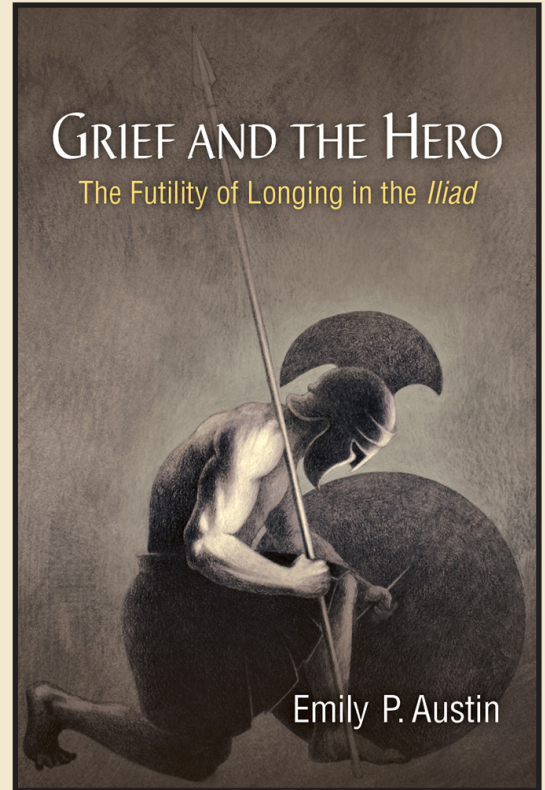


Grief and the Hero

The Futility of Longing in the Iliad

Grief and the Hero examines Achilles' experience of the futility of grief in the context of the Iliad's study of anger. No action can undo his friend Patroklos' death, but the experience of death drives him to behave as though he can achieve something restorative. Rather than assuming that grief gives rise to anger, as most scholars have done, *Grief and the Hero* pays close attention to the poem's representation of the origin of these emotions. In the Iliad, only Achilles' grief for Patroklos is joined with the word *pothê*, "longing"; no other grief in the poem is described with this term. The Iliad depicts Achilles' grief as the rupture of shared life—an insight that generates a new way of reading the epic. Achilles' anguish drives him to extremes, oscillating between self-isolation and seeking communal expressions of grief; between weeping abundantly and relentlessly pursuing battle; between varied threats of mutilation, deeds of vengeance, and other vows. Yet his yearning for life shared with Patroklos is the common denominator. Here lies the profound insight of the Iliad. All of Achilles' grief-driven deeds arise from his longing for life with Patroklos, and thus all of these deeds are, in a deep sense, futile. He yearns for something unattainable—undoing the reality of death. *Grief and the Hero* will appeal not only to scholars and students of Homer but to all humanists. Loss, longing, and even revenge touch many human lives, and the insights of the Iliad have broad resonance.

Emily P. Austin is Assistant Professor of Classics and the College, University of Chicago.



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