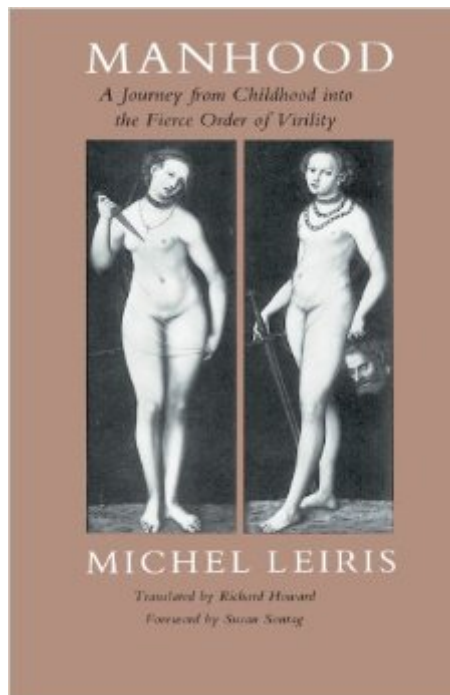


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Manhood: A Journey From Childhood Into The Fierce Order Of Virility



Synopsis

"Not only one of the frankest of autobiographies, but also a brilliantly written book, Leiris' Manhood mingles memories, philosophic reflections, sexual revelation, meditations on bullfighting, and the life-long progress of self-discovery." "Washington Post Book World "Leiris writes to appall, and thereby to receive from his readers the gift of a strong emotion" the emotion needed to defend himself against the indignation and disgust he expects to arouse in his readers." "Susan Sontag, New York Review of Books

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Michel Leiris-- a French ethnographer who also was affiliated with the surrealist literary movement-- penned this often morbidly self-castigating memoir in the proclaimed hope that he might confront and largely master the many deep-seated fears and obsessions that contributed to his "growth" into manhood. Of course, like a number of works within such a genre-- Rousseau's Confessions would provide a paradigm of this-- one often feels suspended between such a cathartic motive and the manner in which the narrative betrays a strange masochistic pleasure as well: a phenomenon that Leiris perceives himself, and which often serves to amplify his self-criticism even further. In accounting for his motives, Leiris proposes an analogy between his own activity and that of a bullfighter whose ritualistic behavior must to some extent mimic the very violent or threatening forces that it wishes to subdue. If in a writer like Hemingway this narrative attempt to regain some sense of virility or manhood sometimes betrays an underlying fear of castrating women, Leiris

clearly indulges in this fear in a much more overt and graphic fashion, even as he acknowledges the bizarre mixture of desire that transforms such fear into its eroticized counterpart. Thus we see so many of his early experiences organized around the symbolic figures of Lucrece and Judith, two female figures from ancient myth who in their own ways serve to highlight the ambivalent significance of violent feminine sexuality in the male imagination.

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