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Grief as ποθή: Understanding the Anger of Achilles

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After the death of Patroklos in Book 18, Achilles is consumed with grief. In this state he launches himself into an unparalleled killing spree against the Trojans. His anger results in a cycle of repeated vengeance on Hektor’s corpse, broken only by the intervention of the gods and his own decision to let go. Scholarship, however, has neglected the relationship between this insatiable anger and Achilles’ grief for his beloved comrade. Why does Achilles’ grief result in such vast fury, when, for example, the Trojans’ grief for Hektor does not? In this paper I argue that anger and grief are linked in Achilles’ story through the dynamic of longing. The poem vividly links the two emotions in Achilles’ first lament over the body of his dead friend. His lament is introduced with a striking simile that compares Achilles’ grief to that of a mother lioness whose cubs have been stolen, and who goes off in restless pursuit (Iliad 18.315-323). The longing that drives her transition from grief to anger emerges in parallel form in Achilles’ lament, and I argue that this link is part of the poem’s larger interest in the insatiety of Achilles’ anger and its inability to assuage his grief.

Before turning to the simile, we should first look at the backdrop for grief language in the poem. The Iliad contains a linguistic peculiarity that scholarly literature has never discussed. Achilles’ grief for Patroklos (together with the Myrmidons’ and his horses’) is explicitly called a ποθή, a force of longing. One might expect to find the same collocation of grief and longing in the Trojans’ great need for Hektor after
his death, but their grief is never described with this term. The unique constellation of terms around grief for Patroklos points us to a particular way of understanding the nature of Achilles’ grief. ποθή, when it appears in non-grief contexts in the poem, most often refers specifically to the longing that a group of fighting men feel for a great warrior, often their leader, when he has left them or been lost. A brief look at these appearances of ποθή and its variants will help us better understand the nature of longing in this poem – longing as the experience of a void, a missing presence, and the desire for the wholeness that has been lost. Then we shall return to grief in the poem, seeing how attention to themes of absence and lost wholeness illuminates these scenes of grief and offer us insight into grief’s relationship with anger in the story of Achilles.

ΠΟΘΗ IN THE ILIAD

In non-grief contexts throughout the poem, ποθή describes the feeling of a group of warriors when their leader is gone from the battlefield. Achilles threatens the Greeks that they will feel such a longing for him when he has withdrawn from battle (1.240); later Poseidon exhorts the Greeks to more vigorous action, promising that if they exert themselves, they will not long for Achilles too badly (κείνου δ’ οὔ τι λίην ποθὴ ἔσσεται, 14.368). Menelaos fears such a loss and longing for the Danaans if Odysseus be lost, calling it a μεγάλη […] ποθή (11.471); this can be compared to the longing on the battlefield for Poseidon and Antilochus when they have to depart (15.219 and 17.704, respectively). Hektor too projects such longing onto his soldiers when he is absent from them in Book 6, using their physical need for him as a reason to refuse Helen’s appeal to sit (μέγ’ ἐμεῖο ποθὴν ἀπεόντος ἔχουσιν, they greatly long for me in my absence, 6.362). Some scholars draw connections between a few of these appearances of ποθή, but none of them isolate the significance of the term in order to apply the concept to grief, as the poem invites us to do. Their observations focus on the narrative impact of the word’s later repetition.¹ In their

¹  Pucci, for example, notes the irony that Achilles, after Patroklos’ death, feels the very longing for Patroklos (19.321) that he had threatened the Greeks would feel for him (1.240); Pucci (1993, pp. 268–269). He argues that the audience could well have heard an evocation of the earlier threat, across the expanse of the poem, and that they would have felt the pathos of that narrative arc. Zanker too asserts that Achilles’ threat could resonate in later moments of the poem, observing that Poseidon’s exhortation to the other Greeks in Book 14 picks up the language of Achilles’ defiance in 1.240 (1994, p. 93, n. 32). Muellner, arguing that Achilles is the first victim of his own menis, notes that he feels ποθή for the social occupations of the warrior male (1.488–92) long before the Greeks feel the ποθή that he predicts for him here (1996, p. 138).
observations, these scholars translate the term variously as “missing,” “longing,” and “feeling his absence,” and these translations are offered without further interpretation. Yet these six appearances of ποθή offer a more precise way to interpret the relationship between “missing” and “longing”; in all of these instances, ποθή is capturing a specific physical situation, the warrior/leader’s absence from battle, and its psychological consequences: the physical absence of that warrior’s valor causes those who remain behind to miss him, to long for what they have lost. This significance of the word will illuminate our understanding of grief later when we look at those passages where grief is described as a force of longing.

The same significance of ποθή comes through elsewhere in the poem, in contexts where sorrow is present though the grief is not explicitly linked to the force of longing itself. When Menelaus asks Antilochus to bring the λυγρὴ ἀγγελίη, the wretched news of Patroklos’ death, to Achilles, he describes the impact of that death on the army as a μεγάλη […] ποθή (17.685-690). This longing has the same source as the non-grief examples above – the yearning of a group of fighters for a strong warrior whom they have lost – but it also conveys clear notes of sorrow. Menelaus calls Patroklos’ death a πῆμα for the Greeks, but victory for the Trojans, and the word evokes both the army’s impending doom and the grief – doom, since they have lost a warrior to lead the Myrmidons to their aid, and grief over their loss. Moreover, Menelaus’ exhortation causes silent tears to spring to Antilochus’ eyes, reinforcing the presence of sorrow in this scene of ποθή for a commander. Thus we not only see further evidence of the physical situation being described by ποθή, namely, the absence of a missing leader and the ensuing desire for his presence, but also intimations of how this force will be linked with grief.

In the Catalogue of Ships there are two more examples of ποθή for an absent leader in which grief is not emphasized, but can be discerned. These examples not only further complete this picture of longing as the response to a void, and point

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3  Two other examples, both of horses, bring out this dimension of ποθή as the perception of physical absence: Trojan horses miss their slain rein-bearers in 11.161, as they rattle through the battle with empty chariots; cf. a speech describing horses thus, 5.234.
4  cf. 22.421-6, Priam links πῆμα and ἄλγεα, calling Achilles a πῆμα for the Trojans, but one who has caused suffering (ἄλγεα) for him above all, killing all of his children, and now killing Hektor. Achilles is Troy’s bane, in that he causes its destruction and, for each individual in Troy, that destruction means personal sorrows for specific dead. For other places where πῆμα commotes both pain and sorrow, cf., e.g., 3.156-160 (Greeks and Trojans ἄλγεα πάσχειν because of Helen, a πῆμα). For πῆμα linked with ὀϊζύος, cf. Hektor calls Paris a πῆμα for Troy, at whose death Hektor would think that he had forgotten sorrow (6.282-283).
to the relationship of that longing to grief, but they also illuminate the personal, as opposed to generic, nature of ποθή. In the first example, the Greeks from Phylake and Pyrasos long for Protesilaus who, as first to disembark at Troy, was shot immediately (2.695-710). The ποθή of the men follows a brief narrative of the grief of Protesilaus’ wife at his death, whom he left behind, ἀμφιδρυφής (with both cheeks torn in mourning), along with his half-finished house (δόμος ἡμιτελής, 2.700-701). The picture of incompleteness and of mourning gives the entire passage a current of sorrow, including the longing that his men have for their leader (2.709). In the second passage, sorrow is more subtle, since the missing leader, Philoktetes, has not died, but has been abandoned by the Achaians on Lemnos. Although alive, he has been left in pain: ἀλγεα πάσχων (suffering pains, 2.721), ἕλκει μοχθίζοντα κακῶι (vexed by an evil wound, 2.723), ἀχέων (aggrieved, 2.724). Philoktetes’ pain, caused by his wound, seems to be as much psychological as physical – the grief of abandonment⁵ – and these same words in other contexts describe grief per se. When the poet tells us, immediately after this description of anguish, that Philoktetes’ men long for him, the longing fits into a larger context of pain and sorrow that colors the entire passage. In this context of sorrow, the poet takes care to tell us that their longing is personal. In both sections of the Catalogue, we are explicitly told that these men have new leaders, but long for their former one: Protesilaus’ men, οὐδὲ τι λαοί / δεύουθ’ ἡγεμόνος, πόθεον γε μὲν ἐσθλὸν ἐόντα (nor was the army without a leader, but they longed for him since he was good, 2.708-9); and Philoktetes’, οὐδὲ μὲν οὐδ’ οἱ ἄναρχοι ἔσαν, πόθεον γε μὲν ἄρχον (nor were they leaderless at all, but they longed for their leader, 2.726). This simple detail points to an important nuance in the significance of ποθή: although the felt absence is described in terms of the role of the one who is absent – the men missed their strong leader – the longing in these examples is clearly for a specific person, not for a role-fulfiller, since the role of leadership is being fulfilled. These men feel the absence of specific persons, not of generic leaders. Their ποθή is personal.

In a passage concerning Achilles, ποθή once describes longing for an action rather than a person. In this passage we see ποθή as longing for something that is intimately part of the person. After the poet describes the return of Chryseis and Apollo’s appeasement, he briefly returns to Achilles, who has withdrawn in rage

⁵ cf. Dione reminding Aphrodite of Hades’ wounding by Herakles, where physical pain and interior grief are intertwined: […] κῆρ ἀχέων, ὀδύνηι πεπαρμένοις, αὐτὰρ οἴστος / ὀμοι ἐν στίβαροι ἤλιθατο, κηδὲ δὲ θυμόν· (grieved at heart, pierced by pains, as the arrow had driven into his heavy shoulder, and he was distressed in his spirit, 5.398-400).
from the army and its fighting, and depicts him sitting by his ship in glorious conflict between action and desire:

αὐτὰρ ὁ μὴνιε νηυσὶ παρήμενος ὄκυπόροισιν
dioygenēs Πηλῆος νιός, πόδας ὀκύς Ἀχιλλεύς·
oūte pot’ eis ἄγορὴν πωλέοκετο κυδιάνειραν
oūte pot’ ἐς πόλεμον, ἀλλὰ φθινύθεσκε φίλον κηρ
αὐθί μένων· ποθέεσκε δ’ ἀυτὴν τε πτόλεμόν τε. (1.488-492)

But swift-footed Achilles, god-born son of Peleus, was full of wrath, and sat by his swift-going ships; neither did he ever go into assembly where men strive for honor, nor into war, but he was forever wasting away his own heart, remaining there; and constantly he yearned for the cry of battle and for war.

Achilles is denying himself the very thing he longs for, ἀυτὴ and πόλεμος. This unique use of ποθή with warfare, not a person, as its object, highlights how the absence that gives rise to such yearning is in fact a kind of ruptured wholeness. Achilles’ entire life has centered on his excellence in warfare. The war-cry and battle are a part of him, and his withdrawal from these activities creates a void in himself. His men share his yearning for battle, as we see in Book 2. When the Catalogue of Ships reaches the Myrmidons, the poet paints a vivid picture of their idleness, which he connects with a longing for their war-loving leader (ἀρχὸν ἄρηψιλον ποθέοντες, 2.778). Kirk regards this yearning as inappropriate, since Achilles is not absent but nearby, but that complaint misses the context of the phrase.6 Just as Achilles yearns for battle, so do his men, but the poet expresses this longing for the fight as longing for a person to lead them to fight.7 The small slippage of thought is quite suggestive; Achilles is given the epithet ἄρηψιλον, which elsewhere in the poem typically describes Menelaos, and the import of the line, in the context of the men’s idleness, is “The Myrmidons longed for the fighting Achilles.” Thus this passage not only

6  Kirk (1984, ad loc.).
7  Later, Achilles declares that the Myrmidons resented his keeping them from the fight (16.203-204). Their eagerness for battle is also apparent in the dramatic simile comparing these warriors to wolves, a comparison which highlights both sheer ferocity, in the graphic descriptions of bloody feasting, and movement towards battle in the verb ῥῶοντ’ that ties the simile back to the actions of the Myrmidons, rushing around Patroklos who will lead them to the fight (16.165-166).
shows that the Myrmidons long for battle as much as Achilles, but it highlights the wholeness that Achilles has sundered through his withdrawal, reinforcing the poignant sketch of 1.492 — Achilles is by nature a war-lover and one who leads men to battle, and his abstention from battle makes him long for it. This special use of ποθή illuminates its rich dimension as the strong desire for something deeply a part of us.

This survey of ποθή, in non-grief contexts and in those passages where grief is not emphasized but can be discerned, establishes four key elements in the term’s Iliadic significance. The predominant meaning of ποθή is a felt absence, that which is felt when a leader leaves the battlefield and his men physically miss him. This absence has a psychological dimension, a longing for what is missed to be present. Thirdly, ποθή is personal, not generic. And lastly, ποθή can describe the desire for something intimately part of us, as Achilles longs for warfare during his period of withdrawal. Thus, when the poet names grief as a force of ποθή in the poem, we are invited to look to this framework of ποθή in order to illuminate the nature of that grief. We will now turn to four scenes in which grief is explicitly described as a force of longing. All of these scenes describe longing for Patroklos, and I would argue that the poet is carefully depicting the grief of Achilles and, by extension, that of the Myrmidons and Achilles’ horses, as a response to a ruptured wholeness, a yearning born of absence.  

GRIEF AS ΠΟΘΗ

The Iliad uniquely clusters ποθή terms and grief words in scenes of grief for Patroklos. In Achilles’ beautiful lament for Patroklos, 19.315-337, Achilles explains why he will continue to refuse food and drink:

η ῥά νύ μοί ποτε καὶ σύ, δυσάμορρε, φίλταθ’ ἑταίρων, 
αὐτὸς ἐνὶ κλισίῃ λαρὸν παρὰ δεῖπνον ἐθηκας 
αἵμα καὶ ὀτραλέως, ὁπότε σπεχοίατ’ Ἀχαιοί 
Τρωσίν ἐφ’ ἵπποι δαμοῖοι φέρειν πολύδακρυν Ἄρηα. 
νῦν δὲ σὺ μὲν κεῖσαι δεδαϊγμένος, αὐτὰρ ἐμὸν κῆρ 
ἀκμήνον πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος, ἐνδόν ἐόντων, 
σῆι ποθῆι· […]. (19.315-321)

8 For this language of wholeness I am indebted to David Konstan, who, in a nuanced reading of Lucian’s satire On Mourning (περὶ πένθους), argues that people who love one another form a “larger self,” since the projects that they share in common make them live, in that sense, a single life; thus grief is “what it is to be without a person who is half of one’s soul.” (2013, pp. 143-149).
“Ah me, once indeed you, ill-fated, dearest of my comrades, you yourself in our hut prepared the savory dinner, quickly and deftly, whenever the Achaians were hastening to bring tearful war to the horse-taming Trojans. But now you lie here, your flesh torn, and my heart will have nothing of drink nor food, though they are here, because of my longing for you; [...].

In Achilles’ earlier refusal to eat, he says that an ἄχος σινῶν, a dread grief, has come upon him (19.307). Here he describes that grief as the longing born of Patroklos’ absence - the aching void of his comrade no longer at his side, setting the table, sharing his life as a warrior against Troy. The longing has the same character as that of its non-grief appearances above: it stems from a concrete, felt absence. The emphatic position of σῆι ποθῆι heightens the pathos of Achilles’ refusal to eat and draws our attention to this connection between grief and longing. Achilles’ lament then expands upon this sense of grief as the longing for a lost common existence. The death of Patroklos has not only sundered the unity of life that he shared with Achilles, but has also rendered hollow Achilles’ plans for the future, since Achilles, we learn, knowing the certainty of his death, had hoped that Patroklos would raise his son. Patroklos’ death thus not only rips from Achilles’ life the wholeness of companionship but also the wholeness of his family’s future well-being. His father’s impending death and the tears which he imagines his father shedding for him contribute to this picture of total loss. Achilles has nothing: no future for his father, none for his son, and no present shared life with his companion. He calls the grief caused by this void a longing, and the whole lament depicts that longing as the rupture of a whole.

In Book 24, that same longing is at the heart of Achilles’ wakefulness when, in tears, he tosses and turns, pacing the shore:

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9 On the impact of the phrase, cf. M. Edwards who notes how σῆι ποθῆι is not only emphatic by position (enjambed placement in first position, followed by a pause), but also because of its unexpectedness (1991, ad loc. 19.319-21), and Pucci who observes its force: “very few expressions in this text have the force and the pathos of σῆι ποθῆι (19.321) which is in no way accented by repetition and metrical fixity” (1993, p. 268, 272).

10 19.326ff. On the rupture of hopes in this lament, cf. Pucci, who sees in the nullity of Achilles’ hopes the destruction of others’ hopes as well: for example, Briseis’ hope for marriage is annulled when he says that he hoped he alone would die at Troy, etc. (1993, p. 272). cf. Konstan on Quintilian’s spes inanes when his son dies, and with him the prospects of their shared life (Institutio Oratoria Bk. 6), (2013, p. 144). I follow Tsagalis (2004) and van Thiel (1996) in keeping these lines, contra West (2001); cf. Tsagalis (2004, p. 148f., n. 408). Though Achilles’ son is only mentioned one other time in the Iliad, the reference here is wholly suitable to the passage, which compares the loss of Patroklos to his other relationships and potential reasons for grief.

longing for Patroklos’ manhood and good strength, and all the deeds he accomplished with him and the griefs he suffered, passing through wars of men and difficult waves.\textsuperscript{12}

Achilles remembers their former comradeship and feels a deep void. The longing for their shared life, now lost, manifests itself in restlessness: Achilles cannot sleep in any position, neither on his side, nor his back, nor face-down (24.10-11), and he repeatedly – iterative verbs – gets up in the middle of the night to pace the shore (\textit{δινεύεσκ} \textit{ἀλύων \παρὰ \θῖν \ἁλός}, 24.12),\textsuperscript{13} followed at dawn by repeatedly dragging Hektor’s body around Patroklos’ burial-mound (“\textit{Εκτὸρα \δ’ ἐλκεσθαι \δησάσκετο}, 24.15).\textsuperscript{14} This vignette of restlessness reflects, on the level of action, the intrinsic nature of his grief, specified in the language of the passage: it is a \textit{ποθή} for Patroklos, for the unity of life – \textit{ὁπόσα \τολύπευσε \σὺν \αὐτῶι \καὶ \πάθεν \ἄλγεα} – that they once shared.\textsuperscript{15}

\textit{ποθή} terms describe grief for Patroklos two other times in the \textit{Iliad}, and I would argue that both scenes are extensions of the grief of Achilles himself. The first are the tears of longing shed for Patroklos by Achilles’ horses – the very first tears shed for the slain warrior in the poem – and the poet specifies that these tears arise from longing. Stunned into motionlessness by their grief, these horses stand apart from the battle, weeping:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Those who athetize these lines (Aristarchus, Aristophanes, Leaf) on the grounds of their Odyssean language (esp. 24.8, “passing through wars and difficult waves”) and their supposed weakening of dramatic effect completely miss the important link between longing and insatiety, and the climactic suitability of the language of these lines to this moment in the narrative. For an overview of the debate, cf. Richardson (1993, \textit{ad loc.}).
\item \textsuperscript{13} Macleod refers to Sappho 96.15 and Menander, \textit{Misumenos} 7, as well as \textit{Il.} 2.778-9, where \textit{δινεύεσκ} \textit{ آلاف} is a sign of longing (1971, pp. 57-59).
\item \textsuperscript{14} Repeated past action is evident throughout the scene; cf. iterative imperfects at 24.13 and 17, iterative optative in temporal clause, 24.14.
\item \textsuperscript{15} cf. Oele who discusses how the \textit{συν} preposition indicates a strong union between the friends, who are able to do and to suffer together (2010, p. 59).
\end{itemize}
ἵπποι δ’ Αιακίδαο μάχης ἀπάνευθεν ἐόντες
κλαῖον, ἐπεὶ δὴ πρῶτα πυθέσθην ἥνιόχοιο
ἐν κονίησι πεσόντος ύφ’ “Εκτορος ἀνδροφόνοιο.  (17.426-429)

[…]

τῶ δ’ οὔτ’ ἄψ ἐπὶ νήας ἐπὶ πλατὺν Ἑλλήσποντον
ἡθελέτην ἱέναι οὔτ’ ἐς πόλεμον μετ’ Ἀχαιοὺς,
ἀλλ’ ὡς τε στήλη μένει ἐμπέδου [...]. (17.432-434)

οὐδεὶ ἐνισκίμψαντε καρήτας: δάκρυα δὲ σφι
θερμὰ κατὰ βλεφάρων χαμάδις ῥέε μυρομένοις
ἡνιόχοιο πόθωι· θαλερ ἡ δ’ ἐμιαίνετο χαίτη
ζεύγλης ἐξεριποῦσα παρὰ ζυγὸν ἀμφοτέρωθεν. (17.437-440)

But the horses of Aiaikides were apart, weeping, from the time when first
they learned of their rein-bearer fallen in the dust at the hands of Hektor,
the man-slayer.

[…]

And the pair were not willing to go up to the ships at the broad
Hellespont, nor to go into battle among the Achaians, but they remained
fixed in place like stelae [...],

heads bowed down to the earth. And warm tears flowed down from their
eyes to the ground as they wept in longing for their rein-bearer. And their
full manes were soiled as they swept down from the yoke-pad along both
sides of the yoke.

The horses’ motionlessness is motivated by πόθος, a longing for their rein-bearer
(17.439). Again we see the precise character of this longing; like the ποθὴ of the
men in the battlefield who are suddenly without their leader, the horses’ longing for
Patroklos arises from a concrete, felt absence. The word order, ἥνιόχοιο πόθωι, and
the placement of the phrase in first position puts a gentle emphasis on the missing
one whose absence causes πόθος. Formerly their rein-bearer guided them through battles and cared for them back in the camp, but now he is dead, no longer able to fulfill that place in their lives. The horses, who have a rein-bearer beating them and beseeching them to go into battle (17.429-431), do not lack someone to perform the role itself, but still the longing for Patroklos in their grief immobilizes them. Achilles links the horses’ grief with their perception of Patroklos’ absence in yet more detail in Book 23, when he explains why he will not compete in the chariot race during the funeral games. His horses have lost (ἀπώλεσαν) their gentle rein-bearer, who washed their manes with oil and water, and so they stand with their manes trailing on the ground, grieving (πενθείετον) (23.280-28). Here Achilles clearly transfers his own grief to his horses, since not only they but he misses Patroklos and thus does not wish to compete. In the weeping scene of Book 17, however, the poet is linguistically explicit that Patroklos’ absence causes longing. The life shared by the horses and their caregiver has been ruptured, and their grief for him is simultaneously the pain of his absence and the longing for his presence.

The broadening of Achilles’ grief also encompasses the Myrmidons, who too are specifically said to feel ποθή in their grief for Patroklos. At the beginning of Book 23, when the Greeks have reached the camp with Patroklos’ body and dispersed, Achilles prevents his men from scattering, asking them to give Patroklos his γέρας θανόντων, a lament (23.9). They drive their horses and chariots around Patroklos’ corpse three times, wetting the sand and their armor with their tears: δεύοντο ψάμαθοι, δεύοντο δὲ τεύχεα φωτῶν / δάκρυσι· τοῖον γὰρ πόθεον μήστωρα φόβοι (Soaked was the sand, and soaked the arms of the men, with their tears; for they were longing for so great a deviser of rout, 23.15-16). The poet portrays the abundant tears of these fighters as rising from the felt absence of their strong companion-in-arms, their μήστωρα φόβοι, and the resulting desire for his presence, who, though less than Achilles, was himself a mighty warrior. This scene of ποθή in grief clearly describes not only the men’s but Achilles’ own longing for Patroklos, who leads their lament: οἳ δ’ ὠιμωξαν ἀολλέες, ἦρχε δ’ Ἀχιλλεύς (23.12). The impact of the loss of Patroklos on the Myrmidon warriors broadens our understanding of what Achilles longs for – not only a fellow companion who prepared his food and to whom he would have entrusted the upbringing of his son, but a warrior who

16 cf. 23.280-284.

17 deJong points to this naming of Patroklos via his role, suggesting that the role-naming shows we are learning the horses’ thoughts (1987, p. 104). Without disagreeing, I would say in addition that by naming Patroklos according to his role, we are led to contemplate a community of life that death has ruptured.
could lead his men to victory in battle.

These four uses of ποθή-words resonate against the larger backdrop of ποθή throughout the poem. The same four key elements appear: physical absence; its psychological consequence, the desire to fill that absence; particularity; and the intimacy of a wholeness that has been ruptured. Thus the language of the poem offers us tools to understand Achilles’ grief more deeply. When we see it as a force of longing, we see that the death of Patroklos has something akin to a physical effect on him, like the physical absence of a deeply needed leader in the middle of a fight. The near-physicality of this absence is further unpacked in his own explanations of his grief, as he describes his experience of the rupture of a life formerly shared. The psychological impact of such a loss – his unwillingness to eat, his restlessness – accords well with the psychological feeling of longing described in those other ποθή passages in the poem, especially the personal longing for specific leaders whose absence is described in the Catalogue of Ships. And the same intimacy that we see in Achilles’ longing for warfare pervades these later scenes of longing for the person of Patroklos whose life was part of their common existence.\(^18\)

These resonances in the uses of ποθή in these grief scenes have important consequences on our understanding of the poem. They not only illuminate deeper dimensions of grief itself, they help explain the effects that grief has on Achilles’ actions, particularly those actions that erupt from anger, and thus they offer insight into the narrative arc of the poem. The strongly felt absence and, for Achilles and his horses, the loss of half of a unique relationship, shapes the nature of grief, and the Iliad explicitly delineates that shape as ποθή, longing. We can find a useful comparandum in the Cratylus where Socrates distinguishes the terms ἵμερος and πόθος, designating ἵμερος as the desire for what is present, and πόθος as the same feeling as felt when the object of desire is absent.\(^19\) This distinction between πόθος as the desire for what is absent and ἵμερος as the desire for what is present gives an outside parallel to what we see in Homer: ποθή, a yearning for what is absent, is at the heart of Achilles’ grief. I would argue that when we understand this link, we see that Achilles’ grief is intrinsically volatile, insatiate, unable to be assuaged. Thus we better understand his transition from grief to anger.

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\(^{18}\) Shay observes that the particularity of love for a special comrade makes one vulnerable. Because of particularity, this comrade makes up an irreplaceable part of one’s life (1994, p. 44).

\(^{19}\) Cratylus 419e-420a.
In the last section of this paper, I would like to look at the simile and first lament for Achilles for his beloved comrade-in-arms. Both passages are permeated by these dynamics of grief and longing. In this simile, Achilles’ grief is compared to that of a lioness who ceaselessly tracks the hunter who stole her cubs, driven to pursuit by a piercing anger (δριμὺς χόλος, 18.322). The movement from grief to anger emerges also in Achilles’ lament following the simile, and in parallel form. The common element in both the simile and the lament is the dynamic of longing, of ποθή, though the term itself does not appear. By linking grief and anger with the parallel dynamic of longing here in Achilles’ first lament for Patroklos, the poem points us to the importance of this link for Achilles’ story. The unique connection of grief with longing in the language describing Achilles’ grief for his comrade reveals the poem’s narrative interest in the relentlessness of Achilles’ anger and the futility of his vengeance to assuage his grief.

ANGER AND LONGING

Many observe that Achilles’ grief gives rise to anger in the last six books of the poem – for example, Schein and Zanker – but these scholars assume the logic of such association without exploring it. Konstan’s work, however, rightly distinguishes Achilles’ initial anger over Agamemnon’s wrongdoing from the grieved fury that besets Achilles after Patroklos’ death. Achilles’ anger with Agamemnon is a response to an affront, while his rage against Hektor and the other Trojans is a response to great harm, but not to an insult. Konstan attributes the vastness of Achilles’ latter fury to the pain of loss. Without downplaying the role of pain in Achilles’ transition from grief to anger, I argue here that the poem offers us a specific dynamic that links these two emotions, namely, longing. Let us turn to the text of the simile and lament in Book 18, which offer a vivid example of how the poet gives grief and anger both a shared grounding in longing and absence.

The insatiate force of ποθή pervades the lioness simile:

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20 Schein observes the contrast between how Achilles’ love for Patroklos both opens Achilles up to the needs of the army and also releases this vast fury (1984, e.g., pp. 128ff). Merely observing the contrast, however, does not explain the relationship between these emotions.

21 Zanker explores the relationship between grief and anger in lion simile in terms of “emotional compensation.” He notes the presence of affection and ties, but not the dynamic of longing, and after exploring grief in the lament that follows the simile, he says simply “The emotion of wrath is developed.” (1994, p. 99).

Like a lioness, bearded, whose cubs a hunter has snatched from the dense woods, and in grief she follows after, and she comes to many valleys as she pursues that man's tracks, in hopes that she might find; for bitter anger takes complete hold of her;

Let us follow the sequence of emotions. The lioness is first described as grieved (ἄχνυται, 18.320), and immediately following this verb comes her active response (ὑπὸ σκύμνους ἐλαφηβόλος ἀρπάσῃ ἄνήρ ὡς ᾗ τ' ἡγεύειος, 18.318-322). The pursuits are expanded for two lines, with a sense of lengthiness in the many valleys that she comes to (πολλὰ δὲ τ' ἂγκε' ἐπῆλθε μετ' ἀνέρος ἧχυν' ἐρευνῶν, 18.321), urgency in the tracking (μετ' ἀνέρος ἧχυν' ἐρευνῶν, 18.321), and longing in her goal of finding (εἴ ποθεν ἐξεύροι μάλα γάρ δριμὺς χόλος αἴρει, 18.322). The poet then explains the lioness's urgent, yearning-filled action as caused by bitter anger (μάλα γάρ δριμὺς χόλος αἴρει, 18.322). The scene moves seamlessly from grief to anger, and the underlying continuity seems to be an insatiety similar to that which the Iliad depicts elsewhere, in scenes where longing is linguistically explicit. The point of the simile does not seem to be simply vengeance, because it is unclear what the lioness hopes to achieve by pursuing the hunter. The object of the verb, ἐξεύροι (find, 18.322), is unspecified. Does she hope that her cubs are alive? Does she wish to kill the hunter, whether her cubs are alive or dead? What is clear in the simile is that the lioness responds to the absence of her cubs with immediate pursuit. The hunter has literally stolen part of the lioness’s life, her offspring, and her lengthy hope-driven quest to find bespeaks both the absence and the almost physical response to that absence—longing for it to be filled. This ambiguity about her aim—whether or not it includes a desire for vengeance—enhances our understanding of the role of longing in grief’s transition to anger. This anger is not necessarily the hope of redressing a wrong, but a response to the inability to redress that wrong, a kind of translation of the inner longing for what is lost into outward action.23

23 n.b., this inner longing can have different manifestations. Some activities are distraction, some are the relief of achieving activities similar to those lost in the formerly shared life. But the anger component—here
This inner dynamic is all the more apparent in the words of Achilles’ lament after the simile. This lament arises in the midst of prolonged weeping, with the Achaians groaning their lament for Patroklos all night long. In such abundance, Achilles voices his particular grief for Patroklos. Longing can be discerned throughout this lament in his regret over unfulfilled future plans:

ὦ πόποι, ἦ ρ’ ἄλιον ἔπος ἔκβαλον ἡματι κείνῳ
θαρσύνων ἠρωα Μενοίτιον ἐν μεγάροισιν.
φήν δὲ οἱ εἰς Ὀπόεντα περικλυτὸν υἱὸν ἀπάξειν
‘Ἰλιον ἐκπέρσαντα λαχόντα τε ληΐδος αἰσαν.
ἀλλ’ οὐ Ζεὺς ἄνδρεσσι νοήματα πάντα τελευταῖι

(18.324-328)

Oh, for shame, truly I uttered an empty promise on that day when I was encouraging the hero Menoitios in his home; and I said that I would bring his illustrious son back to Opoeis when he had sacked Troy and won a share of the spoil. But Zeus does not accomplish for men all their plans.

Achilles laments ἄλιον ἔπος to Patroklos’ father, his empty promise to bring Patroklos safely home after Troy’s sack. This notion of unfulfilled promises conveys the note of longing for a lost future. Achilles’ further conclusion, ἀλλ’ οὐ Ζεὺς ἄνδρεσσι νοήματα πάντα τελευταῖ (But Zeus does not accomplish for men all their plans, 18.328), continues this feeling of rupture. Achilles’ plans were for himself and for Patroklos. Achilles had a goal that encompassed the two of them: that when Troy had been sacked and the spoil won, they would return home. Now he sees the vanity of his hopes for such shared life; instead, their true fate is for both to die at Troy. Achilles faces his death with clarity, a death that will follow soon after Patroklos’. Some scholars see this link between Patroklos’ death and Achilles’ as the heart of the lament, since Achilles here reveals how deeply he embraced his death after the death of his comrade; they even use language of “reunion” in death. Yet I would argue that though Achilles faces his death unflinchingly, his lament betrays the restlessness of a present marked by separation. He continues with a cry that brings home all the

linguistically explicit in the simile – seems to arise specifically from the insatiety of grief.

24  18.314-15. cf. later scenes of ἱμεροὺς γόοιο that depict abundance and almost endlessness.

25  cf. Tsagalis, who interprets Achilles declaration, “for we two are fated to redden the same earth” (18.329), as a future reunion in death, (2004, pp. 79-81). In fact, Achilles speaks not of reunion but simply shared death.
longing that shapes his grief: “But now, Patroklos, since indeed I will go beneath the earth after you, [...]” (18.333). Achilles has not yet followed Patroklos beneath the earth. The antithesis between the ruptured “now” and the “later” reunion captures the yearning marked out at the beginning of the lament when he voiced his bitter understanding that his plans for a shared future with Patroklos were void. The role Achilles had planned to play in his companion’s life was nothing more than an empty promise, and now his present is shaped by the absence of his friend and the dissolution of his plans. Framed by such longing, Achilles’ grief erupts in an oath of anger:

νῦν δ’ ἐπεὶ οὖν Πάτροκλε σεῦ ύστερος εἴμι’ ὑπὸ γαῖαν
οὐ σε πρὶν κτερίῳ πρὶν γ’ Ἐκτορος ἐνθάδ’ ἐνεῖκαι
τεύχεα καὶ κεφαλὴν μεγαθύμου σοῖο φονῆος:
δῶδε δὲ προπάροιθε πυρῆς ἀποδειροτομήσω
Τρώων ἀγλαὰ τέκνα σέθεν κταμένοιο χολωθείς. (18.333-337)

But now, Patroklos, since indeed I will go beneath the earth after you, I will not give you your burial rites before I carry here the arms and the head of Hektor, your great-hearted slayer; and I will cut the throats of twelve shining youths of Troy before your funeral pyre, in anger over your slaying.

Achilles’ move from grief to anger reminds us of the lioness’s ἄχος and χόλος in the preceding simile (18.320, 322). For both the lioness and Achilles, the grief of the scene is shot through with notes of longing, and the resulting actions are explicitly attributed to anger: “μάλα γὰρ δριμὺς χόλος σίρει” for the lioness (18.322); and “σέθεν κταμένοιο χολωθείς” for Achilles (18.337). The specific point of comparison

26 Tsagalis claims that Achilles’ conflation of “now” and “then” allows the future reality of Achilles’ death to “intrude” into the present of his performance (2004, p. 81). In light of Achilles’ initial lament of the vanity of his plans to achieve Patroklos and his own homecoming, I think we can rightly see not intrusion but contrast: Achilles’ present is shaped by this new future, the loss of the shared life that he had hoped for and promised.

27 Neither Achilles nor the narrator refers to his ἄχος; the point of comparison in the simile is the quality of his groaning: ἀνεστενάχοντο γοῶντες (18.315), ἐξῆρχε γόοιο (18.316), πυκνὰ μάλα στενάχω (18.318) ... ὡς ὁ βαρὺ στενάχων (18.323). The lioness’ grief is given in verbal form, ἄχνυται; according to Derderian, ἄχνυσθαι generally represents “personally motivated grief of individual men within the network of ἔτσαιροι or kin” that motivates the hero to action and revenge (2001, p. 19).
in the simile is grief – Achilles’ leads the lament *groaning like a lioness* [...] – but within both the simile and the lament, we see the same sense of restlessness, and the same specific mention of anger as causing these deeds. Thus, the poet highlights a particular feature of Achilles’ grief, namely, its insatiety, and roots in such insatiety the promised deeds of anger: slaying Patroklos’ murderer, bringing that murderer’s head and weapons to Patroklos, and then cutting the throats of twelve Trojan youths before Patroklos’ funeral pyre.\(^\text{28}\) Agony and ferocity are linked in Achilles’ grief through the underlying characteristic of longing born of loss.

Thus this lament seems to me to do far more than show the depth of Achilles’ pain or the clarity of his knowledge of his own imminent death. This set of simile and lament offers us clear insight into an emotional dynamic that becomes a narrative interest of the poem, as the story follows Achilles through heights of insatiating grief and anger and explores the fruitlessness of vengeance to assuage grief at its roots.\(^\text{29}\) Hekabe encapsulates this theme of futility in her incisive condemnation of Achilles’ behavior. Addressing her son Hektor on his funeral bier, she says that Achilles πολλὰ ῥυστάζεσκεν ἑοῦ περὶ σῆμ’ ἑτάροιο / Πατρόκλου, τὸν ἔπεφνες: ἀνέστησεν δὲ μιν οὐδ’ ὧς (“[...] kept dragging him, many times, around the tomb of his companion, Patroklos, whom you killed – but not even thus did he raise him up [...]” 24.755-6). Hekabe perceptively sees longing for the life of his companion at the root of Achilles’ insatiate mutilation of Hektor’s corpse. Such behavior is irrational, but the poem nevertheless explains it through this insight into the nature of grief itself: since grief is a longing for an irretrievable whole, it has an inherent potency in it to generate insatiate activity, including actions of anger. The *Iliad* explores the relationship between these emotions throughout the last third of the poem, giving it linguistic focus through its unique application of ποθή terms to the grief of Achilles; but this first portrait of Achilles’ grief in Book 18 shows the dynamic in vivid clarity. The simile of the mother lioness pursuing the hunter and the parallel lament of empty promises, ending with oaths of vengeance, render Achilles’ tran-

\(^{28}\) *n.b.*, Achilles’ threats of mutilation vary – the decapitation promised here does not recur; he later threatens to give the corpse to the dogs, threatened most violently in 22.346-8, when he wishes he were angry enough to eat Hektor’s raw flesh, since no one will ward off the dogs from his head; then repeated in 23.2, to give the corpse to the dogs to divide raw (23.21); and again repeated in less violent language: “and Hektor, son of Priam, I will in no way give to fire to devour, but to the dogs.” (23.182-183); cf. Segal (1971, esp. pp. 28, 38, and 54). I think we see in such variety of language the volatility of longing at the core of Achilles’ anger: his grief drives him not to specified actions, but to manifold expressions of that grief.

\(^{29}\) *contra* Shay, who claims that killing eases pain of grief, the *Iliad* explores the origins of such attempts and their uselessness (1994, p. 54; cf. Il. 17.602ff).
sition from grief to anger comprehensible: these two emotions have an underlying continuity, the insatiety of ποθή, longing.
Works Cited


