Homer’s Iliad

Week 7 · Short reading note

Focus

The Iliad does not narrate the entire Trojan War. As the presentation stresses, the poem focuses on Achilles’ wrath during a limited period near the end of the war. Hector’s death is its climax, while the fall of Troy takes place after the poem.

Heroes and gods

The conflict between Achilles’ courage and Agamemnon’s authority shapes the war. Patroclus’ loyalty, Hector’s honour, Priam’s wisdom and Andromache’s love give dignity to both sides. Hera, Athena, Apollo, Aphrodite, Poseidon and Zeus intervene in mortal affairs.

Reading path

Book I introduces Achilles’ wrath. Book VI turns to Hector and Andromache, Book XVI to Patroclus’ death, Book XXII to Hector’s death, and Book XXIV to Priam’s encounter with Achilles. Compassion interrupts the cycle of revenge at the close.

Question

How does ending with Hector’s funeral, rather than a military victory, change our reading of heroism and loss?