

He is One Half of My Soul, as the Poets Say: Lineages of Homo-Heroic Grief and Loss in *Captain America*, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, and *The Iliad*

This paper situates the relationship between Steve Rogers and Bucky Barnes in the films *Captain America: The First Avenger* and *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* within the homoerotic-homosocial lineage of heroic epics. Drawing on the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and *The Iliad*, this paper focuses on heroic grief, loss, and longing. In Emily Austin's book, *Grief and the Hero: The Futility of Longing in the Iliad*, she writes that Achilles' grief is intimately tied to the ideas of a "lost shared life," and the "image of *ruptured wholeness*" by which our hero is driven to anger and futile actions by "a desire for what" they can never fulfil, "the restoration of the person lost" (Austin 2021, 2). This sense of ruptured wholeness that Austin identifies shapes the grief of not only Achilles, but that of Gilgamesh and Steve Rogers. In this paper, I argue that Steve Rogers functions as the Achilles/Gilgamesh figure, struggling to navigate a world without Bucky Barnes, the Patroclus/Enkidu figure. Steve's grief and trauma spirals into suicidality, or a desire to die that echoes the heroic grief of Achilles and Gilgamesh in their respective narratives. This paper is divided into three sections: the texts that I am using, the construction of the hero-companion relationship within those texts, and the ways that the hero responds to the death of their companions. Using *Gilgamesh* and *The Iliad* in conversation with the first two *Captain America* movies of the Marvel Comics Universe (MCU), I am hoping to trace a homo-heroic lineage that points to the ways that the ancient epics are echoed in modern day superhero films and helps to unpack the grief and suicidality of Steve Rogers.

Initial Bibliography

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