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GRIEF IN THE *ILIAD*

Abstract: This paper addresses the causes and effects of grief within Homer's Iliad. In addition, this paper argues that error, both committed and suffered, is the primary cause of grief, and that grief is particularly transformative in regard to Achilles, both in his motivations and in his physicality.

This paper addresses the causes and effects of grief within Homer's *Iliad*. Grief is a powerful, motivating force within the epic, and an examination of its role within the *Iliad* leads to a much fuller understanding of both action and consequence within the greater Homeric cycle. This paper holds that grief in the *Iliad* has, for the most part, a single cause: error, both committed and suffered. In the case of Achilles, the effects of grief are particularly transformative, in both the sense that Achilles' goals change entirely after undergoing the grieving process, and in the literal sense, where Achilles undergoes physical changes during the grieving process, as well. This paper will address grief throughout the *Iliad*, but will focus primarily on Achilles, as his is the central narrative of the *Iliad*, and the vast majority of grief in the epic is related to Achilles and his actions, whether directly or indirectly.

Grief, within the epic cycle that spans the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, is easily characterized by its relationship with the dual concepts of *kleos* and *nostos*, particularly in the *Iliad*. *Kleos*, glory through heroic deed and effort, and its counterpart *nostos*, "a safe return home" (Nagy 29), form a binary unit of motivation for Homeric heroes. Within the narrative of the Trojan War and its aftermath, *kleos* is won through battle and hardship on the plains before Troy, and is carried back across the sea through the process of *nostos*. Upon the hero's triumphant return home, their *kleos* is spread by song and story, preserving the account of their actions and insuring that their legacy will live on through time and, more importantly, beyond death. *Kleos* does not require the hero to live beyond the act (or series of actions)

that actually earns kleos. Similarly, nostos does not necessarily involve a short or uneventful homecoming; nostos requires only that the hero eventually arrives safely at home. This is proved spectacularly through Odysseus' trials in his eponymous epic, as his journey home is as long and as fraught with danger as the Trojan War itself. Nagy discusses the importance of kleos and nostos to the Greek hero through a triad of Achilles, Agamemnon, and Odysseus; these three heroes share the Homer-given title of "aristos Akhaiôn," or "best of the Achaeans" (26), and are the three heroes within the Cycle (spanning the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and a handful of other lost epics) most concerned with kleos and nostos.

The interaction of grief and glory in Homeric epic is particularly relevant to an understanding of Achilles, preeminent amongst the Greek host at Troy, and to an understanding of his Trojan counterpart, Hector, as well. Grief in the *Iliad* centers around Achilles; from his own personal grief, to the wider suffering of both the Achaeans and the Trojans, grief swirls around Achilles like a storm. Nearly all of the grief in the *Iliad* somehow involves him. Agamemnon's folly and hubris send Achilles away from the Achaean lines in a fury; this is Achilles' way of punishing the Achaeans for being complacent in Agamemnon's grave error (Redfield 222). Sure enough, without the martial prowess of Achilles and his host, the Achaeans steadily lose ground, buoyed only by divine will and intervention. When Patroclus is slain, the pivotal moment of grief for Achilles, Achilles is thrown into despair. Then, he emerges from it, doom-driven and furious, to exact revenge upon Hector and his kin, those who took Patroclus from him. Finally, it is the bereaved supplication of Priam, king of Troy and father of Hector, that brings Achilles' grief- and rage-driven action to a close, and thus the *Iliad* itself to a conclusion. Though Achilles is at the center of the *Iliad*, it is not, in its entirety, a story about him. "...Homer wished to show us not only Achilles but also, in a way, all heroes, and what sort of men they were: so unwilling to call it after one man, he used the

name of a city, which merely suggested the name of Achilles” (Benardete 1).

The action of the Iliad begins with a grave error on the part of Agamemnon, son of Atreus and brother to Menelaus. This error, Agamemnon taking for himself that which rightfully belonged to Achilles (within the context of the story), drives Achilles into willful isolation from the rest of the Greeks. In the initial exchange between Achilles and Agamemnon, shortly after Agamemnon declares that he will take Achilles’ war-prize, Achilles states (I.152-160):

I for my part did not come here for the sake of the Trojan
spearmen to fight against them, since to me they have done nothing.
Never yet have they driven away my cattle or my horses,
never in Phthia where the soil is rich and men grow great did they
spoil my harvest, since indeed there is much that lies between us,
the shadowy mountains and the echoing sea; but for your sake,
o great shamelessness, we followed, to do you favor,
you with the dog’s eyes, to win your honor and Menelaos’
from the Trojans.

Here, in stark contrast with later books of the poem, Achilles has no true quarrel with the Trojans. He is in Troy out of duty to Agamemnon and Menelaus. Now, with Agamemnon turning on Achilles out of greed and pettiness, Achilles has no reason to stay. He says as much, swearing that (I.239-244):

“And this shall be a great oath before you:
some day longing for Achilleus will come to the sons of the Achaians,
all of them. Then stricken at heart though you be, you will be able
to do nothing, when in their numbers before manslaughtering Hektor
they drop and die. And then you will eat out the heart within you
in sorrow, that you did no honor to the best of the Achaians.”

Agamemnon’s error presents a binary choice to Achilles. Either he suffers Agamemnon’s injustice and remains amongst the Greek host, becoming an “outidanos,” or “mere nothing,” like the rest of the Achaean soldiers, or he separates himself in anger, thus shaming and punishing the other Greeks for their complicity in Agamemnon’s folly while retaining his own

integrity and dignity (Redfield 222). Achilles' withdrawal, therefore, is a calculated social act, and not a rash decision made in the midst of rage and embarrassment. The fact that the Greeks lose soldiers without him to meet the Trojans on the battlefield is the fault of the Achaeans, not of Achilles. They have brought death upon themselves by ostracizing Achilles when they needed him most.

The absence of Achilles will bring great and terrible grief to the Achaeans, and to Agamemnon, especially, because he caused that absence in the first place. Shortly after this oath, Achilles retreats to his camp, and Briseis is taken from him. His outward anger gives way to sorrow, and Achilles weeps on the shore, calling upon his mother, the sea-nymph Thetis. Here is the first foreshadowing of Achilles' premature death, even though he does not die within the *Iliad* itself. "If only you could sit by your ships untroubled, not weeping, since indeed your lifetime is to be short, of no length. Now it has befallen that your life must be brief and bitter beyond all men's," says Thetis, weeping alongside her son (I.415-418). Even before the proper warfare of the *Iliad* begins, Achilles is already marked as a hero who, whatever else he may do and accomplish, bears a sorrowful fate. The second foreshadowing of Achilles' death comes once again from Thetis, after Patroclus is slain, and the final comes on the dying breath of Hector himself. There will be no triumphant return for Achilles, unlike his Homeric counterpart Odysseus.

Agamemnon does not come to his senses until the ninth book of the *Iliad*. After a long, grueling, losing fight for the Achaeans, the Trojan forces are at the threshold of the Greek camp. Achilles' divine mother has done as he requested, and has beseeched Zeus himself to bring the Achaeans to the brink of destruction. Achilles is sorely needed, but remains aloof, camped with the other Myrmidons beside their ships. He can see his comrades need him on the front lines, but purposefully stays his hand in war to punish Agamemnon. The quarrel between two great men, between two kings and leaders, has brought suffering upon all the Greeks at Troy, so much so that

the Achaean camp may even be overwhelmed. That Achilles would abandon the Greeks, in such a critical period and after nearly a decade of constant siege, speaks volumes of Achilles' wrath and of the severity of Agamemnon's transgression. One does not treat a fellow king the way Agamemnon has treated Achilles. Achilles is willing to forsake the lives of thousands to bring Agamemnon to despair and contrition, and this is presented as the natural, inevitable result of Agamemnon's hubris. The suffering of the Greeks, therefore, is as much Agamemnon's fault as it is Achilles'. Achilles may be the one withholding his forces, but Agamemnon was the one who offended him in the first place. The gods do not punish Achilles, though he is doomed to die young; they punish the man who started this quarrel between great men, and, by extension, those under his command. Agamemnon overstepped his bounds, and pays for it dearly.

This is not to say that Achilles' abstinence from war does not come back to bite him, as well. Achilles' own error, sending Patroclus into battle unaccompanied by Achilles himself, is what brings the greatest grief to Achilles himself. In Book 16, the Trojans finally reach the Achaeans' ships, intending to set them ablaze and strand the Greeks on the shore. Holding up his end of a promise made to Agamemnon's embassy (consisting of Odysseus, Ajax, and Phoenix) in Book 9, Achilles rallies the Myrmidons, and sends Patroclus out to lead them, suited in Achilles' armor to sow fear and confusion amongst the Trojans. He gives a warning to Patroclus, to hold back from charging the Trojan lines after driving them away from the ships. Firstly, this will prevent Patroclus from gaining kleos that should, by right, be Achilles, since he is effectively fighting as his king while wearing his armor. Secondly, Patroclus will be more vulnerable away from the Achaean ships, and Achilles specifically notes that the Trojans have many of the Olympian gods, such as Apollo, on their side. Achilles stays behind to watch, after sending a prayer for Patroclus' safety that goes unanswered by Zeus. His confidence buoyed by Zeus' earlier aid in driving the Achaeans to near-ruin, and knowing Patroclus' great skill in

battle, he does not think that the king of gods will let his dear companion die, even against a warrior as great as Hector. As he states in his warning to Patroclus, Achilles fears that Patroclus could be caught up in a clash with the divines; he does not worry about the outcome of a clash between mortals. With the help of Apollo, Hector slays Patroclus, and Patroclus foretells Hector's doom in his dying moments (XVI.844-854):

Now is your time for big words, Hektor. Yours is the victory
given by Kronos' son, Zeus, and Apollo, who have subdued me
easily, since they themselves stripped the arms from my shoulders.
Even though twenty such as you had come in against me,
they all would have been broken beneath my spear, and have perished.
No, deadly destiny, with the son of Leto, has killed me,
and of men it was Euphorbos; you are only my third slayer.
And put away in your heart this other thing that I tell you.
You yourself are not one who shall live long, but now already
death and powerful destiny are standing beside you,
to go down under the hands of Aiakos' great son, Achilleus.

This passage further illuminates Achilles' error, which was to send Patroclus, fully mortal, out onto a battlefield where Olympians warred alongside humans. By Patroclus' own account, Hector was a secondary or even tertiary concern. However, a clash with Hector, Hector being the preeminent defender and champion of Troy, would seem to logically involve at least one of the Trojan-aligned Olympians eventually, if not immediately. Additionally, Patroclus' nod to Euphorbos, who had deeply wounded him prior to the fatal exchange of blows with Hector (XVI.808-815), shows that Patroclus himself knew the dangers of war with mortals (those mainly being the sheer chaos of the battlefield and the fact that your enemy is rarely, if ever, alone), and knew himself to not be invincible. Perhaps Achilles believed, on some level, that Patroclus would be able to hold his own should he come into single combat with Hector, or that Patroclus would at least be able to escape to the safety of the Greek lines, as he attempted to do following Euphorbos' wounding (XVI.816-821). Achilles, perhaps the single strongest soldier in the Achaean camp prior to Patroclus' death, and

certainly the strongest thereafter, paid too little mind to the mundane dangers of war, especially considering he sent Patroclus out in Achilles' own armor, turning him into a prime target for the Trojans. Of course Hector and the other Trojan leaders would focus their efforts and violence upon Patroclus, armored as he was; the opportunity to slay Achilles was too valuable to pass up. The death of Patroclus, therefore, was as inevitable as Achilles' own death the moment Achilles sent him from the camp to fight. However, as Patroclus says, Hector's death is now inevitable as well. "It took three of you to kill me," says Patroclus, "and one of that number was a god. You won't escape Achilles." Through this, Patroclus likens Achilles to fate or death itself, establishing an expectation in the audience that Achilles will act as such for Troy and all its children.

It is not until Book Eighteen that Achilles actually learns of Patroclus' death, and the transformative power of grief upon Achilles begins to reveal itself (XVIII.22-27):

He spoke, and the black cloud of sorrow closed on Achilles.
 In both hands he caught up the grimy dust, and poured it
 over his head and face, and fouled his handsome countenance,
 and the black ashes were scattered over his immortal tunic.
 And he himself, mightily in his might, in the dust lay
 at length, and took and tore at his hair with his hands, and defiled it.

Achilles disfigures himself with dirt and grime so that his outward appearance reflects his inner state. The foremost warrior of the Achaeans has been rent open, not by sword or spear, but by sorrow, by the inevitable death of a loved one. It is hard to imagine a proud warrior such as Achilles giving himself over to such public displays of grief; after all, in the first book of the poem, Achilles retreats to the shore and the company of his mother to grieve over Agamemnon's offense, away from the company of other mortals. Now, Achilles' mourning takes place in the center of the Achaean camp, and his grief is so profound and moving that Antilochos, the son of Nestor and the messenger who brought news of Patroclus' death to Achilles, "mourned with him, letting the tears fall, and held the hands of

Achilleus as he grieved in his proud heart, fearing Achilleus might cut his throat with the iron" (XVIII.32-34). There is no formal, ritual grief as of yet, at least on the part of Achilles; from "the handmaidens Achilleus and Patroklos had taken captive," however, there is something that approaches ritualized lament, as they begin to cry out and to beat their chests with their hands (XVIII.28-31). This display seems to fall in line with what Alexiou describes as "góos," or the spontaneous, informal weeping from the kinswomen of the deceased (103). The handmaidens, then, seem to be the nearest equivalents to blood relations, as the Greek camp is without wives or (mortal) mothers and sisters, and thus they step into the role, whether out of genuine grief or social obligation, the latter seeming far more likely, considering their status as prizes of war. The formalized manner of ritual lament for ancient Greek women is "thrênos," a "set dirge composed and performed by the professional mourners" (Alexiou 103). Interestingly, the ritual lament prescribed for ancient Greek men, "élegos," the praise of the dead, is *not* what Achilles takes part in initially (Alexiou 104). Achilles screams so shrilly and so loudly that his mother Thetis hears him in her own faraway realm (XVIII.34-36). This behavior is far more in line with what Alexiou describes as góos, and is imbued with a supernatural aspect both by its transcendence (or perhaps disregard) for prescribed methods of grief and by the fact that it carries across the mortal realm and into the divine one. This is the first indication that Achilles' grief is exceptional, in the sense that it is not like any other character's grief within the *Iliad*.

Thetis hears her son's cries of grief, and begins to lament herself, saying, "I sent him away with the curved ships in the land of Ilion to fight with the Trojans; but I shall never again receive him won home again to his country and into the house of Peleus" (18.58-60). Patroclus' death has also sealed Achilles' fate, just as it sealed Hector's. It becomes a part of the destinies of both heroes, but, where it merely places Hector on a trajectory towards death at Achilles' hand, it transforms

Achilles, and divests him of both his humanity and his will to live.

Patroclus, in a very real sense, was Achilles' tie to the rest of humanity. "To be sure, all men respect his matchless fighting ability; yet only one calls him friend" (Anderson 265). To the rest of the Achaeans, Achilles is more force of nature than man, and his closest companion and confidant, aside from Patroclus, is his own mother, who dwells amongst the Olympians. Peleus, Achilles' father, is both very old and very far away; Neoptolemus, Achilles' son, is not present in the Myrmidon's camp. Patroclus is the only one amongst humans who regards Achilles as anything but someone to be feared and respected, and even then fear and respect still shape Patroclus' relationship with Achilles. In Book Eleven, Patroclus goes to Nestor to learn of the Achaean casualties on behalf of Achilles. This is a fairly minor errand, as requests from kings go; however, Patroclus politely refuses even slight comforts of hospitality when arriving at Nestor's tent. "You know yourself, aged sir beloved of Zeus, how *he* is; a dangerous man; he might even be angry with one who is guiltless" (XI.652-653). The relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, therefore, is not perfect and is affected heavily by the inherent power imbalance between the two. However beloved Patroclus is to Achilles, Achilles is still Patroclus' king, and Patroclus therefore fears Achilles' wrath more than he values his own comfort, as is shown with his visit to Nestor. Achilles cannot enter even friendship without immediately overpowering the other person in the relationship, and thus drives himself further into isolation and loneliness, and thus error and grief. Anderson also points out that, while the death of Patroclus signals a *détente* with Agamemnon for Achilles, it brings the significant reservoir of violence within Achilles to the point of overflow (266). The violence of absence visited upon the Achaeans, levied as punishment, has become a violence of presence upon the Trojans, enacted as revenge.

When Thetis comes to her son at Troy, Achilles swears to destroy Hector, "since the spirit within does not drive me to go

on living and be among men, except on the condition that Hektor first be beaten down under my spear, lose his life and pay the price for stripping Patroklos, the son of Menoitios” (XVIII.90-94). “Then I must lose you soon, my child, by what you are saying, since it is decreed your death must come soon after Hektor’s,” Thetis responds tearfully (XVIII.95-96). One death has become three, but Achilles, fully isolated from humanity and thus life in a social sense, does not regret the news of his own fate (XVIII.98-116):

I must die soon, then; since I was not to stand by my companion when he was killed. And now, far away from the land of his fathers, he has perished, and lacked my fighting strength to defend him. Now, since I am not going back to the beloved land of my fathers, since I was no light of safety to Patroklos, nor to my other companions, who in their numbers went down before glorious Hektor, but sit here beside my ships, a useless weight on the good land, I, who am such as no other of the bronze-armored Achaians in battle, though there are others also better in council- why, I wish that strife would vanish away from gods and mortals, and gall, which makes a man grow angry for all his great mind, that gall of anger that swarms like smoke inside of a man’s heart and becomes a thing sweeter to him by far than the dripping of honey. So it was here that the lord of men Agamemnon angered me. Still, we will let all of this be a thing of the past, and for all our sorrow beat down by force the anger deeply within us. Now I shall go, to overtake that killer of a dear life, Hektor; then I will accept my own death, at whatever time Zeus wishes to bring it about, and the other immortals.

What Achilles clearly does regret is his own inaction, especially in regard to his decision to stay at the ships while Patroclus led the Myrmidons against Hector in his stead. His death is inevitable; his error was inevitable, as well, in a poetic sense, as the *Iliad* could not continue without it, and it was a reasonable error to make, but Achilles does not see it as such. His anger at Agamemnon, which had dominated Achilles’ motivation throughout the *Iliad*, has become unimportant, as have the prizes of war and the prospect of a safe and celebrated return home, nostos. Those things which, based on Achilles’ prior actions, are most important for a hero, glory, dignity, loot, and

a safe return home, have become inconsequential to Achilles. Achilles requires only one thing in order to return to the war, now: Hector's death by Achilles' own hands. Achilles' motivations are shattered and reshaped in a single moment of loss, and Achilles himself is reshaped, as well. The king has become an avenger; a wish for life has given way to an utter disregard for death. In fact, Achilles embraces his own death, so long as it means that Hector dies with him.

Achilles cannot rejoin the fight, however, while Hector still holds his armor. Therefore, Thetis goes to beg the aid of Hephaestus, that her son might be clad in divinely-wrought armor to match his absolute purpose. In the meantime, fighting continues over Patroclus' body, as Hector wishes to claim it as a trophy and the Greeks wish to preserve it for its due rites. Iris, sent in secret by Hera, descends from Olympus to warn Achilles of this turn of events. When Achilles responds that he has no armor and must wait upon his mother's return, Iris tells him to show himself, unarmed and unarmored, to the Trojans. As Achilles rises from the ground to heed her advice, the second of his physical transformations takes place (XVIII.203-214):

But Achilleus, the beloved of Zeus, rose up, and Athene swept about his powerful shoulders the fluttering aegis; and she, the divine among goddesses, about his head circled a golden cloud, and kindled from it a flame far-shining. As when a flare goes up into the high air from a city from an island far away, with enemies fighting about it who all day long are in the hateful division of Ares fighting from their own city, but as the sun goes down signal fires blaze out one after another, so that the glare goes pulsing high for men of the neighboring islands to see it, in case they might come over in ships to beat off the enemy; so from the head of Achilleus the blaze shot into the bright air.

Athena renders Achilles as a beacon, and cloaks him in divine recognition. All who look upon him will know that he stands apart from other mortals, that he alone bears right to such open divine favor amongst the Achaeans. This is further

confirmed by the lines that follow shortly after, as Achilles literally stands apart (XVIII.215-221):

He went from the wall and stood by the ditch, nor mixed with the other Achaians, since he followed the close command of his mother. There he stood, and shouted, and from her place Pallas Athene gave cry, and drove endless terror upon the Trojans. As loud as comes the voice that is screamed out by a trumpet by murderous attackers who beleaguer a city, so then high and clear went up the voice of Aiakides.

Achilles' voice is echoed and bolstered by the voice of Athena herself and given such power as to send the Trojans into disarray and chaos. Twelve of Troy's best warriors are slain by the rout alone (XVIII.230-231). Achilles, in his grief and his determination and with the help of divinity, has transcended being a mere warrior-king. He has become, as the other Achaeans initially believed him to be, a force unto himself. Cloaked in holy fire and giving war-cries powerful enough to kill, Achilles' first foray onto the field of battle since his quarrel with Agamemnon heralds the destruction of Troy itself.

With the Trojans in disarray, Achilles returns to mourning Patroclus, and his mother finds "her beloved son lying in the arms of Patroklos crying shrill, and his companions in their numbers about him mourned" (XIX.4-6). Again Achilles has returned to sorrowful weeping, and again a goddess delivers him out of it. This time, though, the goddess brings physical raiment, rather than spiritual, and it is as terrible to behold as Athena's aegis of flame (XIX.12-17):

The goddess spoke so, and set down the armor on the ground before Achilleus, and all its elaboration clashed loudly. Trembling took hold of all the Myrmidons. None had the courage to look straight at it. They were afraid of it. Only Achilleus looked, and as he looked the anger came harder upon him and his eyes glittered terribly under his lids, like sunflare.

Achilles' physical transformation is complete once he finally puts on his armor, after reconciling with the Achaeans and fasting out of sorrow for Patroclus (XIX.369-386):

First he placed along his legs the fair greaves linked with silver fastenings to hold the greaves at the ankles. Afterward he girt on about his chest the corselet, and across his shoulders slung the sword with the nails of silver, a bronze sword, and caught up the great shield, huge and heavy next, and from it the light glimmered far, as from the moon. And as when from across water a light shines to mariners from a blazing fire, when the fire is burning high in the mountains in a desolate steading, as the mariners are carried unwilling by storm winds over the fish-swarmling sea, far away from their loved ones; so the light from the fair elaborate shield of Achilles shot into the high air. And lifting the helm he set it massive upon his head, and the helmet crested with horse-hair shone like a star, the golden fringes were shaken about it which Hephaistos had driven close along the horn of the helmet. And brilliant Achilles tried himself in his armor, to see if it fitted close, and how his glorious limbs ran within it, and the armor became as wings and upheld the shepherd of the people.

Grief has transformed Achilles from a king, one amongst many, and a warrior, nearly without peer or equal, into something far more. He is now light-bearer, hope-bringer, salvation to the Greeks in their hour of need. Through the loss of the person dearest to him, he has learned his rightful place is at the head of his comrades' battle-lines, for they are vulnerable without him. Where he once brought sorrow, now he brings courage. This transformation is two-fold, however: death becomes as much a part of Achilles as victory. His ascension comes at the cost of his future and of the future of all who oppose him as well. Just as only the gods could have forged Achilles' new armor, only the gods can stop him once he puts it on. Patroclus' death heralded the last days of Ilion's most noble champion, and, when he falls, so will the city he defends.

A question arises from Achilles' complaint of lacking the armor necessary to fight, to prevent the Trojans from claiming Patroclus' body and mutilating it: why did Achilles not wear Patroclus' armor? If Patroclus could convincingly wear Achilles' armor, then surely the inverse would be true? John A. Scott points out that someone else was, in all likelihood, already

wearing it: Automedon, charioteer of Achilles, “so that while Patroclus passed for Achilles, Automedon in his turn passed for Patroclus” (682). However, this is not the only reason. The most obvious reason that Achilles could not wear Patroclus’ armor, from a poetic perspective, is that, had he done so, the transformation brought about by him putting on Hephaestus’ set would not be nearly as significant or as striking. Hephaestus’ armor is the first battle-raiment that Achilles wears since withdrawing from the fighting, and it represents his singular status amongst the Achaeans as well as his divine purpose. To wear any other set of armor prior to putting on the raiment of flame would invalidate all that Hephaestus’ gift says of him. There is another, less obvious reason, though, and that is that Homeric heroes are burnt alongside their armor when they die. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus encounters the ghost of Elpenor when he descends into Hades, and is asked by Elpenor to seek out Elpenor’s body and burn it along with his armaments. They do so immediately after leaving the realm of the dead. “Evidently the obligation was too sacred to be ignored” (Scott 683). Patroclus’ armor, therefore, should have gone with his body to the pyre, and Achilles could not have worn it, even if it was available. To strip the armor of a dead enemy was to take a prize, as is shown when Hector strips Patroclus of Achilles’ original armor in Book Seventeen; to wear the armor of a fallen comrade would be a sin.

Scott raises a point that this paper contends with, and that is the idea that Patroclus was, essentially, not a warrior. “It is impossible to define accurately the position held by Patroclus in the army at Troy, as he seems a sort of supernumerary in the camp, and he is of importance only as a companion, a friend, or a servant of Achilles; therefore he seems to have had no occasion to use arms, except for the one brief period when he employed, not his own armor, but that of Achilles. Patroclus plainly joined the Greek forces to serve and to advise Achilles, but not to fight the Trojans” (Scott 682). While Patroclus certainly did not have a particular, pressing quarrel with the Trojans (remember, neither did Achilles, when he arrived), and

although the exact nature of Achilles' and Patroclus' relationship has been a topic of debate from antiquity on, to say that Patroclus is important only as a gopher for Achilles is misguided. Patroclus, very clearly, is important as a warrior, because he dies not in a raid on the camp or by accident, but on the battlefield, facing Troy's crown prince. No mere adjunct to greatness would be afforded such an important moment within the narrative. The fact that Achilles sends Patroclus out in Achilles' own armor, fully confident that Patroclus will hold his own and return as long as he obeys Achilles' warnings, also speaks volumes of Achilles' confidence in Patroclus' abilities as a warrior. To send Patroclus alone, instead of joining him, was a grave mistake on Achilles' part, as was Patroclus' rash decision to try and engage Hector so far from the Greek lines, but these stemmed from what is perhaps the defining flaw of the warrior: overconfidence. Even Patroclus' final words are said in the role of the dying soldier, grimly reminding his enemy of the inevitability of his own death. Scott raises the idea that Patroclus is *not* explicitly burned with his armor as final proof of his status as adjunct and advisor, rather than soldier, but Hector is not explicitly burned with his armor, either, and one would hardly argue that Hector was not a warrior. Scott is correct, however, when he says "The tragedy of the *Wrath* is that it should have forced this man to his death, and in borrowed armor" (686). The tragedy of Patroclus is not that he was a civilian forced into the impossible role of soldier by the foolishness of a superior; it is that he was sent into death by the *overconfidence* of a superior and friend, and by his own overconfidence as well. Patroclus was not sent forth unwilling into the fray; he was held back at length, and, when he was finally released and allowed to act under his own power, he died. Though Patroclus was already a fine warrior in his own right, he could never match Achilles' prowess, and thus died when only Achilles could have survived. Had Patroclus been a mere advisor, his death would not have been inevitable or necessary.

Returning to the action of the *Iliad*, Achilles, after ending (or at least pausing) his quarrel with Agamemnon, receives the gifts that Agamemnon's embassy promises him earlier in the epic. Agamemnon both acknowledges and excuses his error in this section, saying, "Yet what could I do? It is the god who accomplishes all things. Delusion is the elder daughter of Zeus, the accursed who deludes all; her feet are delicate and they step not on the firm earth, but she walks the air above men's heads and leads them astray. She has entangled others before me" (XIX.90-94). In this way, Agamemnon acknowledges his own role in the Achaeans' suffering and retains his dignity and power as king. "Even kings are subject to the whims of the gods," he is saying, removing his own personal culpability from the equation, as he must to retain his status. An important aspect of the quarrel, starting in Book One, between Achilles and Agamemnon is that they quarrel as equals, as two kings who have come to an impasse. "Achilles is a king, the son of a deity, and personally stronger; Agamemnon is a greater king and commands more power. They argue like equals and upbraid each other in terms designedly comprehensible both to each other and to those listening" (Arieti 193). Agamemnon's promise to take Achilles' prize (Briseis) is a gesture equivalent to "I have more worth than you, because I deserve more war-prizes." Since both kings accept the same standard of "quantitative honor," as Arieti puts it, Achilles insults Agamemnon by calling his courage into question, and withdraws from the fighting in a way that is entirely socially acceptable within his own culture (193). Agamemnon's error, therefore, is social as well as personal, and the Greeks at Troy as a whole are punished as a result.

Though the long-standing feud between the two great kings, two of the "best of the Achaeans," has finally calmed enough to allow the two to work towards a common goal once again, Achilles does not care for the gifts that Agamemnon delivers. They are rich gifts as well: aside from the promised return of the women, the gifts consist of gold and silver, well-wrought cauldrons and horses, things which would greatly

increase the wealth of Achilles' house (XIX.243-248). He wishes to immediately return to the fighting, alongside the rest of the Achaean host, but Odysseus dissuades him, noting that the Greeks cannot fight on empty stomachs (XIX.155-172). Achilles assents, but does not take food or drink himself. "I beg of you. If any dear companion will listen to me, stop urging me to satisfy the heart in me with food and drink, since this strong sorrow has come upon me. I will hold out till the sun goes down and endure, though it be hard" (XIX.305-308). Achilles, out of guilt and sorrow, fasts. Shortly prior to this declaration, Briseis is returned to the Myrmidon's camp, and her grief at learning of Patroclus' death once again matches what is described by Alexiou as *góos*, though her vocal lament is perhaps closer to *thrênos*, simply because she gives it a form more complex than wails or moans (XIX.287-300):

Patroklos, far most pleasing to my heart in its sorrow,
 I left you here alive when I went away from the shelter,
 but now I come back, lord of the people, to find you have fallen.
 So evil in my life takes over from evil forever.
 The husband on whom my father and honoured mother bestowed me
 I saw before my city lying torn with the sharp bronze,
 and my three brothers, whom a single mother bore with me
 and who were close to me, all went on one day to destruction.
 And yet you would not let me, when swift Achilleus has cut down
 my husband, and sacked the city of godlike Mynes, you would not
 let me sorrow, but said you would make me godlike Achilleus'
 wedded lawful wife, that you would take me back in the ships
 to Phthia, and formalize my marriage among the Myrmidons.
 Therefore I weep your death without ceasing. You were kind always.

The loss of Patroklos is here revealed to be a far deeper loss than the loss of a dear companion to Achilles alone; it is a loss for all the Myrmidons and to the most vulnerable amongst their camp, the prisoners of war. Considering the fear and reverence with which Patroclus spoke of Achilles to Nestor earlier in the epic, it seems unlikely that his promises to Briseis were idle or empty; he would not have promised Achilles to marriage had he not been sure the proposal would please Achilles. Briseis' mourning adds a new dimension to Achilles' grief and to the

grief of his men. The loss of Patroclus is one sorely felt by all the Greeks, but most keenly by Achilles, who can no longer bring himself to take part in even basic acts of sustenance such as eating and drinking.

Achilles' isolation is further highlighted following his declaration of intention to fast. Speaking to Patroclus' body, as yet unburied but lying peacefully in the Myrmidons' camp, Achilles speaks of both his father and son (XIX.321-337):

...There is nothing worse than this I could suffer,
not even if I were to hear of the death of my father
who now, I think, in Phthia somewhere lets fall a soft tear
for bereavement of such a son, for me, who now in a strange land
make war upon the Trojans for the sake of accursed Helen;
or the death of my dear son, who is raised for my sake in Skyros
now, if godlike Neoptolemos is still one of the living.
Before now the spirit inside my breast was hopeful
that I alone should die far away from horse-pasturing Argos
here in Troy; I hoped you would win back again to Phthia
so that in a fast black ship you could take my son back
from Skyros to Phthia, and show him all my possessions,
my property, my serving men, my great high-roofed house.
For by this time I think that Peleus must altogether
have perished, or still keeps a little scant life in sorrow
gor the hatefulness of old age and because he waits ever from me
the evil message, for the day he hears I have been killed.

Achilles knows that his death will bring sorrow to his remaining family, to his mother and father and son, if the latter two still live. Other than Patroclus, Peleus and Neoptolemos were his only ties to the mortal world; now, with Patroclus lying dead, and Peleus and Neoptolemos dead as well for all he knows, Achilles is truly bereft of mortal company. His death will not go unmourned, either in his distant home or amongst the Greek camp, but Achilles is utterly, truly alone, and will be so until his death. Achilles' sorrow and isolation moves both the other Achaeans and Zeus himself, who sends Athena to imbue him with nectar and ambrosia to stave off the ill effects of fasting (XIX.338-356). It is at the end of Book Nineteen that Achilles' physical transformation is complete, as it is when he finally

dons Hephaestus' gifts (XIX.369-391). Finally, a third foretelling of Achilles' death comes from one of Achilles' horses, Xanthos, to whom Hera gives voice (XIX.407-410): "We shall still keep you safe for this time, o hard Achilleus. And yet the day of your death is near, but it is not we who are to blame, but a great god and powerful Destiny." Achilles responds (XIX.420-423): "I myself know well it is destined for me to die here far from my beloved father and mother. But for all that I will not stop till the Trojans have had enough of my fighting." Death comes for Achilles, but Achilles, like unto death, clad in shining, divine armor, also comes for Troy. The same force that will consume him, fate, will also bring him the victory he so desires. Grief will surely follow Achilles' death, but grief is the reason that Achilles crossed the threshold of inevitability in the first place.

Books Twenty and Twenty-One consist of Achilles' return to the war, and of the slaughter he inflicts upon the Trojan host. Zeus lifts a prior ban on the gods interfering in the conflict, as well, returning the war to its earlier state, where the full forces of both sides are mustered. Aeneas and Achilles, who first clashed in Book Thirteen, have a rematch, and Aeneas is rescued by Poseidon. Achilles and Hector rally their respective forces, and Achilles begins to rapidly kill Trojan heroes, which draws Hector to him. This meeting is ended prematurely by Apollo, who shrouds Hector in mist and spirits him away. "Once again now you escaped death, dog. And yet the evil came near you, but now once more Phoibos Apollo has saved you, he to whom you must pray when you go into the thunder of spears thrown. Yet I may win you, if I encounter you hereafter, if beside also there is some god who will help me. Now I must chase whoever I can overtake of the others" (XX.449-454). The longer Hector delays in fighting Achilles, the more suffering Achilles inflicts upon Hector's countrymen. Much as Achilles punished the Achaeans for their complicity with Agamemnon's foolishness, Achilles punishes Hector for failing to fight him, killing Trojans as if he were idly snapping dry twigs. By the end of Book Twenty, Achilles has killed at least a score of Trojan heroes, and he is described as sweeping "everywhere with his

spear like something more than a mortal harrying them as they died” (XX.491-494).

Book Twenty-One is much of the same, but it contains a scene that reinforces Achilles’ new role as the destruction of Troy (though he does not literally destroy it). When Achilles corners Lycaon, a son of Priam and one of Hector’s half-brothers, Lycaon is quick to surrender, having previously been a prisoner of Achilles during the war. “Do not kill me,” he says. “I am not from the same womb as Hektor, he who killed your powerful and kindly companion” (XXI. 95-96). Achilles is not impressed (XXI.97-113):

So the glorious son of Priam addressed him, speaking
in supplication, but heard in turn the voice without pity:
‘Poor fool, no longer speak to me of ransom, nor argue it.
In the time before Patroklos came to the day of his destiny
then it was the way of my heart’s choice to be sparing
of the Trojans, and many I took alive and disposed of them.
Now there is not one who can escape death, if the gods send
him against my hands in front of Ilion, not one
of all the Trojans and beyond other the children of Priam.
So, friend, you die also. Why all this clamour about it?
Patroklos also is dead, who was better by far than you are.
Do you not see what a man I am, how huge, how splendid
and born of a great father, and the mother who bore me immortal?
Yet even I have also my death and my strong destiny,
and there shall be a dawn or an afternoon or a noontime
when some man in the fighting will take the life from me also
either with a spearcast or an arrow flown from the bowstring.’

Achilles then kills Lycaon without another word, and hurls him into the river Scamander, an intentional act of disrespect done in order to prevent his family from giving his body its proper burial rites (XXI.120-125). Again, Achilles explicitly states that his grief and anger over Hector’s slaying of Patroclus has transformed him into something like unto death itself for the Trojans, and that only the gods can prevent him from carrying out his intent. Here, Achilles’ rage extends even to the dead, which foreshadows his eventual, far more brutal treatment of Hector’s corpse; he chokes the river with so many corpses that

its eponymous god rises from it and attempts to rebuff Achilles himself, only to be rebuffed by Hephaestus.

The final confrontation between Achilles and Hector comes in Book Twenty-two. Hector's parents, Priam and Hecuba, beg him to retreat inside the walls of Troy: "Do not go out as champion against him, o hard one; for if he kills you I can no longer mourn you on the death-bed, sweet branch, o child of my bearing, nor can your generous wife mourn you, but a big way from us beside the ships of the Argives the running dogs will feed on you" (XXII.85-89). They know that if Achilles kills their son, he will do everything in his power to desecrate the body, and that Hector will go down into Hades mutilated and mangled. Hector chooses to stand outside the walls, which is a fatal error. As soon as Achilles appears, "closing upon him in the likeness of the lord of battles," Hector bolts, knowing that, alone, he cannot hope to win against Achilles (XXII.131-138).

The actual fight between the two is, predictably, short. Once Achilles catches Hector with the aid of Athena, Hector comes to accept his own death, as Achilles once accepted his. However, they come to this acceptance in vastly different circumstances. Where Achilles embraces his fate while bereft by grief in the company of his mother, Hector is without company at all, except for Achilles (XXII.289-309):

So he spoke, and balanced the spear far shadowed, and threw it,
and struck the middle of Peleides' shield, nor missed it,
but the spear was driven far back from the shield, and Hektor was
angered because his swift weapon had been loosed from his hand
in a vain cast. He stood discouraged, and had no other ash spear; but
lifting his voice he called aloud on Deiphobos of the pale shield,
and asked him for a long spear, but Deiphobos was not near him.
And Hektor knew the truth inside his heart, and spoke aloud:
"No use. Here at last the gods have summoned me deathward.
I thought Deiphobos the hero was here close beside me,
but he is behind the wall and it was Athene cheating me,
and now evil death is close to me, and no longer far away,
and there is no way out. So it must long since have been pleasing
to Zeus, and Zeus' son who strikes from afar, this way; though before this
they defended me gladly. But now my death is upon me.
Let me at least not die without a struggle, inglorious,

but do some great thing first, that men to come shall know of it.”
 So he spoke, and pulling out the sharp sword that was slung
 at the hollow of his side, huge and heavy, and gathering
 himself together, he made his swoop, like a high-flown eagle
 who launches himself out of the murk of the clouds on the flat land...

In a moment, Hector realizes that he is alone, with no comrade to aid him in his time of need; that he will die shortly; and that this incident, where Achilles has chased him tirelessly and finally cornered him, was planned by the gods; and that his death had been written long before this moment. He then chooses that which is left to him: battle and the promise of glory that will outlive him. He flies into death, and, with his last words, warns Achilles of his own impending demise at the hands of Paris and Apollo (XXII.358-360). Just as Patroclus' death chased Hector, Hector's death will chase Achilles, until the cycle of grief comes to an end with the death of the son of Peleus. There is mutual understanding between Hector and Achilles as Hector draws his last, though everything in Achilles burns with hatred for Hector. Achilles has heard this doom-prophecy before, and Hector knows it by the simple fact of Achilles' presence on the battlefield. His last words to Achilles are not so much a warning, then, as a reminder. "We are bound," Hector is saying, harkening to the strange entanglement of their respective fates. "As I die, so shall you." Both figures could not stand upon the same field. The presence of one would buckle and destroy the other, and thus consume itself, in due time. By slaying Patroclus, Hector ensured, unknowingly, that he would be the first to fall. Both warriors go into death willingly because there was no other way it could be.

After Hector falls, Achilles begins to do injustice to Hector's body by mutilating it, just as Priam and Hecuba feared he would. Unlike Achilles' earlier withdrawal from the war, the desecration of a corpse is not a socially acceptable act, and thus the gods seek to protect it from further injustice, and plan to send Priam as supplicant to Achilles' tent. Now that Hector is dead, and Patroclus buried and mourned through funeral games, Achilles' rage is spent. All that is left is sorrow and

whatever shall come of the war before his inevitable death. Achilles is, once again, isolated. "Patroclus had loved him, perhaps, yet that love had not cast out fear now Patroclus had died, and there was nothing left" (Anderson 266). His treatment of Hector's body is as much an act of self-mutilation as it is one of revenge; the treatment has a compulsive nature, as if Achilles were so caught up in the throes of his own hatred and self-loathing that he could do nothing but tie Hector's ankles to his chariot and drag him through the dust. In juxtaposition with all this, however, there is a single smile from Achilles, in Book Twenty-Three. It comes over a minor, non-rancorous dispute amongst his men during the funeral games for Patroclus; one man, Antilokhos, has claimed that he will fight anyone who tries to take a particularly beloved mare from him, as he feels he has earned it. Achilles grins, and allows him to keep the prize. "The smile of spontaneous warmth on the part of a hero whom the *Iliad* elsewhere compels us to imagine weeping but never laughing is a fleeting hint of a set of possibilities remote from those which have played themselves out in the poem. It is, for a split second, the smile of a different Achilles and a different world" (Halliwell 99). In some other life, Achilles might have gone unchanged by grief, returning home triumphant and without a heart scarred by sorrow. That is not the life Achilles is living, though; in his actual life, Achilles was irrevocably transformed by grief, and, now that the rage has subsided, all that is left for Achilles to do is quietly mourn for what once was and see the War to its end, or to his.

When Priam arrives in Achilles' tent, he is in no danger. Zeus himself states as much (XXIV.154-158): "And after he has brought him inside the shelter of Achilleus, neither will the man himself kill him, but will hold back all the others, for he is no witless man nor unwatchful, nor is he wicked, but will in all kindness spare one who comes to him as a suppliant." This sits in stark contrast to his earlier treatment of Lycaon, who immediately surrendered and was cut down for it. However, Zeus believes that Achilles will not only leave Priam unharmed, but will stop the other Achaeans from harming him as well.

Now that Achilles' anger is spent, he has willingly stepped back into his culture, and will not only abide by its values once more but enforce those values as well.

Like Agamemnon, Priam brings gifts, and, like before, Achilles accepts but ignores them. Priam, knowing that Achilles has done him great wrong but is not a monster, evokes his memories of Peleus (XXIV.503-517):

‘Honour then the gods, Achilleus, and take pity upon me remembering your father, yet I am still more pitiful; I have gone through what no other mortal on earth has gone through; I put my lips to the hands of the man who has killed my children.’
So he spoke, and stirred in the other a passion of grieving for his own father. He took the old man's hand and pushed him gently away, and the two remembered, as Priam sat huddled at the feet of Achilleus and wept close for manslaughtering Hektor and Achilleus wept now for his own father, now again for Patroklos. The sound of their mourning moved in the house. Then when great Achilleus had taken full satisfaction in sorrow and the passion for it had gone from his mind and body, thereafter he rose from his chair, and took the old man by the hand, and set him on his feet again, in pity for the grey head and the grey beard, and spoke to him and addressed him in winged words...”

Grief binds the two of them together. Priam weeps for sons; Achilles weeps for a father. But the nature of Achilles' grief has changed. Where before he was unable to control his expressions of grief over Patroclus, he now cuts himself off, allowing himself to grieve but able to control when and how. There is a mutual recognition of grief, as well, and of the fact that they have been driven on their respective paths by the tides of fate and war. Achilles does not speak to an enemy when he receives Priam graciously; he speaks to a man much like his own father, old but dignified, sorrowful but resolute. And Priam, though he is a supplicant and indeed looks upon Achilles with a measure of fear, sees Achilles as someone much like his own son, who was also often described as being godlike. Achilles provides food and shelter for Priam for the night, and Priam asks one last thing of him: to hold the Achaeans back from war for twelve days so that the city of Troy might mourn Hector, its greatest

son, properly. Achilles immediately agrees and swears that what Priam has asked will be so.

The *Iliad* comes to a close with the funeral games of Hector. Though fated to die, Achilles does not go to his death within the bounds of the poem. He does not need to die for a resolution to have been reached, though; after all, Patroclus is buried and honored, Hector is once again amongst his people to be mourned properly, and the seemingly-unending wrath of Achilles has finally drawn to a close. Though Achilles will return to the fighting, and though he will die before the walls of Troy, he will remain unchanged from the time of the *Iliad's* ending to the time of his death.

When Achilles arrived at Troy, he was a mere-warrior king, standing amongst equals, such as Odysseus, Agamemnon, and Menelaus. Though both highly-skilled in battle and sorely-needed by the other Greeks for that reason, he was merely one soldier, however princely he may have been. Agamemnon therefore felt safe in his decision to dismiss him, to drive him from the lines and let him watch the fighting unfold. Achilles sent his dearest companion, Patroclus, to fight in his stead when the Trojans threatened to overrun the Greek camp, and thus lost Patroclus. Achilles' grief, born from error, was the catalyst for his transformation, at the height of which he became like unto the gods themselves. He became wrath embodied, clad in fire and sunlight. Once the grief runs its course, Achilles remains forever changed from the Myrmidon king he was when he arrived at the shores of Ilion, but he is no longer an avenger; that duty was fulfilled with the slaying of Hector. The *Iliad* thus concludes with funeral games, and not the sacking of a city. The heroes of the epic know, just as the audience knows, that Troy will fall, and that Achilles will die, but, for now, there is only the respectful silence of the Greeks in their camps and the grief of Troy, too, rising up with the smoke of Hector's funeral pyre.

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