

# **Sing, Muses, of the Grief of Achilles.**

An analysis of the grief of Achilles in the *Iliad* using  
Coping Theory and Grief Psychology

Plan A Master's Thesis

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*Grief is the existential testament to the worth of the one who is lost.*

-Professor Mark Berkson, PhD<sup>1</sup>

*What is grief if not love persevering?*

-Vision<sup>2</sup>

## **I. Introduction**

Homer's *Iliad* has been a subject of study since it was first committed to writing almost 3,000 years ago in Archaic Greece. This epic tale, which focuses on a small section of the Trojan War, became the standard of writing in Greece and Rome for centuries. Even today, the story of Achilles' wrath fascinates scholars and general readers alike.

While the epic occurs in a different time and place from our own and is filled with fantastical characters, the story itself is about universally human problems and the characters are relatable. The plot is driven by two types of problems: arguments over reputation and by the need to come to terms with great loss. The overall relatability of the characters is part of the genius of Homer, who took an epic tale of the gods and their (occasionally immortal) children and created a story that would be accessible in every time and place.

Most importantly for this study, the semi-divine character Achilles is relatable as he deals with questions of mortality and loss. The myth of Achilles is well known. As a young man, his mother, the goddess Thetis, told Achilles that he had a two-fold fate: he

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<sup>1</sup> Berkson, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Schaeffer & Shakman, 2021.

could either die young fighting at Troy having won great κλέος (fame or glory)<sup>3</sup> for himself, or he could stay home and die of old age, but never be known beyond his home of Phthia. This is the myth that we are familiar with today, and Jonathan Burgess argues that this myth was familiar to Archaic Greeks before the *Iliad* was composed.<sup>4</sup> Other myths available at the time granted Achilles immortality.<sup>5</sup> Homer's nuance in the *Iliad* is his focus on Achilles' mortality. While Achilles' early death was always a focus within his myths, Homer made his mortality one of *the* focuses.<sup>6</sup>

Much work has been done already concerning Achilles' fate and how he responds to it within the *Iliad*. What I am interested in here is how Achilles reacts to a different death, that of his companion Patroclus. Some *Iliad* scholars discuss the actions of mourners, the belief in an afterlife, or the process of a proper funeral.<sup>7</sup> This interest seems to follow the trend in other fields that are interested in death.<sup>8</sup> I have discovered only one scholar who discusses the process of coping with death and loss in the *Iliad*, Jonathan Shay. His context, however, is the Vietnam War and the experience of soldiers. Still, his work offers interesting insights. Georges Méautis also discusses the broad change in Achilles' psychology over the course of the *Iliad*. Following in the work of scholars, such as Saul M. Olyan, who examines grief psychology within the Hebrew Bible, this thesis will be using an intersectional approach with psychology to do a close

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<sup>3</sup> κλέος is "that which is spoken about you." A hero earns κλέος by "sending another hero to the underworld" and risking his life doing so (Gazis, pp. 34-35) or it is done by "dying in full view of the gods and of each other" (Gazis, pp. 10-11). Therefore, κλέος and death are inextricably tangled together. This is discussed by many characters within the *Iliad*, such as Hector and Ajax during their duel in Book 7 or Hector when he decides to fight Diomedes in Book 8.

<sup>4</sup> Burgess, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Such as Robert Garland, Kyriaki Mystakidou, and Christine Sourvinou-Inwood.

<sup>8</sup> Gross, p. 10 and Olyan, p. 2.

reading of the *Iliad* through the lens of modern Coping Theory and Grief Psychology. I will focus on the character of Achilles and how he copes with the death of Patroclus. By investigating his actions and words within the text, we can see how Achilles grieves and how he comes to terms with the loss of his companion. Even though he is a demi-god of Greek epic, we can still relate to Achilles through the way he grieves the death of a loved one.

Before we can delve into the psychology of Achilles, however, we need an understanding of views of death in Archaic Greece, the methodology which I will be utilizing to analyze the character of Achilles, and the *Iliad* itself.

## **II. Views of Death in Archaic Greece**

The general view of death within the Homeric poems is referred to by Sourvinou-Inwood as the Tame Death or the Good Death. This idea remained current through at least the fifth century and was consistent for thousands of years.<sup>9</sup> If there was a change developing, it was among the elite philosophers. Homeric attitudes among the general populace changed little from 800 BCE to 500 BCE, which includes the time in which the *Iliad* was taking the form we largely have now.<sup>10</sup> Thus, when reading the Homeric epics, it is possible to use them to understand some basic attitudes of the average Archaic and Classical Greek.

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<sup>9</sup> Morris, p.299.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 300-301.

The Tame Death has two parts to it: dying in battle and winning κλέος or dying old and peacefully in your home. This is certainly exemplified through the *Iliad*, where many warriors are seen willingly fighting in battle for the chance to win κλέος. The example of Sarpedon and Glaucus in Book 12 of the *Iliad* is very instructive here.<sup>11</sup> Sarpedon tells Glaucus how, since they are mortal and all mortals must die, they should fight and either win κλέος themselves by killing the enemy or give the κλέος to others by being killed. The key here is that death and κλέος are inseparable for the Tame Death.

Homer exemplifies the other half of the Tame Death through its negative in Book 22 of the *Iliad*. As Hector is about to duel Achilles, Hector's father, King Priam, begs his son not to fight.<sup>12</sup> Part of Priam's appeal to his son is to explain what will happen to him if Hector dies, rather than discussing what death would mean for Hector himself. Hector's death will signal the end of the last defense of Troy. With the fall of Troy, all of Priam's sons and sons-in-law will be killed, and his daughters and daughters-in-law will be taken captive by the Achaeans.<sup>13</sup> Priam will be aware of these losses. Then he himself will be killed by a Greek soldier, left to be eaten by his own dogs. He says

νέω δέ τε πάντ' ἐπέοικεν

ἄρηϊ κταμένω δεδαϊγμένω ὄξει χαλκῷ

κεῖσθαι: πάντα δὲ καλὰ θανόντι ὅττι φανήη

ἄλλ' ὅτε δὴ πολίον τε κάρη πολίον τε γένειον

αἰδῶ τ' αἰσχύνωσι κύνες κταμένοιο γέροντος

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<sup>11</sup> *Iliad* 12.326-328.

<sup>12</sup> *Iliad* 22.38-76.

<sup>13</sup> *Iliad* 22.58-65.

τοῦτο δὴ οἴκτιστον πέλεται δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσιν. (*Il.* 22.71-76)<sup>14</sup>

But for a young man, all things are suitable  
being killed in battle he lies there having been slain by sharp bronze:  
and, though being dead, all things appear lovely:  
but when the dogs disfigure the respected grey head and the grey beard  
and the shameful parts of the old man having been killed  
this is the most pitiable thing to wretched mankind.

Priam here affirms both sides of the Good Death. Dying in battle will be proper for Hector, although still heartbreaking for those he leaves behind. Yet, because of his death, Priam will die an improper death at the hands of a soldier. This example shows that an old man falling in battle is shameful. An elderly person should not be in the context of battle. Rather, he should be at home, surrounded by family, dying peacefully in his bed. The further description of Priam being eaten by the dogs which he brought up in the palace emphasizes that there will be nobody left in Troy to bury his corpse, a further shame. Instead, his entire bloodline will be lost, with all his sons dead, and nobody will be left to complete the familial duty of the funeral.

Another part of the ideology of the Tame Death has to do with the community, and the willingness to risk one's life for the sake of one's community. The "continuity of

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<sup>14</sup> All translations and emphases are my own unless otherwise specified.

the community gives meaning to the discontinuity of the individual.”<sup>15</sup> This is shown in a beautiful simile within the *Iliad*.

τὸν δ' αὖθ' Ἴππολόχοιο προσηύδα φαίδιμος υἱός:  
“Τυδεΐδη μεγάθυμε τί ἢ γενεὴν ἐρεΐνεις;  
οἷη περ φύλλων γενεὴ τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν.  
φύλλα τὰ μὲν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη  
τηλεθόωσα φύει, ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη:  
ὥς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ ἢ μὲν φύει ἢ δ' ἀπολήγει.” (Il. 6.144-149)

Then [Glaucus] the shining son of Hippolochus spoke to him,  
“Great-hearted [Diomedes] son of Tydeus, why do you ask my ancestors?  
Like the generations of leaves, such are the generations of men.  
The wind blows the leaves to the ground, but the trees  
blooming grow other leaves and the season of spring comes:  
Thus the generation of men grows and dies.”

Glaucus gives two, contradictory opinions in only a few lines. On the one hand, he dismisses Diomedes' question concerning his lineage. He likens the generations to leaves, which the wind blows to the ground. The lifespan of a mortal is fleeting. On the other hand, Glaucus continues on to list his ancestors, which he can trace back to the

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<sup>15</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1983), p. 34.

famous hero Bellerophon.<sup>16</sup> As Glaucus speaks, they learn that Bellerophon and Diomedes' ancestor, Oineus, were guest-friends. Since guest-friendship is hereditary, Glaucus and Diomedes are also guest-friends. To reenforce this friendship, they exchange armor rather than fight.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, Diomedes' question about Glaucus' lineage is meaningful. This is the tree that remains, blooming with new leaves every year.

The importance of a hero's lineage is also evident by Homer's use of patronymics. A hero's patronymic tells what land he is from, who his ancestors are, and if any of them did something of note, as in the case of Glaucus. Through their descendants, someone's κλέος might be remembered. It is not just about the κλέος of one man, but the continuation and κλέος of the family and the community. A hero is not simply an individual; he is a member of a lineage and of a place. Achilles, for another example, is the son of the hero King Peleus. Peleus, according to some myths, was one of the heroes who sailed with Jason on the Argo to find the Golden Fleece. Achilles is also the prince of Phthia and the leader of the Myrmidons who are fighting at Troy and he holds the title Best of the Achaeans. Both aspects are part of his identity, the tree that sprouts new leaves each spring and the leaf that is Achilles himself.

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<sup>16</sup> *Iliad* 6.150-211.

<sup>17</sup> *Iliad* 6.212-236.

### III. Coping Theory and Grief Psychology

Before analyzing Achilles' own experience of loss within the *Iliad*, it is helpful to gain a basic understanding of modern Coping Theory and Grief Psychology. These tools will help give a starting point for understanding Achilles' grief through a psychological lens, although with some caution since we are looking at a different time and culture within the *Iliad*.

The field of Coping Theory is still relatively new, having only been an area of research since the 1970s.<sup>18</sup> Since then, scholars have worked to properly define coping and to apply their research, but there still is not a single, standard definition for coping. I will give my own definition here, based on those of Lazarus and Folkman and Zeidner.<sup>19</sup>

Coping is a more or less rational, adaptable response to a specific stressor that is seen as exceeding available resources, whether physical, psychological, or emotional.

Coping theory as a field focuses on how an individual reacts to stress and how they personally deal with that stress. This field has more to do with how a person *actually* reacts than how a person *should* react.

That being said, we can discuss how coping may be more or less appropriate to a given situation. Folkman argues that *control* is central for determining what general type of coping would be most appropriate in any situation.<sup>20</sup> When the situation that is causing stress is controllable, the one coping would be best helped by looking at problem-focused coping strategies. An example of this would be if someone in an

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<sup>18</sup> Zeidner, p. xv.

<sup>19</sup> Carpenter, p. 48; Zeidner, p. 45.

<sup>20</sup> Carpenter, pp.41-44.

argument became stressed by it afterward. In this case, they could later go back to try and resolve the argument. When the situation that is causing stress is uncontrollable, however, the one coping would be best helped by looking at emotion-focused coping strategies. An example of this would be if someone today experiences a death in the family, they may seek companionship or a therapist, effectively leaning on other people to help them cope with the loss. Study has also found that someone coping may act as though they have some degree of control over their situation, even if they do not, in order to utilize problem-focused coping strategies. This has been shown to aid with coping.<sup>21</sup>

Additionally, research shows that the event itself is not the only factor determining the stress level of the one coping. The consequences of the event in the social environment also play a role.<sup>22</sup> For example, being financially insecure before experiencing a death in the family would make paying for a funeral a greater burden. This hardship, in turn, would make coping with that death more difficult. How the one coping interacts with their social environment before and after the stress inducing event plays a role in how effectively they cope with that event.

Richard Gross' book *The Psychology of Grief* has been instrumental to my research on coping with interpersonal loss and on grief. Gross overviews different types of grief and different responses that people have. Let us start with some definitions. The first is *bereavement*, which is defined as the loss of a loved one through death.<sup>23</sup> *Grief* is the response to bereavement. *Grief work* is the process of detaching “from the deceased in

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>23</sup> Gross, p. 2.

order to form new attachments/relationships” and to move on.<sup>24</sup> The concept of grief work has been altered recently to remove the goal for the bereaved to detach from the deceased and instead to reorganize.<sup>25</sup> Put in other terms, “the dead person must be detached socially and then reintegrated as a non-living member of society.”<sup>26</sup> This allows the bereaved to remain emotionally attached to the deceased in a way that also allows them to come to terms with their loss.

Acute grief is the type of grief that occurs soon after the loss. Typical characteristics of acute grief include preoccupation with the image of the deceased, guilt, hostility, and changes in behavior patterns.<sup>27</sup> Important factors in determining more long-term grief responses are gender, age, and relationship to the deceased. Women, in general, are more likely to be intuitive grievers, which means that they will deal directly with their grief and be more likely to cry and have a desire to talk with others about their loss. Men, in general, are more likely to be instrumental grievers, which means that they will (re)channel their grief into other activities.<sup>28</sup> Regardless of these generalizations, it is important to understand that everyone’s “grief journey” is unique and that someone’s culture plays a large role in deciding what is deemed appropriate grieving and what is deemed inappropriate, or complicated, grieving.<sup>29</sup> My method in this thesis, then, of unpacking *how* Achilles grieves is through a modern Western lens. I leave it to the text of the *Iliad* itself to determine whether and when Achilles’ grief becomes inappropriate.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 3. This idea was first presented by Freud.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>26</sup> Olyan, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> Gross, pp. 33-34.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-8.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 25, 63-64.

There are certain risk factors for complicated grief that appear to be universal, however what is understood as complicated grief is defined in each specific culture. The most important factor is how the deceased died. The bereaved is more likely to suffer from complicated grief if the deceased dies suddenly or unexpectedly, if the death was violent or involved human agency (as in the cases of suicide or murder), or if there were multiple deaths at the same time.<sup>30</sup> Especially in the case of murder, anger and guilt are likely to be the predominated emotions for the bereaved.<sup>31</sup>

It is important to remember that grief, and coping in general, is a process that takes place over time.<sup>32</sup> Models of grief, such as Kubler-Ross and Bowlby, which believed in phases that *should* be worked through, have recently been challenged.<sup>33</sup> One alternative to these rigid models is to view their phases not as a strict, ordered checklist, but rather as phases which could be touched and repeated as needed.<sup>34</sup> Another alternative is to abandon these stages altogether and instead look at components of grief: shock, disorganization, denial, depression, guilt, anxiety, aggression, resolution, and reintegration.<sup>35</sup>

Whichever model is used, there are four main tasks of mourning that must be accomplished for the bereaved to successfully complete their grief journey. First, the reality of the death must be acknowledged and accepted. Second, the bereaved must experience or process the pain of their loss. Third, the bereaved must adjust to a world

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>32</sup> Carpenter, p. 49

<sup>33</sup> Bowlby's four phases of mourning are: phase of numbing, phase of yearning and searching, phase of disorganization and despair, and phase of reorganization. See Gross, p. 14.

<sup>34</sup> Gross, p. 16.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

that no longer includes the deceased. Finally, the bereaved must discover an “enduring connection” with the deceased while starting a new life without them.<sup>36</sup> How these four tasks are accomplished is up to the bereaved themselves.

In agreement with the first two tasks of mourning, research shows that the bereaved cannot avoid dealing with the reality of their loss and still cope in an effective and meaningful way.<sup>37</sup> Studies show that prolonged grief disorder (PGD), a new psychiatric category in 2018, can cause severe symptoms. Examples of these symptoms include guilt, anger, and somatization.<sup>38</sup> Having to face a loss through a funeral is generally understood to help the bereaved come to terms with the reality of their loss and their pain at that loss, allowing them to grieve properly.<sup>39</sup> The importance of having a prompt funeral and being able to work through the grieving process is exemplified through the current pandemic. Many of us have had the misfortune of witnessing the effects of a delayed funeral firsthand during the COVID-19 pandemic in the past year, as many funerals are pushed out until an unknown time when families are able to gather again.<sup>40</sup>

The third and fourth mourning tasks mentioned above can also be summed up as reorganization. Reorganization is discussed within Coping Theory concerning interpersonal loss.<sup>41</sup> This is a problem-focused coping strategy that allows the bereaved to face their loss and come to terms with its implications. This strategy could be either a long-term or short-term project, depending on the interconnectedness of the lives of the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 35-36.

<sup>37</sup> Zeidner, pp. 560-562.

<sup>38</sup> Somatization is the physical expression of psychology symptoms.

<sup>39</sup> Zeidner, p. 560-562.

<sup>40</sup> Cénat, p. S94-95.

<sup>41</sup> Zeidner, p. 562.

deceased and the bereaved. It could also, initially, cause further distress as painful memories are aroused and the thoughts of the bereaved linger on the deceased. However, over time, reorganization appears to aid in the coping and grief journey of the bereaved.

#### **IV. A Focused Summary of the *Iliad***

Now that we have a basic understanding of how I will analyze Achilles' grief, I want to turn to the text I will be analyzing. While the *Iliad*, on the surface, is a book of war and fighting, the real focus is death.<sup>42</sup> The characters in the *Iliad* are concerned with a Good Death, whether it is their own death or a death which they bring about. How the dead are treated is mentioned and discussed throughout the epic. "It is in keeping that whole books of the [*Iliad*] are dominated by death in its most tangible and least metaphorical form: the vital importance of the corpse and its treatment."<sup>43</sup> This concern is emphasized by angry soldiers shouting at enemies that their corpses will be mistreated<sup>44</sup> and by Achilles as he interacts with the corpses of Hector and Patroclus. Therefore, I will analyze Achilles' reaction to and treatment of the corpses of Patroclus and Hector. My summary of the *Iliad* which follows will focus on the events leading up to the death of Patroclus and the events that directly follow.

To put the *Iliad* in context, the Trojan War was fought over Helen, the wife of Menelaus, who left Sparta to marry the Trojan prince, Paris.<sup>45</sup> Menelaus' brother,

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<sup>42</sup> Griffin, p. 94.

<sup>43</sup> Griffin, p. 44.

<sup>44</sup> They will be eaten by dogs and crows.

<sup>45</sup> In some versions of the myth, Helen was kidnapped by Paris and went with him unwillingly.

Agamemnon, led the first Panhellenic expedition as Greek forces came together from their various city-states to invade Troy.

The events of the *Iliad* take place during the 9<sup>th</sup> year of the Trojan War. The story centers on Achilles, who is the best fighter of the Greek army. The epic opens with an argument between Achilles and Agamemnon. Agamemnon takes Achilles' γέρας (a war prize and symbol of τιμή or honor), a slave woman named Briseis. Due to this grave dishonor, Achilles refuses to continue fighting, or to let his people, the Myrmidons, fight. He even goes so far as to ask his mother to supplicate Zeus so that the king of the gods will aid the Trojans in the war effort.<sup>46</sup> Then the Greeks will be crippled and forced to beg Achilles to return to war.<sup>47</sup> Then, Achilles believes, the Greeks will finally recognize that he is by far the best soldier and they will honor him as such.

In Book 9, with the Greeks losing ground, Agamemnon sends an embassy to Achilles, who is sitting outside his tent with Patroclus. The embassy, consisting of Odysseus, Ajax the Greater, and Phoinix, deliver the message of Agamemnon's apology and a list of prizes he will give to Achilles if he returns to the battlefield. Achilles refuses and Odysseus and Ajax return to Agamemnon in defeat.

In Book 15, the Greeks' situation becomes more desperate as the Trojans reach the Greek ships and begin to set fire to the ships. If the ships are destroyed, the Greeks would be prevented from returning home, the fires would spread and destroy their camp,

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<sup>46</sup> This may seem to be a harsh treatment of the army at large when Achilles' quarrel was only with Agamemnon. Méautis argues, however, that because of the army's collective silence at the way Agamemnon treated him, Achilles finds everyone guilty of his dishonor (pp. 12-14). Shay also marks this moment as when Achilles withdraws "his moral, emotional, and military commitment from the army." (p. 25).

<sup>47</sup> Book 1.

and the Trojans would be at a great advantage. Patroclus pleads with Achilles to fight and protect the ships, but he still refuses. Patroclus then begs to be allowed to fight in his stead.<sup>48</sup> Achilles allows him to lead the Myrmidons into battle while wearing Achilles' armor on the condition that Patroclus not try to claim Troy without Achilles. The Trojans, falling for the ruse that Achilles has rejoined the fight, retreat until they are back at the walls of Troy. Patroclus, spurred on by the gods, attempts to climb the walls and to take Troy himself against Achilles' warnings. He is killed by the god Apollo and by Hector. An intense battle ensues over the corpse.

When he hears the news of Patroclus' death, Achilles is grief-stricken and filled with a godlike rage (μήνις). With the aid of Athena, he bellows across the Trojan plains and the Trojans again retreat to the city. The Greeks then bring Patroclus' body back to Achilles for proper burial rites.<sup>49</sup>

After Achilles spends the night grieving over the corpse, Thetis gifts him new armor made by the god Hephaestus. Achilles rejoins the fight and slaughters without mercy everyone on the Trojan side he meets in battle. His goal is to kill Hector in revenge for Patroclus' death, which he does. He then ties Hector's body to his chariot and drags him back to the Greek camp. This action has two, complimentary reasons behind it: the Trojans are not able to perform the proper burial rites for Hector and the corpse would be disfigured (although, unbeknownst to Achilles, it is protected by the gods).<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Book 16.

<sup>49</sup> Book 18.

<sup>50</sup> Books 19-22.

That night, Achilles is visited by the ghost of Patroclus in a dream. Patroclus demands a funeral for himself and for his bones to be placed in an urn where they will be mixed later with Achilles' after he is also killed before the war ends. Patroclus warns Achilles of his fate and reminisces on their less martial time together. When Achilles awakens, he holds the funeral for Patroclus. The funeral includes lavish athletic funeral games where he hands out both his and Patroclus' possessions as prizes. All the Greeks participate in a celebratory mood.<sup>51</sup>

That night, Priam, the father of Hector, travels to Achilles' tent to ransom back Hector's body at the instruction of the gods. Achilles is moved to pity when he compares the fate of Priam to that of his own father, who also will never see his son again. Achilles agrees to Priam's request, and returns from his divine rage to a human state of mind. The two men grieve their past and future losses together and share a meal. Afterwards, Priam is able to return home, unharmed, with the body of his son. The poem ends with the funeral of Hector and with the Trojans mourning the loss of their lead defender and the now inevitable fall of their city.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Book 23.

<sup>52</sup> Book 24.

## V. Achilles' Responds to Patroclus' Death

Before going into detail about Patroclus' death and what follows, a brief consideration of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus within the *Iliad* is in order. I believe this is important for understanding the depth of Achilles' grief and how he responds.

Achilles and Patroclus are presented as close by both Homer and the characters within the *Iliad*. From Homer, we learn Patroclus is present for the important moments when Achilles interacts with other mortals.<sup>53</sup> When Agamemnon sends the heralds to take Briseis, Achilles is beside his shelter. He seems to be alone, until he speaks to Patroclus, telling him to go inside and bring out Briseis.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, when the embassy of Odysseus, Ajax the Greater, and Phoinix arrive at Achilles' tent, Patroclus is present. He and Achilles are sitting outside together, and both go inside for the discussion with the embassy.<sup>55</sup> Lest we think that Patroclus might not have been present throughout the meeting, he is mentioned again when Odysseus and Ajax leave to report back to Agamemnon.<sup>56</sup> Achilles seems to have Patroclus beside him always. Furthermore, Achilles seems to isolate himself from everyone besides Patroclus after his fight with

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<sup>53</sup> Patroclus is absent whenever Achilles talks with his divine mother. This makes sense since Achilles is semi-divine while Patroclus is entirely mortal.

<sup>54</sup> *Iliad* 1.324-348.

<sup>55</sup> *Iliad* 9.182-204.

<sup>56</sup> *Iliad* 9.658-659.

Agamemnon in Book 1, even from the other Myrmidons.<sup>57</sup> Thus, Patroclus' absence after death would be felt intensely as Achilles becomes completely isolated.

We do not need to rely solely on Homer for information concerning the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus. When the embassy arrives at Achilles' tent, each member attempts to persuade Achilles to rejoin the fighting. Each attempt fails, but Phoinix' attempt is worth mentioning here. Phoinix tells the story of Meleager.<sup>58</sup> In his version of the story, Meleager's situation directly parallels Achilles'.<sup>59</sup> Meleager is a warrior, the best in his city of Kalydon and the son of their king Oineus. During a war between the Aitolians and Kouretes, whenever Meleager was in the fight, the Aitolians would be winning. However, he becomes angry with his mother, who wishes death upon him for the death of her brother.<sup>60</sup> He sits apart from the battle with his wife, Kleopatra, causing the Aitolians to suffer in battle. Many try to persuade him to return to the fighting, offering gifts and honor to no avail. Only his wife can convince him to return to battle through an emotional plea. The similarity between the names Kleopatra and Patroclus is almost impossible not to notice in the Greek: both names are a combination of the Greek κλέος and πατήρ (father). Phoinix is speaking to both Achilles and Patroclus here – a warning to Achilles about what will happen if he refuses to fight (no

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<sup>57</sup> Sistac, paragraph 2. « Il exerce un repli sur soi, d'abord à l'échelle de son peuple, les Myrmidons, puis de lui-même en se retirant dans sa baraque, seul ou avec Patrocle qui est un autre lui-même, selon ses propres dires. » See also Shay, p. 28.

<sup>58</sup> *Iliad* 9.524-605.

<sup>59</sup> There are other versions of the myth of Meleager that Homer may or may not have been familiar with. While I personally believe that this version works too perfectly for it to be anything other than an intentional alteration of a known myth, there is no way to know for sure what other versions Homer would have been working with.

<sup>60</sup> Phoinix does not go into detail about what has happened to her brother. Presumably, Meleager has killed him, but no explanation of why or when is given.

τιμή or physical rewards) and a coded plea to Patroclus for him to attempt to convince Achilles. Patroclus might be the Greeks' only hope.

In Book 11, Achilles sends Patroclus into the main camp to see how the Greeks are faring, even addressing him as τῷ ἐμῷ κεχαρισμένε θυμῷ (dear to my heart).<sup>61</sup> Nestor pleads with Patroclus in the camp to talk with Achilles and try to persuade him to rejoin the fighting.<sup>62</sup> After the efforts of the other Greeks have failed, Nestor, just as Phoinix did, still believes that Patroclus may be able to succeed in changing Achilles' mind. Patroclus seems to agree with them when he leaves the side of Eurypylos, whom he had been medically tending, to talk with Achilles and attempt to persuade him.<sup>63</sup> Patroclus thinks that he has a chance. After he presents his argument, Achilles says at the end of his response,

αἶ γὰρ Ζεῦ τε πάτερ καὶ Ἀθηναίη καὶ Ἄπολλον  
μήτε τις οὖν Τρώων θάνατον φύγοι ὅσσοι ἔασι,  
μήτε τις Ἀργείων, νῶϊν δ' ἐκδῶμεν ὄλεθρον,  
ἄφρ' οἴοι Τροίης ἱερὰ κρήδεμνα λύωμεν. (*Il.* 16.97-100)

If only Father Zeus and Athena and Apollo  
would not allow that any of the Trojans or Argives  
might escape death, *but that we two might escape destruction,*  
that we might destroy the holy battlements of Troy.

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<sup>61</sup> *Iliad* 11.598-616.

<sup>62</sup> *Iliad* 11.761-802.

<sup>63</sup> *Iliad* 15.401-405.

Clearly, Achilles values Patroclus above all the other Greeks, enough that he would rather live on with Patroclus with all their allies dead than have either of them die at Troy. Tragically, they both will fall on the plains of Troy.

Even with their bond, Patroclus is unable to convince Achilles to rejoin the war himself. His secondary request, on the other hand, is granted. Patroclus asks that Achilles lend him his armor when he enters the battle, so that the Trojans will retreat in fear, thinking Achilles has rejoined the war.<sup>64</sup> This will at least remove the threat of fire to the ships and allow the Greeks some time to regroup. Achilles gives in with the caveat that Patroclus not attempt to sack Troy without Achilles there.<sup>65</sup> Achilles cites two reasons for this: Achilles will not be able to earn his great fame if he is sitting out the war when Troy is taken and if Patroclus tries, Apollo will kill him.

Of course, as must happen in all tragic stories, the warning is forgotten in the heat of the moment. After killing Sarpedon, the leader of the Lykians, son of Zeus, and one of the best of the Trojan fighters, Patroclus continues to fight towards Troy.<sup>66</sup> Homer explicitly blames this on Zeus, who has been planning Patroclus' death throughout the poem.<sup>67</sup> Patroclus makes it to the walls of Troy, and four times attempts to scale the walls. Apollo forces him back down again each time. At the fourth attempt, Apollo slaps the armor off Patroclus. This gives Euphorbus, a previously unnamed Trojan fighter, the

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<sup>64</sup> *Iliad* 16.40-45.

<sup>65</sup> *Iliad* 16.87-100.

<sup>66</sup> *Iliad* 16.462-507.

<sup>67</sup> *Iliad* 16.688.

chance to thrust a spear into Patroclus.<sup>68</sup> With Patroclus wounded, Hector is now able to kill him and take Achilles' armor.<sup>69</sup> Book 17 focuses on the fighting that commences over Patroclus' body, as the Greeks attempt to bring Patroclus' body back to Achilles and the Trojans attempt to bring Patroclus' body to Troy in the hopes of trading it for Sarpedon's body.<sup>70</sup> The Greeks are not faring well, and Antilochus, a friend of Achilles, is sent back to camp to tell Achilles the news and ask for his help.

When Antilochus arrives, Achilles realizes what has happened before he speaks.<sup>71</sup> He mentions a prophecy his mother told him once, that before his own death, the bravest of the Achaeans would perish.<sup>72</sup> Antilochus confirms his suspicions and informs him that there is now a battle raging over the naked corpse. He names Hector as the killer, and says that he now has Achilles' armor, having taken it as spoils of war.

Achilles immediately shows his grief in a physical way.

ὥς φάτο, τὸν δ' ἄχεος νεφέλη ἐκάλυψε μέλαινα:  
ἀμφοτέρησι δὲ χερσὶν ἐλὼν κόνιν αἰθαλόεσσαν  
χεύατο κακ' κεφαλῆς, χαρίεν δ' ἤσχυνε πρόσωπον:  
νεκταρέφ δὲ χιτῶνι μέλαιν' ἀμφίζανε τέφρη.  
αὐτὸς δ' ἐν κονίησι μέγας μεγαλωστὶ τανυσθεὶς  
κεῖτο, φίλησι δὲ χερσὶ κόμην ἤσχυνε δαΐζων. (*Il.* 18.22-27)

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<sup>68</sup> *Iliad* 16.784-815. Euphorbus is killed by Menelaus (17.43-60), removing the need for Achilles to pursue him in addition to Hector when he finally rejoins the battle.

<sup>69</sup> *Iliad* 16.816-867.

<sup>70</sup> This is impossible, as Zeus has commanded the brothers Hypnos (Sleep) and Thanatos (Death) to carry his son's body back to Lykia for proper burial rites. (16.666-675).

<sup>71</sup> *Iliad* 18.1-14.

<sup>72</sup> This is the first time that this prophecy has been mentioned within the *Iliad*.

Thus he spoke, and a black cloud of pain covered him:  
Taking up grimy dust in both hands  
He poured it onto his head and disfigured his fair face:  
and upon his immortal tunic the black ashes settled.  
And he laid great in his greatness stretching in the dust  
laid himself down and tearing with his dear hands disfigured his hair.

These physical signs of grief, such as dirtying oneself and ripping clothes, have parallels within the Hebrew Bible and Mesopotamian literature.<sup>73</sup> These signs appear to be somewhat universal to the Ancient Near East. “[W]eeping, lamenting, and self-aggression are...a regulated symbol channeling grief...amplifying it as part of a release-mechanism leading to adjustment,” according to social anthropologists.<sup>74</sup> Additionally, when the bereaved disfigures their own body, covers himself in dust, and lays in the dust, they are likening themselves with the deceased whom they are grieving.<sup>75</sup> In this way, the bereaved also separates themselves from the rest of society to identify with the deceased. Antilochus, watching Achilles, fears that in his grief he will slit his own throat and more than symbolically join Patroclus, and so takes his hands and holds them while they both cry.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> In Genesis 37:34-36, for example at the apparent death of his son Joseph, Jacob tears his clothes, puts on sackcloth, and refuses to be comforted, wishing rather to join Joseph in Sheol. Additionally, Gilgamesh, at the death of Enkidu, rips his clothes and hair and is unable to sleep. When Enkidu's body begins to decompose, Gilgamesh puts on animal skins rather than his royal clothes. (Tablets VIII - IX). For a further discussion of these parallels, see Olyan.

<sup>74</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1983), pp. 33-34.

<sup>75</sup> Burgess, pp. 84-85.

<sup>76</sup> *Iliad* 18.32-34.

There are parallels to Achilles' behavior later in the *Iliad* as well, as King Priam grieves for his dead son, Hector, in Book 24.

παῖδες μὲν πατέρ' ἀμφὶ καθήμενοι ἔνδοθεν αὐλῆς  
δάκρυσιν εἶματ' ἔφυρον, ὃ δ' ἐν μέσσοισι γεραῖος  
ἐντυπᾶς ἐν γλαίνῃ κεκαλυμμένος: ἀμφὶ δὲ πολλὴ  
κόπρος ἔην κεφαλῇ τε καὶ ἀχένοι τοῖο γέροντος  
τὴν ῥα κυλινδόμενος καταμήσατο χερσὶν ἔῃσι. (*Il.* 24.161-165)

The children sitting around their father in the court yard  
wet their garments with tears, and the old man in their midst  
was hidden, enshrouded tightly in his cloak: and much dung  
was on the neck and head of the old man  
having rolled in it, he heaped it with his own hands.

The act of a man covering himself in filth while grieving was a commonly accepted act, as Sourvinou-Inwood states.<sup>77</sup> Both Achilles and Priam seem to have grabbed onto whatever filth they were able to find. The difference is that nobody seems to fear for Priam's safety, although they will worry about him as he tries to leave to retrieve his son's body.<sup>78</sup> Priam does, however, say that he does not care about his own safety. He

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<sup>77</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1983), p. 37.

<sup>78</sup> *Iliad* 24.200-216.

tells his wife that he will die whenever fate has decided, and that as long as he is able to mourn for his son, he does not care if Achilles himself kills him.<sup>79</sup>

Achilles' lamentations at the news of Patroclus' death are enough to summon his mother, Thetis, to him.<sup>80</sup> He tells her that while everything he asked for from Zeus had been accomplished, it means nothing to him without Patroclus beside him. He wishes, instead, that he had never been born.<sup>81</sup> He continues,

νῦν δ' ἵνα καὶ σοὶ πένθος ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μυρίον εἶη  
παιδὸς ἀποφθιμένοιο, τὸν οὐχ ὑποδέξεται αὖτις  
οἴκαδε νοστήσαντ', ἐπεὶ οὐδ' ἐμὲ θυμὸς ἄνωγε  
ζῶειν οὐδ' ἀνδρῶσσι μετέμμεναι, αἴ κε μὴ Ἴκτωρ  
πρῶτος ἐμῶ ὑπὸ δουρὶ τυπεὶς ἀπὸ θυμὸν ὀλέσσει,  
Πατρόκλοιό δ' ἔλωρα Μενoitιάδεω ἀποτίσῃ. (Il. 18.89-93)

Now uncountable grief must be in your heart on account  
of the death of your son, never again receiving him  
having returned home, *since now my heart does not command me  
either to live or to remain among men, unless first Hector,  
being struck by my spear, destroys his life,*

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<sup>79</sup> *Iliad* 24.217-227. This is both a selfless and a selfish act. If Priam succeeds, he will have risked his life for the sake of his son's body and the funeral and rituals that need to be performed for Hector to be able to enter the Underworld. If he fails, then someone else would have to go to retrieve both bodies, since it is unlikely that the Trojans would abandon the body of their king. Even though Priam has been promised by Iris that he will succeed in his mission (24.169-187), the mentality he professes to Hecuba is risky, not just for him, but for the Trojans at large.

<sup>80</sup> *Iliad* 18.34-38.

<sup>81</sup> *Iliad* 18.78-87.

*and pays the penalty for the spoils of Patroclus.*

Achilles has just committed to reentering the fight, on account of Patroclus' death. In a sense, then, Phoinix, Nestor, and Patroclus were correct when they thought that Patroclus alone would be able to convince Achilles to return to war – just not the way that they had thought. Achilles states that he is dedicated to killing Hector now and that he does not wish to remain alive unless he accomplishes this vengeance. Of course, by returning to fight, he knows that his death will soon approach, which is emphasized in Thetis' response.

ὠκύμορος δὴ μοι τέκος ἔσσεαι, οἷ' ἀγορεύεις:

αὐτίκα γάρ τοι ἔπειτα μεθ' Ἑκτορα πότμος ἑτοῖμος. (*Il.* 18.94-96)

Indeed, you will be swift fated my child, since you speak thus:

For immediately after Hector your destiny will be at hand.

Thetis tells her son directly that if he returns to battle, his fate of death will be soon to follow. Achilles, ὀχθήσας (grieving, being vexed),<sup>82</sup> declares “αὐτίκα τεθναίην” (straightaway, I shall die).<sup>83</sup> Achilles is more than willing to face his prophesied and certain death to avenge Patroclus. Earlier, he was unwilling to do so without the proper τιμή (honor), which he valued over his own life. At the end of this speech, he does tell his mother that he will win κλέος and cause the Trojan or Dardanian women to lament

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<sup>82</sup> Richmond Lattimore translates ὀχθήσας as “deeply disturbed” (p. 398).

<sup>83</sup> *Iliad* 19.97-98.

over their men that he will personally kill.<sup>84</sup> In other words, he will still gain fame throughout the Greek world, but he may not receive the physical symbols of honor that he had previously been waiting for before returning to war. Therefore, while his motivation for returning is revenge for Patroclus above the τιμή he had wanted from Agamemnon, he still knows that his κλέος will grow throughout the Greek world.

When Achilles tries to rejoin the battle to recover Patroclus' body, Thetis stops him. She does not want him to fight without his armor, which is now in the hands of Hector. She tells him that she will go to Hephaestus and ask him to make Achilles new armor, worthy of him.<sup>85</sup> She makes him promise to wait until she returns before he tries to fight again.

Achilles is forced to watch the battle from his camp. Since Book 1, he had chosen to sit out of the war. Now, as the Greeks and Trojans slaughter each other over Patroclus' corpse, the choice has been taken away from him. Because Achilles refused to fight earlier, Patroclus went in his place. Patroclus' death is on Achilles' hands and now he is left helpless to save even his companion's body.<sup>86</sup>

Athena, at this point, comes down to aid Achilles' ability to cope with his feelings of helplessness and guilt. She strengthens Achilles, wreathing his head in fire and amplifying his voice to carry across the entire battlefield.<sup>87</sup> Achilles becomes so fearsome that the Trojans leave the body and flee back to Troy. Achilles' ability, through the help of Athena, to aid in the recovery of Patroclus' corpse helps Achilles to come to

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<sup>84</sup> *Iliad* 18.120-126.

<sup>85</sup> *Iliad* 18.134-137.

<sup>86</sup> Méautis, p. 16. « Achille lui-même qui est, par cet appel, la cause de la mort de son ami. »

<sup>87</sup> *Iliad* 18.165-238.

terms with his loss. He is able to exert some control over the situation, utilizing a problem-focused coping strategy, and therefore is able to further his ability to cope.

Even so, Achilles does not respond the way that may be expected. Patroclus, by definition, has died a Good Death. He was killed while fighting bravely and winning κλέος. While it is expected for Achilles to grieve, it would not be expected for him to charge back into battle, risking his own τιμή, to avenge Patroclus' death. While there are other instances of avenging a death, such as Euphorbus trying to avenge his brother whom Menelaus had killed, these interactions seem to be opportunistic rather than purposeful.<sup>88</sup> Achilles appears to be viewing Patroclus' death as a murder rather than a battle fatality. Patroclus was not known as a fighter and Achilles had sent him out for the sole reason of scaring the Trojans into a retreat. He had not intended Patroclus to fight. Additionally, Antilochus places Patroclus' death on the hands of Hector, isolating the agent of death as a specific person rather than the war or the Trojans at large. This view of Patroclus' manner of death will alter how Achilles' grief manifests itself. Grief psychology says that in the case of murder, anger and guilt are usually the predominating emotions. Certainly, anger and guilt are central to Achilles' reaction to Patroclus' death.

After the corpse of Patroclus is returned to the Greek camp, Achilles mourns all night for him with the Achaeans.<sup>89</sup> He places his hand on the center of Patroclus' chest while leading the lamentations.<sup>90</sup> This action "highlights [Achilles'] struggle to cope

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<sup>88</sup> *Iliad* 17.1-42. Euphorbus comes upon Menelaus and declares the spoils of Patroclus to be his. Menelaus tells him to back down. Euphorbus responds by saying that now he will avenge his brother by killing Menelaus, since Menelaus will not let him have his honorable spoils.

<sup>89</sup> *Iliad* 18.314-315.

<sup>90</sup> *Iliad* 18.316-318.

with his companion's death and their ultimate separation."<sup>91</sup> The chest is the center of "life and vitality."<sup>92</sup> It is also, for the Greeks, where the mind is located. Achilles cannot understand that there is no life left within the body of Patroclus. Still at the beginning of the grieving process, Achilles has not accepted the fact that Patroclus is dead. "[B]eing confused about whether [the deceased] is or isn't still available in the physical world" can be problematic for the bereaved's ability to grieve.<sup>93</sup> In contrast, when Priam brings back Hector's body, Hector's wife, Andromache, touches his head.<sup>94</sup> Additionally, it was typically women who touched the corpse, rather than men. They would also violently self-wound.<sup>95</sup> These acts, along with those of the men stated above, were done to embrace the pollution and death of the deceased. They were "socially meaningful symbolic act[s]."<sup>96</sup>

When mourning for Patroclus, Achilles takes on the role of lead mourner, which is suitable for him as the one who was closest to Patroclus in life. He also takes on both male and female mourning roles, which is more complex than taking on a single role. He is surrounded by the Achaeans and the serving women that Achilles and Patroclus took in war, who are also mourning Patroclus' death, yet he still takes on every role.<sup>97</sup> He and Patroclus had been isolated for much of the *Iliad*, which necessarily plays a role in how Achilles copes with *his* loss of Patroclus. Achilles' social environment has changed

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<sup>91</sup> Gazis, p. 51.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>93</sup> Gross, p. 46.

<sup>94</sup> *Iliad* 24.723-724.

<sup>95</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1983), p. 37.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>97</sup> *Iliad* 18.28-31.

completely with this loss, but he is still acting as if the two of them are isolated. He seems unable to allow others in and to share the grieving roles.

Achilles proceeds to make a promise to Patroclus, a restatement of what he said to his mother earlier.

νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν Πάτροκλε σεῦ ὕστερος εἶμ' ὑπὸ γαῖαν,  
οὗ σε πρὶν κτεριῶ πρὶν γ' Ἑκτορος ἐνθάδ' ἐνεῖκαι  
τεύχεα καὶ κεφαλὴν μεγαθύμου σοῖο φονῆος:  
δώδεκα δὲ προπάρριθε πυρῆς ἀποδειροτομήσω  
Τρώων ἀγλαὰ τέκνα σέθεν κταμένοιο χολωθείς. (Il. 18.333-337)

Now Patroclus, *since I will go below the earth after you,*  
I will not bury you before I have brought here  
the armor and head of Hector, *your greathearted slayer:*  
And I will slaughter before the pyre twelve  
brilliant children of the Trojans, *since I am angry over your slaying.*

Achilles has decided that he will delay the funeral until certain conditions are met. He therefore also delays his ability to process his loss and to enter a state of grieving.

Once he makes his promise, he gives orders for the cleaning of Patroclus' body.

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ ζέσσειεν ὕδωρ ἐνὶ ἥνοπι χαλκῶ,  
καὶ τότε δὴ λοῦσάν τε καὶ ἤλειψαν λίπ' ἐλαίῳ,

ἐν δ' ὠτειλὰς πλῆσαν ἀλείφατος ἐννεώροιο:

ἐν λεχέεσσι<sup>98</sup> δὲ θέντες ἔανῶ λιτὶ κάλυψαν

ἐς πόδας ἐκ κεφαλῆς, καθύπερθε δὲ φάρεϊ λευκῶ. (*Il.* 18.349-353)

Then when the water boiled in the gleaming bronze,

and then they washed and anointed [the body] with rich oil,

and they filled the wounds with 9-year-old oil:

and *placing him on the bed* they covered him with a thin sheet

from head to toe, and a white cloth above.

The body of Patroclus has been properly washed and prepared for the funeral, yet Achilles has insists on postponing. Instead of placing the body on the pyre, the Myrmidons place it upon the bed. This action gives the impression that Patroclus is asleep, rather than dead. This is further evidence that Achilles is unable to process the reality of this loss. He still cannot accept that Patroclus is truly dead, even as his emotions cause him to seek vengeance.

The next morning, Thetis returns with the armor Hephaestus has made for her son.<sup>99</sup> Upon her arrival, having mourned through the night in Patroclus' arms, Achilles voices a concern. He worries that Patroclus' body will begin to decompose and that his wounds will breed worms and flies.<sup>100</sup> The delay of Patroclus' funeral could have

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<sup>98</sup> λέχος can also be translated as “bier,” which would seem more appropriate for the corpse of Patroclus. However, Achilles does not treat the λέχος as a bier by having it carried to the pyre for cremation. Therefore, I think that “bed” is the proper translation for this passage.

<sup>99</sup> *Iliad* 19.1-11.

<sup>100</sup> *Iliad* 19.23-27.

physical as well as psychological consequences. The bodies of the dead were meant to be disposed of before they began to smell and decompose. Thetis assures her son that she will drive away the flies and worms, and then breathes ambrosia into Patroclus to preserve him.<sup>101</sup> She enables Achilles to continue delaying his grief with her divine aid, and he enters the battlefield, having pledged that no food or drink will pass his lips until he has killed Hector.<sup>102</sup>

After Achilles reenters the battlefield, he has two encounters which are worth mentioning here. The first is with Lykaon, a son of Priam and half-brother of Hector.<sup>103</sup> Evidently, this is not the first time that the two enemies have met on the battlefield. Previously, Achilles captured Lykaon and sold him in Lemnos, where he was eventually ransomed back to his family. He had only returned to Troy twelve days prior.<sup>104</sup> Now again, he approaches Achilles in the position of a suppliant, relying on his previous experience with Achilles. He expects that Achilles will behave the same as he did the last time they met and that he will still respect a suppliant. Achilles' response is worth quoting in its entirety here.

νήπιε μή μοι ἄποινα πιφάσκειο μηδ' ἀγόρευε:

πρὶν μὲν γὰρ Πάτροκλον ἐπισπεῖν αἴσιμον ἦμαρ

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τόφρᾳ τί μοι πεφιδέσθαι ἐνὶ φρεσὶ φίλτερον ἦεν

Τρώων, καὶ πολλοὺς ζωοὺς ἔλον ἠδ' ἐπέρασσα:

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<sup>101</sup> *Iliad* 19.28-39.

<sup>102</sup> *Iliad* 19.209-214. Athena again helps Achilles by imbuing him with ambrosia and nectar so that he will be able to fight Hector (19.349-356).

<sup>103</sup> *Iliad* 21.34-135.

<sup>104</sup> *Iliad* 21.73-82.

νῦν δ' οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅς τις θάνατον φύγη ὄν κε θεός γε  
 Ἴλιου προπάροιθεν ἐμῆς ἐν χερσὶ βάλῃσι  
 καὶ πάντων Τρώων, περὶ δ' αὖ Πριάμοιό γε παίδων. 105  
 ἀλλὰ φίλος θάνε καὶ σύ: τί ἦ ὀλοφύρεαι οὕτως;  
*κάθθανε καὶ Πάτροκλος, ὃ περ σέο πολλὸν ἀμείνων.*  
 οὐχ ὀράας οἶος καὶ ἐγὼ καλός τε μέγας τε;  
 πατρὸς δ' εἶμ' ἀγαθοῖο, θεὰ δέ με γείνατο μήτηρ:  
*ἀλλ' ἔπι τοι καὶ ἐμοὶ θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κραταιή:* 110  
 ἔσσεται ἦ ἠὲς ἦ δείλη ἦ μέσον ἦμαρ  
 ὀππότε τις καὶ ἐμεῖο Ἄρη ἐκ θυμὸν ἔλῃται  
 ἦ ὅ γε δουρὶ βαλὼν ἦ ἀπὸ νευρῆφιν ὀϊστῶ. (Il. 21.99-113)

Fool, do not speak to me about ransom nor harangue me:  
*For before Patroclus met his fated day* 100  
*then it was dearer in my heart to be sparing*  
*of the Trojans, and many still alive I seized and sold:*  
 But now there is no one who will escape death whom the god  
 throws into my hands before Ilium  
 none among the Trojans or the sons of Priam. 105  
 But, friend, you also will die: why lament this?  
*Even Patroclus died, who was much better than you.*  
 Do you not see how fine and great I myself am?  
 And I was born of a great father and goddess mother:

*But death is even for me and a powerful destiny:*

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whether it will be at dawn or afternoon or mid-day

whenever some man seizes my life in battle

either throwing a spear or shooting an arrow from the bowstring.

Achilles then kills Lykaon by slicing his neck while Lykaon remains in a position of supplication, leaning back on his knees with his hands spread wide. He makes no move to defend himself.<sup>105</sup>

This passage marks a dramatic change in Achilles' characterization which occurs due to his grief. Two of the characteristics of acute grief mentioned above are hostility and changes in behavior patterns. Achilles clearly states that previously he would have *preferred* to capture and sell Trojans rather than to kill them.<sup>106</sup> Through Patroclus' death, however, Achilles has lost any compassion he once had. He is hostile to everyone he meets, killing so many that the River Scamander complains of all the corpses that block his waters.<sup>107</sup> Amid Achilles' battle rage that encompasses three entire books (20-22) and ends with the slaughter of Hector, Achilles has this calm conversation when Lykaon approaches him where he explains that he has no desire to spare even a single life. Achilles seems not to see a problem in this change which he acknowledges within himself. He views Patroclus much more highly than any other life. Therefore, if Patroclus has died, then so will everyone else with the fall of Troy. In his grief, Achilles

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<sup>105</sup> *Iliad* 21.114-119.

<sup>106</sup> See Griffin, p. 54.

<sup>107</sup> *Iliad* 21.136-138. In total, Achilles kills 24 named soldiers, and he is the only one in Books 20-22 who kills anyone. Both the Trojans and the rest of the Greeks are inconsequential when Achilles returns to the field.

has devalued every other life that he encounters, even his own.<sup>108</sup> There is no reason to spare Lykaon, even if he is a suppliant.<sup>109</sup> Achilles even appears, in his grief, to violate the laws of supplication that are ruled by the gods. Gould notes, in this case, that Lykaon has removed his hands, and thus breaks the contact between suppliant and supplicated, before Achilles kills him; therefore, Achilles is not technically breaking any rules of supplication.<sup>110</sup> More significant, however, is that Lykaon is still defenseless before Achilles. Achilles may be killing in the environment of a battle, but Lykaon is not his enemy. Previously, Achilles did not kill unless necessary, preferring to capture those he faced.<sup>111</sup> Now, Achilles kills even those who kneel before him weaponless. Achilles' mindset and behavior has changed dramatically since Patroclus' death. He is now cruel where he was not before.

The second encounter worth mentioning here is between Achilles and Hector. Hector's death is the final death contained within the epic itself, making it the climax of the epic's action. Achilles comes upon Hector alone outside the walls of Troy. Hector is wearing Achilles' old armor, which he took after killing Patroclus. Achilles chases him around the city.<sup>112</sup> Apollo aids Hector until Zeus tips the scales and Apollo must accept

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<sup>108</sup> Griffin marks this as the point when Achilles accepts his death (p. 191).

<sup>109</sup> This scene can be paralleled to *Iliad* 6.37-65. In battle, Adrestos approaches Menelaus as a suppliant to be spared and ransomed. Adrestos promises Menelaus great treasure from his father if he is ransomed. Agamemnon approaches and removes Adrestos from his position of supplication and kills him himself. This is permissible because it is Agamemnon rather than Menelaus who kills Adrestos and because the physical contact of supplication between Adrestos and Menelaus has been broken (Gould, p. 33).

<sup>110</sup> See Gould, p. 34.

<sup>111</sup> See Shay, pp. 29-30, for a further discussion on Achilles' capture of the enemy and the stark contrast between him and the other Greeks.

<sup>112</sup> *Iliad* 22.131-213.

the decision that Hector will die at Achilles' hand. Athena encourages Achilles to fight, and the two men stop running and face each other.

Hector attempts civility, even in the crisis he faces. Both men know that one of them must die, and Hector knows it will be him.<sup>113</sup> He swears by the gods that if he wins, he will take Achilles' armor, but otherwise leave the body untouched and return it to the Greeks. He asks that Achilles swear the same if Hector wins.<sup>114</sup>

Achilles responds,

“Ἐκτορ μή μοι ἄλαστε συνημοσύνας ἀγόρευε.” (*Il.* 22.261)

Hector, unforgiveable, do not speak to me about agreements.

Achilles continues on to compare the relationship between Hector and himself through two metaphors: men and lions, wolves and lambs.<sup>115</sup> Achilles is so focused on revenge over the death of Patroclus that he no longer sees Hector as another human.<sup>116</sup> Achilles' brutality, central since he returned to battle, is his defining characteristic in this scene. He will not permit even Hector's corpse to go unpunished.

Achilles concludes his response

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<sup>113</sup> *Iliad* 22.25-130 shows Hector's family within the walls pleading with Hector to return, and then Hector pondering what his choices are. He ends up choosing a Good Death at the hands of the greatest of the Greeks rather than running inside the city and living.

<sup>114</sup> *Iliad* 22.250-259.

<sup>115</sup> *Iliad* 22.262-267.

<sup>116</sup> These metaphors are ambiguous. Either Hector is the lion or wolf that needs to be killed to prevent further harm, or Achilles is the lion or wolf who hunts and wins.

νῦν δ' ἄθρόα πάντ' ἀποτίσεις

κῆδε' ἐμῶν ἐτάρων οὐς ἔκτανες ἔγχρῃ θύων. (*Il.* 22.272-273)

But now you will repay in heaps

for the troubles of my companions whom you killed with your spear, raging.

It is interesting to note that above, the audience assumes that the reason Achilles pursues Hector is that he is responsible for the death of Patroclus. But here, Achilles mentions his “companions,” plural. Why this shift? He has not shown this concern for the Greeks at large since the beginning of the poem, so why does he now mention his companions? Perhaps, in this moment, he is filling the role of the hero which the Greeks expect him to fill. Or perhaps his guilt extends beyond just Patroclus’ death to include all the Greeks who died because of Achilles’ wish in Book 1.

After killing Hector, Achilles speaks powerful lines to the corpse:

τέθναθι: κῆρα δ' ἐγὼ τότε δέξομαι ὀππότε κεν δῆ

Ζεὺς ἐθέλη τελέσαι ἠδ' ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι. (*Il.* 22.365-366)

Die: and I myself will accept death whenever

Zeus and the other immortals wish to end me.

Achilles calmly acknowledges and accepts his death. He has accomplished his vengeance. He returned to battle knowing that if he killed Hector, his death would soon

follow. He knows that whatever actions he takes after this point, the result will be the same: he will die at Troy. But having killed Hector, he is ready to face his own death. He attaches Hector's corpse to his chariot by its ankles, and drags it to the Greek camp, while the Trojans look on in horror from their walls.<sup>117</sup>

Achilles' determination to desecrate Hector's corpse, and his attempts to do so after Patroclus' funeral, again emphasize the striking change in Achilles' character that I have already mentioned. Previously, Achilles showed respect to those he killed during the war. Andromache, when trying to convince her husband, Hector, not to return to battle in Book 6, tells him that he is all she has; the rest of her family is dead.<sup>118</sup> And Achilles himself killed her father.

κατὰ δ' ἔκτανεν Ἡετίωνα,  
οὐδέ μιν ἐξενάριζε, σεβάσσατο γὰρ τό γε θυμῷ,  
ἀλλ' ἄρα μιν κατέκρηε σὺν ἔντεσι δαιδαλέοισιν  
ἦδ' ἐπὶ σῆμ' ἔχεεν: (Il. 6.416-419)

[Achilles] killed Eëtion,  
but he *did not strip his armor*, for he respected<sup>119</sup> him in his heart,  
but *he burned him* with his skillfully wrought armor  
and *he built a grave mound*.

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<sup>117</sup> *Iliad* 22.396-404.

<sup>118</sup> *Iliad* 6.410-413.

<sup>119</sup> Lattimore's translation of σεβάσσατο (p. 182).

Achilles even killed all seven of Eëtion's sons, as Andromache continues.<sup>120</sup> He also showed some mercy and released her mother, but Artemis struck her down still in Eëtion's house.<sup>121</sup> Before Patroclus' death, Achilles performed the funeral of a man he had killed. Achilles had killed his entire family, so Eëtion no longer had anyone else to take on that responsibility. Still, there was no requirement that Achilles take on that role. Additionally, burning Eëtion's armor shows incredible respect. This action means that Achilles renounced his claim to Eëtion's arms as spoils which Achilles had rightly won.<sup>122</sup> Andromache presents Achilles as a man who respects the gods and the enemy. Her words, along with Achilles' conversation with Lykaon offered above, show Achilles had no personal grudge against the Trojans and their allies. After the death of Patroclus, this is not the case.

When Achilles returns to the Greek camp, dragging Hector's body behind him, he approaches Patroclus' corpse to share the news. He addresses Patroclus with "χαῖρέ."<sup>123</sup> Χαίρω was "used as a formal greeting in early Greek epic, in order to bridge a certain distance between two parties."<sup>124</sup> This is therefore not a greeting that you would expect between Achilles and his closest companion. His use of χαῖρέ, then, is a "recognition of the distance that separates him from Patroclus" but also indicates that Achilles is still having a difficult time grasping the fact that Patroclus is gone.<sup>125</sup> While he knows that Patroclus is dead, his body is still lying before him. He is both present and absent, and

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<sup>120</sup> *Iliad* 6.421-424.

<sup>121</sup> *Iliad* 6.425-428.

<sup>122</sup> Shay, p. 29.

<sup>123</sup> *Iliad* 23.19.

<sup>124</sup> Gazis, p. 54.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

this leads to Achilles' awkward greeting. He does not know how to interact with Patroclus anymore, and still has yet to accept his death.

That night, Patroclus' ghost visits Achilles in a dream. Apparently, the one-day delay of his funeral is too much for Patroclus and he tells Achilles not to delay any longer. By waiting even the single day, Patroclus has been barred entrance to the Underworld and Achilles has postponed his grieving. While a single day may not seem significant to us, in a world where embalming or cremation may occur a week before the ceremony, for the Greeks, disposing of the body quickly was important. As detailed above, delaying a funeral could also be detrimental to the bereaved's ability to cope with their loss. A delay of even a day would be a significant one. Knowing that Achilles will also die at Troy, Patroclus asks that the two of them be buried together, within the same urn. The type of intimacy expressed here again emphasizes the close relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, allowing a better understanding of Achilles' mindset.

Immediately upon waking, Achilles gets to work setting up the funeral for Patroclus.

The funeral itself, in Ancient Greece, was not performed by a priest or a religious figure, as we might expect today. Instead, the funeral was performed by the family.<sup>126</sup> In the case of Patroclus, in this military context, the Myrmidons, and especially Achilles, are in charge of Patroclus' funeral in lieu of closer relatives.<sup>127</sup>

Funerals are an act of separation. This ritual helps to conceptually move the deceased from the land of the living to the land of the dead.<sup>128</sup> First, the deceased and the

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<sup>126</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1983), p. 31.

<sup>127</sup> Sistac, paragraph 2.

<sup>128</sup> Berkson, episode 5: Understanding and Coping with Grief.

mourners are separated from the larger community. Then, the mourners are separated from the deceased and rejoin the community. Both steps of this process are important, and both show up within the *Iliad*, through the funeral of Patroclus and the supplication of Priam to Achilles.

Even before Patroclus' death, Achilles and Patroclus had isolated themselves from the rest of the Greek army. As mentioned above, Achilles and Patroclus are often shown sitting apart from even the other Myrmidons. When preparing for the funeral, Achilles still seems to sit apart, even in a moment which should be social, according to Sistac.<sup>129</sup> As I mentioned, Achilles fills the mourning role of both men and women, as if he needs to complete the rituals by himself. This is not necessary, as the entire Greek army shows up to mourn with him. His inability to accept the aid of the community shows a refusal to join it in any way. Achilles is physically in the center of this community, but mentally and emotionally he remains separate.

The group of mourners, along with Achilles, whether he realizes it or not, are together separating themselves from the larger community during the ritual and funeral. They are existing with Patroclus in a separate space during this time. The first step of this separation occurs after the pyre is built. The Myrmidons, at the command of Achilles, put on their armor. The horsemen lead the way, then the charioteers in their chariots, and finally the foot soldiers, carrying Patroclus' corpse to the pyre.<sup>130</sup> They are physically entering themselves into a new, separate space where the cremation and burial will take place.

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<sup>129</sup> Sistac, paragraph 3.

<sup>130</sup> *Iliad* 23.127-134.

The next step is for the soldiers to cut their hair and place the clippings onto the body of Patroclus. Achilles, at this moment, takes the position of holding Patroclus' head and their relationship is again emphasized.<sup>131</sup> This action also suggests progress in Achilles' grief journey. He no longer attempts to find life in Patroclus' body by placing his hand on the chest, as he had previously. Achilles has completed the first task of mourning: acknowledging and accepting the reality of the death.<sup>132</sup> He is treating Patroclus's body as a corpse, rather than as Patroclus.

Only once the other soldiers have laid down their clippings does Achilles do the same, carefully placing his hair into Patroclus' hands. His father, Peleus, had promised the River Spercheios Achilles' hair clipping, along with fifty rams, if Achilles was safely returned home to Phthia. Now, however, with the true acceptance and willingness to die at Troy, Achilles instead gives this offering to Patroclus.<sup>133</sup>

This action of cutting their hair and placing the clippings upon the corpse is the first step towards separation of the mourners from the deceased.<sup>134</sup> Cutting one's hair was also carried out at other separation rites, especially rites of passage, such as marriage. This act symbolizes that Patroclus' status within the community has changed.<sup>135</sup> While his death physically removed him from the living community, he is now socially removed as well.

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<sup>131</sup> *Iliad* 23.135-137.

<sup>132</sup> Gross, pp. 35-36.

<sup>133</sup> *Iliad* 23.141-153.

<sup>134</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), p. 110.

<sup>135</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1983), p. 41.

Once Patroclus is placed upon the pyre, Achilles tells Agamemnon to have the other Greeks leave and concern themselves with dinner. Only the close mourners are allowed to remain at the pyre to watch the body be cremated.<sup>136</sup> The completion of the funeral is also the partial completion of the second task of mourning: experiencing and processing the pain of grief.<sup>137</sup> Achilles must watch the body of his friend burn, but I do not believe this step is completed in the *Iliad* until Book 24, after Priam's arrival. The funeral alone does not give Achilles the peace he needs.<sup>138</sup>

After a short rest at dawn, Achilles gives the orders for Patroclus' bones to be gathered up and put into a golden urn, into which Achilles' bones will also be placed when he dies, honoring Patroclus' request.<sup>139</sup> The Greeks obey, and place the urn within a small, temporary tomb. Burial is the final step of the separation of the deceased from the community.<sup>140</sup> The ψυχή (life breath, spirit, soul) and body are also now separate entities. The ψυχή can now go to Hades, while the body is held within the earth. Likewise, the mourners can fully re-enter society since the deceased is no longer present even physically.<sup>141</sup>

Achilles, however, stops the Greeks from returning to their ships. He insists on holding funeral games for Patroclus.<sup>142</sup> Sistac points out that it is inappropriate to hold funeral games during a war.<sup>143</sup> Additionally, Burgess and Sourvinou-Inwood state that

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<sup>136</sup> *Iliad* 23.154-183.

<sup>137</sup> Gross, pp. 35-56.

<sup>138</sup> Sistac, paragraph 12.

<sup>139</sup> *Iliad* 23.231-257.

<sup>140</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), p. 109.

<sup>141</sup> Gazis, p. 60.

<sup>142</sup> *Iliad* 23.257-261.

<sup>143</sup> Sistac, paragraph 20.

funeral games were reserved for men of high status and it is therefore surprising that these games would have been held for Patroclus, as he is only the companion of Achilles.

<sup>144</sup> Patroclus was not known for his fighting ability, and only managed to kill Sarpedon through Zeus' plan. Burgess argues that in this way Patroclus' games are standing in for Achilles', which cannot be contained within the *Iliad*, as it ends before Achilles' death.<sup>145</sup>

While Burgess' argument may have some truth to it, I think there is a deeper meaning which has to do with Achilles continuing his grief journey.

I hope that I have shown that after the death of Patroclus, the epic focuses on Achilles' grief and coping with his loss. To me, Patroclus' funeral games continue this focus. One way to deal with loss is to reorganize belongings.<sup>146</sup> The closer to the death that reorganization is carried out, the more positive the effects will be. Similarly, the third task of mourning is adjusting to a world without the deceased.<sup>147</sup> These funeral games, then, serve a dual purpose: they are both a way of celebrating Patroclus' life and of reorganizing Patroclus' and Achilles' belongings to help Achilles adjust to a life without his companion.

One reason that scholars have argued that Achilles' funeral games are mirrored in Patroclus' is that the items that Achilles distributes as gifts are his rather than Patroclus'. This, however, is not true. Of the sixteen prizes listed, thirteen are not given original ownership, two are credited to Patroclus, and one is credited to Achilles.<sup>148</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>144</sup> Burgess, p.92 & Sourvinou-Inwood (1983), p. 40.

<sup>145</sup> Burgess, p. 92.

<sup>146</sup> Zeidner, p. 562.

<sup>147</sup> Gross, pp. 35-36.

<sup>148</sup> Of the six contests that take place, two have prizes whose histories are given. The first of the three prizes for the footrace is given a history: a silver mixing bowl which was given to Patroclus when he sold Lykaon. One might argue that this rightly belongs to Achilles, since Lykaon was Achilles'

the prizes being awarded for the funeral games belonged to both Achilles and Patroclus, with a majority remaining ambiguous. Additionally, Achilles says that he himself will not compete to win the prizes, showing that the prizes are meant to go elsewhere rather than to go to the best of the Greeks, a title which Achilles has been arguing for the entire epic.<sup>149</sup> Thus, it is reasonable to see the funeral games as reorganization as a way for Achilles to cope and as his attempt to adjust to a life that no longer includes Patroclus. Additionally, by not participating, Achilles is continuing his isolation.<sup>150</sup>

The final step of the funeral ritual is to reintegrate oneself back into society. After the funeral games, the rest of the Greeks return to their tents to eat and sleep, successfully reintegrating into society.<sup>151</sup> Achilles is unwilling to do this, as he deliberately goes against what is deemed to be appropriate to his society. Thrashing in bed alone,<sup>152</sup> unable to stop grieving for Patroclus, he yokes his horses to his chariot, fastens Hector behind his chariot, and drags the corpse around Patroclus' σῆμα, or gravesite.<sup>153</sup> The gravesite now stands in for Patroclus and so is the point where Achilles focuses his attention when dragging around the corpse.<sup>154</sup> The grave is often helpful as a focal point for the

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hostage. I believe that because Patroclus is listed as receiving the gift and Achilles is not discussed at all, we can conclude that Patroclus was the owner of the silver bowl (740-751). An extra prize is given to Antilochus after the footrace, also credited to Patroclus: Sarpedon's armor, which rightly would have belonged to his slayer if Patroclus had survived the battle. Therefore, this is another prize given from the possessions of Patroclus (798-800). The single prize listed for the discus throw is the discus itself (pig-iron, as Lattimore translates it) which Achilles took from Eëtion after killing him. This is the only item which is explicitly said to be Achilles' (826-829). The prizes for the chariot race (23.261-270), the boxing match (651-663), the wrestling match (700-705), and the archery contests (826-858) have no owner specified.

<sup>149</sup> *Iliad* 23.274-285.

<sup>150</sup> Sistac, paragraph 19.

<sup>151</sup> *Iliad* 24.1-3.

<sup>152</sup> Sistac emphasizes his solitude in this moment (paragraph 21).

<sup>153</sup> *Iliad* 24.3-18.

<sup>154</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), pp. 120-121.

bereaved so that they can continue to visit the deceased and continue to redefine their relationship to the deceased.<sup>155</sup>

Achilles' attempted desecration of Hector's corpse displeases the gods, and they discuss the potential of Hermes stealing back Hector's body. Hera, Poseidon, and Athena demand a different option.<sup>156</sup> On the twelfth day after Hector's death (eleven days after Patroclus' funeral) the gods assemble to discuss the matter. Apollo states explicitly that Achilles is grieving excessively and behaving inappropriately.<sup>157</sup> From the mouth of the gods, then, Achilles is not grieving according to societal expectations. He is experiencing complicated grief and therefore his grief is problematic.<sup>158</sup> The gods need to step in for Achilles to be able to return to "normal," appropriate grieving. They finally decide that Priam will go to Achilles under their protection and ransom back his son's body.<sup>159</sup>

When Priam arrives at the Greek camp, he goes immediately to Achilles' tent. Inside, he finds Achilles ἔταροι δ' ἀπάνευθε καθήατο ([Achilles] sat apart from his companions) Automedon and Alkimos. Achilles has just finished dinner.<sup>160</sup> At this point, at least, Achilles has allowed himself to eat and drink something. However, he is still separating himself from the community by eating alone. Reintegration is the step that Achilles has the most difficulty with.

Priam positions himself as a suppliant before Achilles and kisses his ἀνδροφόνους (man-slaughtering) hands. He begs Achilles to remember his own father, whom Priam

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<sup>155</sup> Gross, p. 58.

<sup>156</sup> *Iliad* 24.23-30.

<sup>157</sup> *Iliad* 24.44-54.

<sup>158</sup> Gross, pp. 88-89.

<sup>159</sup> *Iliad* 24.31-76.

<sup>160</sup> *Iliad* 24.471-476.



Achilles and Priam are among the leaders of opposing sides of the Trojan War. And yet, in this moment, their grief ties them together into a new community, a new social context, easing them both towards reintegration. In particular, Priam is easing Achilles towards the final adjustment to a world without Patroclus.

Achilles' next speech clearly shows this change. He commends Priam's bravery at being able to face him, especially since Achilles killed so many of Priam's sons.<sup>163</sup> Then he says:

ἀλλ' ἄγε δὴ κατ' ἄρ' ἔζευ ἐπὶ θρόνου, ἄλγεα δ' ἔμπτῃς  
ἐν θυμῷ κατακεῖσθαι ἐάσομεν ἀχνύμενοί περ:  
*οὐ γάρ τις πρῆξις πέλεται κρυεροῖο γόοιο: (Il. 24.522-524)*

...

ἄνσχεο, μὴ δ' ἀλίσστον ὀδύρεο σὸν κατὰ θυμόν:  
*οὐ γάρ τι πρῆξεις ἀκαχήμενος υἱὸς ἔηος,*  
*οὐδέ μιν ἀνστήσεις, πρὶν καὶ κακὸν ἄλλο πάθῃσθα. (Il. 24.549-551)*

But come now, be seated upon this chair, and all our pains  
we will allow to lie in our hearts, though grieving:  
*For there is no profit from dread lamentation.*

...

Bear it, do not wail unrelenting in your heart:  
*For there is nothing to be gained from mourning your son,*

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<sup>163</sup> Iliad 24.517-521.

You will not raise him from the dead before you suffer another evil.

This is the moment that Achilles stops his displays of grief. He boldly decides that the time for lamentation and weeping is over, that nothing more can come of it. He has finally completed the second task of mourning, which he began at the funeral eleven days prior: experiencing and processing the pain of grief. He also forces Priam, the other half of his new community, to follow this decision as well.

The next step for the development of this new community, now that they have ended their physical expressions of grief, is to share a meal together. Although Achilles has eaten, as Homer tells us when Priam entered Achilles' tent, he was eating alone. Additionally, Priam claims he has not eaten since Hector's death twelve days ago.<sup>164</sup> While such a fast is unlikely, this moment, I believe, would still be when Priam officially breaks his fast. Perhaps he has eaten enough to survive, but he certainly has not eaten meat since Hector's death. Meat was only eaten after a sacrifice, which Achilles performs for this meal.<sup>165</sup> It is also probable that Achilles has not eaten meat. While it is not mentioned explicitly either way, we can assume that Achilles has refrained from eating meat as part of his grief and this is his official end to his fasting as well. To help motivate the two to share this meal and for them both to officially end their fasts, Achilles tells the story of Niobe.<sup>166</sup>

Niobe was blessed with six sons and six daughters. She claimed that she was better than the goddess Leto who only had one son, Apollo, and one daughter, Artemis. In

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<sup>164</sup> *Iliad* 24.641-642.

<sup>165</sup> *Iliad* 24.621-624.

<sup>166</sup> *Iliad* 24.601-620.

anger over their mother's insult, Apollo kills Niobe's sons and Artemis kills Niobe's daughters. Even Niobe, Achilles says, in the midst of her grief at the loss of all her children, remembered to eat after she had lamented her fill. This tale shows that Achilles, too, has lamented his fill and is ready for this next step of his grief journey.

After the two men finish their meal, Priam asks Achilles for a place to sleep. He says that he has not slept since Hector's death, but instead has been grieving and "wallow[ing] in muck."<sup>167</sup> Achilles immediately orders his servants to prepare a bed on the porch and tells Priam that he will be safe there.<sup>168</sup> He even calls Priam "γέρον φίλε" (dear old man) when addressing him, again showing the new social context that they are in.

Achilles then asks how long Priam will need for Hector's funeral.<sup>169</sup> This is a dramatic change from the Achilles at the beginning of Book 24 who attempted to desecrate Hector's corpse in his anger. Because of Priam's arrival and companionship, Achilles has moved to fully accept Patroclus' death and to adjust to a world without Patroclus' companionship, rather than continuing to lash out. He has managed to cope with his loss in a more successful way than previously and has now completed the third task of mourning. He has had a change of heart where he is willingly returning the corpse rather than only obeying the will of the gods.<sup>170</sup>

When the two men have agreed to a nine-day truce for the funeral, they both go to bed.<sup>171</sup> Priam retires outside with his herald, while Achilles sleeps inside next to

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<sup>167</sup> *Iliad* 24.635-640. This translation is Lattimore's, as it creates a very vivid image (p. 514).

<sup>168</sup> *Iliad* 24.643-655.

<sup>169</sup> *Iliad* 24.65-658.

<sup>170</sup> Sistac, paragraph 23.

<sup>171</sup> *Iliad* 24.659-670.

Briseis.<sup>172</sup> This is the final step at reintegration for Achilles. While previously he has napped (directly before and after the funeral) or thrashed about alone, he has now returned to sleeping properly in his bed with a woman. In fact, the woman whom Achilles blames, in part, for Patroclus' death.<sup>173</sup> This change officially ends Achilles' grieving and reintegrates him fully into the community. This is also the final time that Achilles appears in the epic, emphasizing his successful reintegration.

## VI. Conclusion

The death of Patroclus is necessary for the final eight books of the *Iliad* to take place. Without this pivotal moment, it is not clear that Achilles would ever have returned to battle. But Homer does not use this death for only a plot point. He does not shy away from showing the raw grief that Achilles feels at Patroclus' death; rather, he takes care to show the grief journey that Achilles travels. I hope that I have shown convincingly how Coping Theory and Grief Psychology can help us gain a deeper understanding of Achilles' grief when reading the epic.

Through the last third of the epic, we watch Achilles go through his grieving process and work through the tasks of mourning. However, I have only shown Achilles completing three of the four tasks. This is because I do not believe that Achilles completes task four: finding an enduring connection with the deceased in the midst of

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<sup>172</sup> *Iliad* 24.671-676.

<sup>173</sup> *Iliad* 19.59-62.

embarking on a new life.<sup>174</sup> I believe that Achilles has no intention of completing this stage, because he plans to reunite with Patroclus soon in the Underworld.<sup>175</sup>

Within the *Iliad*, there is no alternative to the Underworld. Every mortal must die, even demigods, and everyone must travel to the same place.<sup>176</sup> Since Achilles knows that he will die at Troy, and soon since he has already killed Hector, he does not feel the need to form a different connection with Patroclus. Knowledge of his own impending death prevents Achilles from completing his tasks of mourning. One might argue that this is due more to the fact that the *Iliad* ends shortly after the completion of task three. However, Homer has been able to write an epic that encompasses the entire Trojan War while only discussing a few weeks of time.<sup>177</sup> Homer focuses especially on Achilles' grief at the end of the epic. I believe this means that Achilles' journey is over, and soon he will join Patroclus himself, bodily when their ashes are mixed together in the same urn and as souls together in the Underworld.

Achilles has been a larger-than-life character for nearly three thousand years. Yet, his actions and his grief that are the focus of the final eight books of the *Iliad* make him relatable in an unexpected way. For what is more human than grief at the loss of a loved one?

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<sup>174</sup> Gross, pp. 35-36.

<sup>175</sup> Gazis, p. 72.

<sup>176</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), p. 17.

<sup>177</sup> Burgess, p. 4, 66.



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