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a review of N. J. Saunders, *Alexander's Tomb; The Two Thousand Year Obsession to Find the Lost Conqueror* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), ISBN 978-0-465-07202-6

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This thoroughly entertaining overview of the search for Alexander the Great's final resting place is a book of questions rather than answers. While quests concerning the liminal zone between the historical and the legendary generally lose none of their fascination if no definitive answers are found – the Holy Grail, the Ark of the Covenant and Atlantis continue to elude – the reader of this volume is left wondering about quite a few minor puzzles within the central mystery of Alexander's posthumous whereabouts. Why was the local sanctuary purported to house Alexander's corpse never displayed on any of a thousand coins minted at Alexandria (p. 78)? Why did emperor Severus deposit books on alchemy inside the building and lock it up (p. 87)? And why did the Arabs of a later date identify Alexander, now largely mythologised, with the prophet Daniel (p. 127)? Saunders' answers to these vexing questions are quite unsatisfactory. At points, the book would also have benefitted from a bit more research or some more careful phrasing. It would have helped if Saunders had perused and cited primary sources more often, instead of relying on modern writers for Chrysostom, Strabo, Zenobius or Lucan. And one would hardly characterise Mohammed's recitals, embedded in the *Qur'an*, as "stories" (p. 118). Such quibbles and a handful of typos aside, the book remains a riveting, intelligent and highly informative read. That the 'discovery' of the tomb of Christ in the 3rd century CE and the cult subsequently woven around it in a sense emulated the pagan prototype of Alexander's 'empty' tomb is a brilliant analysis. If anything, ironically, the parallel could have suggested an unexpectedly elegant solution to the conundrum of Alexander's tomb: as in the case of Christ, Alexander's body is not here, but resides in that magical abode where all heroes of his ilk await their return – the throne of God, the cave of Cronus, or perhaps Avalon.

immortal heroes need no tombs; rating: 8