Patroklos and the Pity of Achilles
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<u>Thesis</u>:
Achilles shows inappropriate pity towards the Achaians in Book 16 when he allows
Patroklos to go to their aid. This mistake, however, is not a result of Achilles behaving in
a manner foreign to the heroic ethos, but rather of a dysfunction of attributes which are
integral to it.
(Abstract here.)

<u>Scholarship</u>:
- ❖ J. M. Redfield: Pity is antithetical to the heroic ethos.
- ❖ Jinyo Kim: Pity is variegated; pity for one's dying comrades in battle is necessary to the
  heroic ethos.

<u>Key terms and phrases</u>:
- ❖ (τὼ) δὲ πεσόντ' ἐλέησε(ν) : trope throughout Greek epic for pitying one's dying comrades
- ❖ verbs for "pity" in the Iliad: ἐλεεῖν, ἐλεαίρειν, οἰκτίρειν, κήδεσθαι
- ❖ translated in a key instance as "pity," but more precisely "mourn," "grieve," or "sorrow
  over": ὀλοφύρεσθαι

<u>Quotes</u>:
Achilles' official stance on the Achaians:
For I wish, father Zeus, and Athene, and Apollo, that no man of the Trojans might escape death,
of all there are, nor any of the Argives, but that we two might escape destruction, so that alone
we might loose the sacred diadem of Troy. (16. 97-100)

Nestor to Achilles:
Why now does Achilles have such pity (ὧδ' ὀλοφύρεται) for the sons of the Achaeans? (11.656)

Hera to Zeus regarding Sarpedon:
But if he is dear to you and your heart is grieved (ὀλοφύρεται), then allow him to be vanquished
in the mighty combat at the hands of Patroclus, son of Menoetius; but when his soul and life
have left him, send Death and sweet Sleep to carry him away. (16.450--454)

Nestor regarding Achilles:
Yet Achilles, noble though he is, cares not (οὐ κήδεται) for the Danaans, nor pities (οὐδ'
ἐλεαίρει) them. Does he wait indeed until the swift ships near the sea, in spite of the Argives,
blaze with consuming fire, and we ourselves are slain one after the other? (11.664-7)

Achilles to Patroklos:
Or is it that you are sorrowing (ὀλοφύρεαι) for the Argives, how they are being slain beside the hollow ships because of their own presumptuous act? (16.17-8)

Regarding Achille viewing Patrokloss:
[S]wift-footed noble Achilles had pity (ᾤκτειρε) when he saw him. (16.5)

Achilles' stated plan:
In warding destruction from the ships fall on them mightily...But obey, as I put in your mind the sum of my counsel, so that you may win me great recompense and glory at the hands of all the Danaans, and that they send back that beauteous girl, and in addition give glorious gifts. When you have driven them from the ships, come back. (16.80-7)

Achilles' concession:
To be sure I said that I would not sooner make an end of my anger, but only when to my own ships came the war cry and the battle. But come, put my glorious armor on your shoulders...if indeed the dark cloud of the Trojans has surrounded the ships mightily. (16.61-7)

Regarding Patroklos:
So he spoke in prayer, great fool that he was, for it was certain to be his own evil death and fate for which he prayed. (46-7)

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