

Lesser, R. H. (2022) *Desire in the Iliad: The Force that Moves the Epic and Its Audience*, Oxford.

This book is the first study to examine desire in the *Iliad* in a comprehensive way, and to explain its relationship to the epic's narrative structure and audience reception. Its approach is informed by studies of desire in ancient and modern literature, narrative theory and narratology, psychoanalytic theories of object-loss, feminist and queer theories, and cognitive approaches to literature. The book identifies the triangle of desire, featuring two parties in conflict over a third, as a fundamental and pervasive pattern in the *Iliad*. It shows how a variety of desires animate these triangles, including sexual passion, longing for a lost loved one, yearning for lamentation, and aggressive desires for vengeance and status, which are signified by terms such as *erōs*, *himeros*, *pothē*, *menos*, *thumos*, *boulē*, and *eeldōr* as well as through the epic's thematic emotions of grief and anger. The author demonstrates how mortal and divine desiring characters, and particularly "queer" characters who transgress norms of gender and sexuality, together drive and shape two Iliadic plots, the main plot of Achilles' withdrawal from the fighting and return to battle, and the "superplot" of the larger Trojan War story. She also argues that these plots and their motivating desires arouse the listener's—or reader's—own corresponding desires: narrative desire to know and understand the *Iliad*'s full story, sympathetic desire for characters' welfare, and empathetic passions, longings, and wishes. Our desires invest us in the epic narrative and their resolution brings us satisfaction.