

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

LITERATURE

AUSTIN (E.) **Grief and the Hero: The Futility of Longing in the *Iliad***. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021. Pp. x + 192. £55.95/\$70. 9780472132324.
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In this slender but not inconsequential volume, Emily Austin reflects on the nature of grief in the *Iliad*. With particular focus on the grief of Achilles after the death of Patroklos and its aftermath, Austin attempts to account for the hero's ensuing anger; she goes on to observe the continuing failure of that anger, boundless as it is, to assuage the pain of loss. She compares the grief experienced by Achilles and its explosions into aimless but often violent activity with the passive quality of Trojan grief after the death of Hektor. Through this detailed study she demonstrates, with beautiful clarity, grief's crucial role in the arc of the narrative.

The key to heroic grief, Austin argues, is to be found in *pothē* ('longing'). Taking her cue from David Konstan's work (*The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks* (Toronto 2006)), she views longing as the 'desire for wholeness now lost' (15–16). This first chapter ('*Pothē* in the *Iliad*') offers us an overview of the uses of the term in the poem (amplifying the appendices to the volume). *Pothē* is used insistently in the context of Achilles' grief, in the longing that he expresses in his address to Patroklos (*sēi pothēi*, 19.321), that the narrator observes in his description of Achilles, restless and unable to sleep (*potheōn*, 24.6), and that is felt both by Achilles' horses (17.439) and by his men, the Myrmidons (23.16). At the heart of this chapter is a comprehensive study of Achilles and Patroklos' relationship as depicted in the epic (32–49). This is no homoerotic bond, nor is it a father-son relationship, nor is Patroklos an alter ego, a second self. Rather, Austin argues persuasively for 'a particular form of friendship, one rooted in a deep and pervasively shared life' (33); as she demonstrates, the men are related as 'brothers, teachers and pupils, counsellors to one another, and fellow comrades' (38), a complex bond of friendship that forges a single identity. On Patroklos' death, therefore, Achilles' world is shattered; hence his *pothē* for his companion and the life they shared.

In chapter 2 ('Longing, Anger, and Futility') Austin considers Achilles' grief-driven behaviours, noting the sheer volatility of his responses to his loss (51). Here she observes his desire for isolation; his desire for community; his apathy; and the aimless, repetitious activity that emerges from his anger. At this point I longed for something more. Although Austin claims that 'the articulation of this grief-anger relationship is crucial to understanding the *Iliad*' (51), although she poses that very question (why does grief shaped by *pothē* turn to anger?, 67) and although she offers sensitive readings of the text in her account of the hero's insatiate behaviour, I miss some reference to a real-world account of the psychology of grief-driven anger. What do social psychologists say about the emotional and situational triggers that can cause the experience of longing to spill over into anger?

Chapter 3 ('How *Pothē* Changes the Story') considers both the persistence of Achilles' anger after the death of Hektor, especially as documented early in *Iliad* 24, and its final release, when, in the presence of Priam, Achilles lets go his anger and thus abandons that cycle of futile behaviour. Austin argues persuasively that Achilles has perceived that his longing for Patroklos can never be quenched (104–05); and, as he has discovered, anger and

violence do not ease the pain of loss. Only now, with this realization, can he release the body of Hektor and re-engage with mortal life, as he shares a meal with his enemy.

By contrast, the grief experienced by the Trojans after the death of Hektor is not manifested in the same way. There is no opportunity for *pothē*, no looking back to a shared life in the past. Rather, as Austin shows in chapter 4 ('Grief for Hektor'), the Trojans look to the future with dismay. Their lives (and their fate) are tied to that of Hektor. After his death their city, they know, will be sacked (121). Their grief is characterized, therefore, by a subdued, despairing passivity.

As for Hektor's closest kin, their fate is likewise enmeshed with the fate of the city. Although Andromache's lament at 22.477–514 offers a vivid illustration of the rupture in the life that she and Hektor had shared, and although Priam's short-lived frenzied actions (22.412–28) suggest *pothē*-driven behaviour, the poet avoids the specific language of *pothē* (127). Personal loss and longing are elided here; the implications of Hektor's death, for every Trojan, overshadow all else.

To conclude: Austin has offered us a splendid account of the hero of the *Iliad* through the lens of grief – his own and, by contrast, that of the Trojans. I recommend this 'robustly literary' (3) study for its careful argument, its engagement with current scholarship and its eminent readability.

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KRETTLER (K.) **One Man Show: Poetics and Presence in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*** (Hellenic Studies 78). Washington DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2020. Pp. 384. \$24.95. 9780674980020.

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To read Chryses' speech to the Achaians in silence is qualitatively different from facing a man who begs for his daughter's freedom, gesturing pathetically towards you. It is this aspect of the Homeric poems that Kretler urges us to appreciate in her analysis of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as scripts for performance.

In its focus on the poems' performative intent, the volume under review complements a century of work on composition in performance and adds to a growing body of scholarship exploring the interactions between the Homeric narrator and audiences both inside and outside the story.

In the introduction, Katherine Kretler notes that Plato and Aristotle were impressed by the performative dimension of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and argues that they were struck in particular by the 'uncanny or haunted quality of Homeric poetry' (47), which is central to Kretler's conception of Homeric performance.

Chapter 1 surveys the techniques by which the bard activated various performative dynamics. While some of these are clearly relevant to the experience of a live audience (for example, gestures, mapping story space onto performance space, shifting from narration to direct speech), others are less straightforwardly so (for example, the evocation of background stories, the use of ring composition, intratextual resonances and the creation of ethical dilemmas). While these effects can certainly be appreciated in performance, as they were intended to be, one may question the extent to which Homeric intratextuality or ring composition ought to be regarded as performative phenomena.