

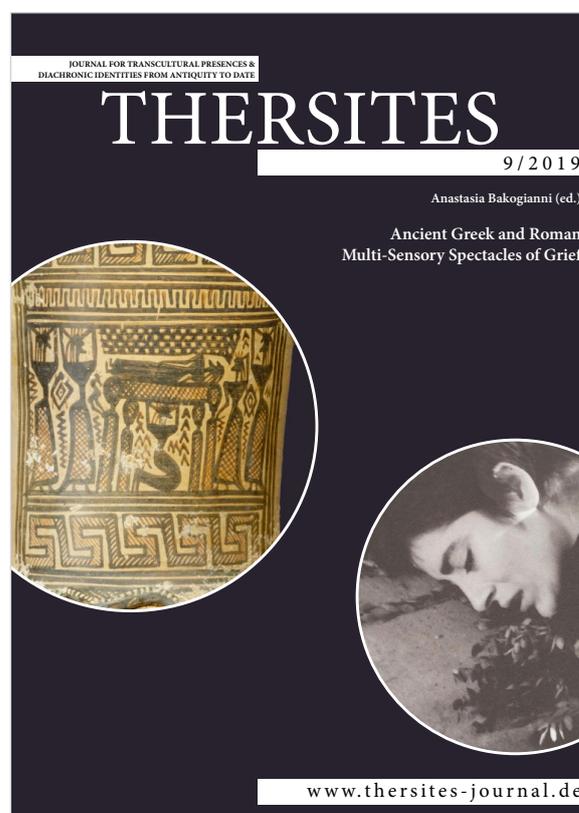
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Individual vs. Collective Expressions of Grief in the Homeric Poems

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ABSTRACT

In the Homeric poems, expressions of grief and mourning abound. This is a key theme in the *Iliad*, and the poem culminates with the big funeral scenes of the last three books. Homeric poetry has long been linked to the emergence of the Greek polis, and it offers us an insight into accepted patterns of displaying grief and mourning practices in the public sphere. The funeral games and the different forms that these choral laments adopt, particularly the *thrênos*, are collective expressions of ritualised mourning that acquire a paradigmatic role comparable to that they enjoy in the iconographic record (e.g. on Geometric pottery). In contrast, some individual responses to grief in the poems are presented as anomalous, for example, Achilles' which is explained in terms of his heroic temper and Penelope's because of her uncertainty over Odysseus' fate. These examples allow the poet to portray extreme personal responses to grief, made manifest in severe physical symptoms. Their individual specificity functions as a foil to the paradigmatic representation of the collective management of grief through ritualised competition and communal choral practices.

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Individual vs. Collective Expressions of Grief in the Homeric Poems

1. Introduction

THIS paper explores the contrast between individual and collective lament in the Homeric poems and highlights the importance of the individual, isolated mourner motif as a foil to collective, ritualized expressions of grief. A polarity is thus established, a major compositional device that drives the plot in both poems, although it takes on different forms in each. In the *Iliad*, this polarity is highlighted by the contrast provided by Achilles as the individual mourner (isolated even when his mourning is framed in a collective, ritualized context, as in Patroclus' funeral) and Hector's funeral as a paradigm of the collective management of grief. In the *Odyssey*, the focus shifts to Penelope's isolated grief, which cannot be shared in a ritual context both because of the absence of a corpse to be mourned and the disruptive presence of the suitors. But, the different narrative formulation of the 'isolated mourner' motif in the two epics only serves to highlight the commonalities in the portrayal of Achilles' and Penelope' individual grief, which is supported by the iconographic record.

Grief and bereavement are central to the *Iliad*. Broadly speaking, the whole movement of the poem leads us on an emotional journey from individual expressions of grief, experienced by a great many of the characters as they lose their loved ones in war or are separated from them by other means, to Patroclus' and Hector's large-scale funerals in the final books. These two funerals stand out not only because the epic concludes with them, but also because they exemplify accepted individual and collective mourning behaviour.¹ In these closing scenes, collective ritualized practices, such

¹ There are crucial differences between the two funerals, mainly due to Achilles' disruptive behaviour, but both function as paradigms for the funerary practices of the elites of Geometric Greece. The archaeological record reinforces this view, for example, the so-called Royal Tombs at Salamis, Cyprus, which attest to the sacrifice

as funeral games and choral lament, help manage grief effectively, bringing it to a close and transforming it into “enduring artifacts of completed mourning”, referring to both the grave (*sêma*) and the poem itself.² We will return to the subject of ritualized lament as expressed in choral practice. But first I will examine the representation of two anomalous responses to grief, Penelope’s in the *Odyssey* and Achilles’ in the *Iliad*, both of which highlight the tension between individual and collective grief, and contrast sharply with accepted displays of mourning.

2. Mourning Penelope

Let us begin with Penelope, since her portrayal as an isolated mourner is even more important for her characterisation than is the case with Achilles. In the iconographic record, admittedly dated after the accepted date for the *Odyssey*, and from the classical period onward, she is typically represented as seated in a mourning attitude, with the characteristic chin-in-hand gesture, her head covered by a veil.³ In her first appearance in the poem she interrupts the rhapsode Phemius who is singing a poem about the Trojan war, because it intensifies her grieving:

ἦ δ' ὅτε δὴ μνηστῆρας ἀφίκετο δῖα γυναικῶν,
στῆ ῥα παρὰ σταθμὸν τέγεος πύκα ποιητοῖο,
ἄντα παρειάων σχομένη λιπαρὰ κρήδεμνα·
ἀμφίπολος δ' ἄρα οἱ κεδνὴ ἐκάτερθε παρέστη.
δακρύσασα δ' ἔπειτα προσηύδα θεῖον ἄοιδόν·
“Φῆμιε, πολλὰ γὰρ ἄλλα βροτῶν θελκτῆρια οἶδας
ἔργ' ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε, τά τε κλείουσιν ἄοιδοί·
τῶν ἔν γέ σφιν ἄειδε παρήμενος, οἱ δὲ σιωπῆ
οἶνον πινόντων· ταύτης δ' ἀποπαύε' ἄοιδῆς

of horses and other features during the funerary ritual. They bear striking similarities to the description of Patroclus’ funeral in the *Iliad*. For the ‘anomalous’ elements in this description, see Schnapp-Gourbeillon (1982) and Sistac (2018).

² Derderian (2001) 66.

³ For a useful discussion of this dominant trend in the representation of Penelope see Cohen (1995) 43-48. More generally, on the representation of grief in Greek art and iconography, see Shapiro (2001) and Huber (2011). See also Bakogianni in this issue (57-58) on the ancient iconographical representation of Electra and how it is portrayed in modern performance.

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λυγρῆς, ἣ τέ μοι αἰὲν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλον κῆρ
τείρει, ἐπεὶ με μάλιστα καθίκετο πένθος ἄλαστον.
τοίην γὰρ κεφαλὴν ποθέω μεμνημένη αἰεὶ
ἀνδρός, τοῦ κλέος εὐρὸ καθ' Ἑλλάδα καὶ μέσον Ἄργος.”

When the woman divine reached the suitors,
she stood beside a column of the densely-built roof,
holding a shiny veil against her cheeks,
and a devoted handmaid stood on either side.
Then, in tears, she said to the godlike singer:
“Phemius, since you know many other things that enchant mortals, / the
deeds of men and gods that singers celebrate,
sing one of those, as you sit beside them, and let them drink
their wine in silence. Cease this sad song
that ever distresses the dear heart in my chest,
since sorrow not to be forgotten (πένθος ἄλαστον) comes especially upon
me, / for I always long for (ποθέω) such a head, when reminded of my hus-
band, / whose fame (κλέος) is wide from Hellas to the middle of Argos.”⁴

Penelope interrupts the epic song within the epic because of her unceasing sorrow. This testifies to the inversion of the normal management of grief, in which the song extolling the virtues (in the epic the κλέος, ‘glory’) of the deceased brings pleasure, or at least a measure of collective consolation. It brings closure to the audience by fixing the paradigmatic image of the dead man as a hero, citizen and other normative male roles.⁵ In Odysseus’ case, however, there is no dead hero to mourn, and the song of *epainos* has the opposite effect. Rather than integrating the bereft person into her community, it serves to further isolate her from it.⁶

This episode foreshadows two similar ones in later books, in which first Telemachus and then Odysseus himself behave like Penelope does at the

⁴ *Od.* 1. 332-344. All references are to Lattimore’s translation of *The Iliad* and Huddleston’s of *The Odyssey*.

⁵ For funerary lament in Greek culture, see Alexiou (1974), Derdeian (2001), and Palmisciano (2017).

⁶ The isolation of the female mourner from the community is an important aspect of the portrayal of Electra in Sophocles’ tragedy. See Bakogianni in this issue (58-60).

onset of the poem. In book 4, when Menelaus reminds Telemachus of Odysseus, the prince of Ithaca cannot refrain from a sudden, intense burst of mourning for his absent father:

ὥς φάτο, τῷ δ' ἄρα πατρὸς ὑφ' ἴμερον ὤρσε γόοιο·
δάκρυ δ' ἀπὸ βλεφάρων χαμάδις βάλε πατρὸς ἀκούσας,
χλαῖναν πορφυρέην ἄντ' ὀφθαλμοῖν ἀνασχῶν
ἀμφοτέρησιν χερσὶ.

So said he (Menelaos), and roused in Telemachus the desire to weep (γόος) for his father. / He let tears fall from his eyelids to the ground on hearing of his father, / holding up his purple robe in front of his eyes / with both hands.⁷

Just as Penelope veiled her face in the former episode, Telemachus' spontaneous grief is accompanied by an appropriate mourning gesture. Telemachus uses his cloak to cover himself. In book 8, Odysseus himself repeats this gesture not once but twice, upon hearing Demodocus' song about the heroes at Troy. As was the case with Penelope, this rekindling of the painful memory of his lost comrades, especially Achilles, but also his own endless wanderings, makes Odysseus burst into a spontaneous display of grief. And like Telemachus, Odysseus, too, tries to isolate himself from his immediate surroundings (the banquet at Alcinous' palace) by concealing his face under his cloak, thus attempting to keep his grief to himself:

ταῦτ' ἄρ' αἰδὸς ἄειδε περικλυτός· αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
πορφύρεον μέγα φᾶρος ἔλῶν χερσὶ στιβαρῆσι
κὰκ κεφαλῆς εἴρυσσε, κάλυψε δὲ καλὰ πρόσωπα·
αἶδετο γὰρ Φαίηκας ὑπ' ὀφρύσι δάκρυα λείβων.
ἦ τοι ὅτε λήξειεν αἰείδων θεῖος αἰιδός,
δάκρυ' ὁμορξάμενος κεφαλῆς ἄπο φᾶρος ἔλεσκε
καὶ δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον ἔλῶν σπείσασκε θεοῖσιν·
αὐτὰρ ὅτ' ἄψ ἄρχοιτο καὶ ὀτρύνειαν αἰεῖδεν
Φαιήκων οἱ ἄριστοι, ἐπεὶ τέρποντ' ἐπέεσσιν,
ἄψ Ὀδυσσεὺς κατὰ κρᾶτα καλυψάμενος γοάσκειν.

⁷ *Od.* 4. 113-116.

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This the far-famed singer sang, but Odysseus
grasped the great purple cloak with his well-knit hands,
pulled it over his head, and hid his handsome face, for he was ashamed / to
shed tears from under his eyebrows in front of the Phaeacians. / Indeed, each
time the divine singer stopped singing,
Odysseus took the cloak from his head, wiped his tears,
grasped a goblet with two handles, and made libation to the gods.
But each time he began again, and the best of the Phaeacians
spurred him on to sing since they enjoyed his stories,
Odysseus immediately covered his head and cried.⁸

By concealing their faces from those around them, Telemachus and Odysseus follow Penelope's example at the beginning of the poem. Similar behaviour is exhibited in the iconographic representation of the 'mourning' Odysseus, seated with his hand supporting his head, replicating the much more popular depiction of his wife.⁹ This style of representation, whose exact meaning is unknown, is usually interpreted as Odysseus at Ogygia longing for Ithaca. However we interpret this trend in the representation of Odysseus, the iconographic similarities with the mourning Penelope are striking. Still in book 8, the scene repeats itself, but this time Odysseus' grief is compared to that of the lament of a warrior's wife over her dying husband:

ταῦτ' ἄρ' ἀοιδὸς ἄειδε περικλυτός· αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
τήκετο, δάκρυ δ' ἔδενεν ὑπὸ βλεφάροισι παρειάς.
ὥς δὲ γυνὴ κλαίῃσι φίλον πόσιν ἀμφιπεσοῦσα,
ὅς τε ἔῃς πρόσθεν πόλιος λαῶν τε πέσῃσιν,
ἄστει καὶ τεκέεσσιν ἀμύνων νηλεὲς ἦμαρ·
ἢ μὲν τὸν θνήσκοντα καὶ ἀσπαίροντα ἰδοῦσα
ἀμφ' αὐτῷ χυμένη λίγα κωκῦει· οἱ δέ τ' ὄπισθε
κόπτοντες δούρεσσι μετάφρενον ἠδὲ καὶ ὤμους
εἴρερον εἰσανάγουσι, πόνον τ' ἐχέμεν καὶ οἴζυν·
τῆς δ' ἐλεεινοτάτῳ ἄχεϊ φθινύθουσι παρειαί·
ὥς Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐλεεινὸν ὑπ' ὀφρύσι δάκρυον εἶβεν.

⁸ *Od.* 4. 83-92.

⁹ For instance, in a fifth-century bronze helmet cheekpiece (Antikensammlung Misc. 7863, Berlin). See also *LIMC*, s.v. "Odysseus", 947-48.

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ἔνθ' ἄλλους μὲν πάντας ἐλάνθανε δάκρυα λείβων,
Ἄλκίνοος δέ μιν οἶος ἐπεφράσατ' ἠδ' ἐνόησεν.

This the far-famed singer sang, but Odysseus
melted, as tears from under eyelids wet his cheeks.
As a woman weeps, when she falls on her dear husband,
who's fallen in front of his city and people,
warding off ruthless day from his city and children,
and as she sees him gasping and dying, she throws her
arms around him, and loudly wails, but those behind her
strike her back and shoulders with their spears
and lead her into bondage, to have hard work and hardship,
and her cheeks waste away with the most piteous grief,
so Odysseus let piteous tears fall from under his brows.
He went unnoticed there by all the others, shedding tears,
and Alcinous alone noticed him and understood.¹⁰

At first glance, the comparison can appear problematic, as the extreme expressions of female grief contrast sharply with Odysseus' concealed crying. But the spontaneous and highly individual response to the death of a loved one, and above all the absence of any collective ritualised sharing of grief, are more significant factors. In Demodocus' song the woman's lament is cut short by her captors, who forcibly remove her from the body of the deceased.¹¹ This takes us back to our discussion of Penelope. In book 19, Penelope herself tells the audience of her never-ending sorrow. A further comparison is drawn to highlight this unusual state, this time between her never-ending grief and the song of the nightingale, a funeral lament for a lost son, as the myth tells us:¹²

αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ καὶ πένθος ἀμέτρητον πόρε δαίμων·

¹⁰ *Od.* 8. 521-533.

¹¹ The allusion to the Trojan women after the fall of Troy, and in particular Andromache, is inescapable. The contrast with the closing books of the *Iliad*, which will be discussed next, is all the more telling. In the epic, Andromache mourns Hector adhering closely to the ritualized model for the collective management of grief.

¹² For the commonalities between the myth of the nightingale and Sophocles' tragic heroine, see Abbattista's paper in this issue. See also Anhalt (2001).

ἦματα μὲν γὰρ τέρπομ' ὄδυρομένη γοόωσα,
ἔς τ' ἐμὰ ἔργ' ὀρόωσα καὶ ἀμφιπόλων ἐνὶ οἴκῳ·
αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν νύξ ἔλθη, ἔλθῃσι τε κοῖτος ἅπαντας,
κεῖμαι ἐνὶ λέκτρῳ, πυκιναὶ δέ μοι ἀμφ' ἀδινὸν κῆρ
ὄξειαι μελεδῶναι ὄδυρομένην ἐρέθουσιν.
ὥς δ' ὅτε Πανδαρέου κόρυη, χλωρηΐς ἀηδῶν,
καλὸν ἀείδῃσιν ἔαρος νέον ἰσταμένοιο,
δενδρέων ἐν πετάλοισι καθεζομένη πυκινῶσιν,
ἦ τε θαμὰ τρωπῶσα χέει πολυδευκέα φωνήν,
παῖδ' ὀλοφυρομένη Ἴτυλον φίλον, ὃν ποτε χαλκῶ
κτεῖνε δι' ἀφραδίας, κοῦρον Ζήθιοιο ἄνακτος·
ὥς καὶ ἐμοὶ δίχα θυμὸς ὀρώρεται ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα, (...)

But a divinity gave even me immeasurable sadness.
For my days I indulge in mourning and lamenting,
as I see to my works and my handmaids' in my house.
Then after night comes, and sleep takes hold of all,
I lie in bed, and think about my throbbing heart
sharp anxieties disturb me in my mourning.
As when Pandareus' daughter, the greenwood nightingale,
sings beautifully when spring has just begun,
sitting in the thick leaves of the trees,
who, often varying her voice of many tones, pours out
in mourning for her beloved son Itylus, the son of lord Zethus,
whom she killed on account of folly once upon a time,
so my heart, too, stirs two ways, to and fro (...)

In my view this comparison reinforces the extraordinary nature of Penelope's grief. The never-ending nature of Procne's lament is the result of her decision to kill her son in revenge for her husband's rape of her sister Philomela. In Penelope's case, as with Telemachus and Odysseus, her never-ending sorrow is caused by the impossibility of carrying out the proper funerary rituals. But Penelope's reasons are singular, she is not sure whether her husband is alive or dead. Her place in Ithaca is thus unclear, is she still a wife or is she a widow? Procne, on the other hand, cannot occupy her usual place in the ritual, cradling her son's head, because she was the one who murdered him. The unnamed Trojan warrior's wife in Book 8 is forcibly dragged away before she can perform the proper funerary rites,

unlike Andromache in the *Iliad*.¹³ The uncertainty about Odysseus' fate makes the ritualization of his death impossible. Above all, the absence of a corpse over which to lament (a concern repeatedly raised in the epic,¹⁴ as well as in Late Geometric representations of shipwrecks that depict drowned sailors being devoured by fish)¹⁵ condemns Penelope and Telemachus, and even –paradoxically– Odysseus himself, to an individual, isolated, incessantly-renewed grief, that cannot successfully be brought to a close, via a shared, collective ritual that will transform the hero into a consoling memory.

3. Mourning Achilles

The visual expression of individual grief through a gesture of concealing one's face from others is also a prominent feature of the representation of Achilles in classical iconography.¹⁶ This iconographic link points to a close relationship between Achilles and Penelope, the two epic characters that are consistently depicted as isolated mourners. Achilles is portrayed as a mourner in three key points in the epic. Firstly, when Briseis is taken from him, secondly, during the embassy when his comrades try to persuade him to return to the battlefield, and thirdly, when Thetis gives him the new armour he needs to avenge the death of Patroclus. In the first two cases, he is grieving over the loss of Briseis, while in the third Patroclus' death is the cause of his sorrow. In the poem, the continuity between these two sources of grief for the hero is highlighted by Thetis' use of *akhos* (grief) and the

¹³ A parallel is Penelope's never-ending act of weaving, intended as the fabrication of Laertes' shroud and presented as a cunning tactic of deferring Penelope's remarriage, but also functioning on a deeper level as a fitting symbol of the impossibility of properly mourning the missing hero.

¹⁴ E.g. in *Od.* 14. 133-136: 'By now, dogs and swift birds of prey must have / pulled the skin off his bones, and his soul has left him. / Or, on the sea, fish ate him, and his bones / lie on the mainland, wrapped in lots of sand.'

¹⁵ For example, the Late Geometric *krater* in the Pithekoussai Archaeological Museum (the so-called 'Shipwreck vase'), and the Attic Late Geometric *oinochoe* at Munich (Antikensammlungen, inv. 8696). On this motif, see also Hurwit (2011).

¹⁶ For a list of vases and images, see Muellner (2012). An illustrative example is the Attic red-figure volute-krater from Tarquinii, ca. 460 BCE, now in the Louvre (G482): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Akhilleus_Nereides_Louvre_G482_n2.jpg.

verb *akhéo* (to grieve),¹⁷ which she uses to describe her son's grief to Hephaestus:

ὄφρα δέ μοι ζῶει καὶ ὄρα φάος ἠελίοιο
ἄχνυται, οὐδέ τί οἱ δύναμαι χραισμῆσαι ἰοῦσα.
κούρην ἦν ἄρα οἱ γέρας ἔξελον υἷες Ἀχαιῶν,
τὴν ἄψ' ἐκ χειρῶν ἔλετο κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων.
ἦτοι ὃ τῆς ἀχέων φρένας ἔφθιεν. (...)
(...) ὃ δὲ κείται ἐπὶ χθονὶ θυμὸν ἀχεύων.

'Yet while I see him live and he looks on the sunlight, he has sorrows, and though I go to him I can do nothing to help him. And the girl the sons of the Achaians chose out for his honour powerful Agamemnon took her away again out of his hands. For her his heart has been wasting in sorrow (...)
(...) Now my son lies on the ground, heart sorrowing.'¹⁸

The iconographic gesture of concealing his face from those around him corresponds in the poem to the depiction of Achilles' withdrawal from military action because of Briseis' loss and the insult to his honour. Just as in the visual motif of a man wrapped up in his cloak, Achilles decides to isolate himself from the Greek army and from normal social interaction, as Penelope does in Ithaca. Achilles *has* lost Briseis, but she is not dead, making it impossible for him to perform a collective ritualized mourning action. His grief cannot therefore be overcome nor can he enjoy a measure of consolation that can reshape his social ties and allow him to resume normal interpersonal interactions.¹⁹ As Palmer and later Nagy and Mueller have pointed

¹⁷ Muellner argues that grief (*akhos*) is the primary meaning, as in the comparable portrayals of Penelope's and Odysseus' grief, and not anger (*kholos*), as argued by Cairns (2001).

¹⁸ *Il.* 18. 442-446, 461. See also, 2. 694: 'For her sake he lay grieving (*ἀχέων*) now, but was soon to rise up'. Whatever our interpretation of Achilles' feelings towards his concubine and his anger at Agamemnon's insult, these passages testify that his grief (*akhos*) is directly related to the loss of Briseis.

¹⁹ For a detailed analysis of Achilles' relationship with Briseis and their respective feelings, as portrayed both in the *Iliad* and in the later tradition see Fantuzzi (2012) 99-185, especially his discussion of the epic in 99-123.

out, sorrow (*akhos*) is such an integral part of Achilles' being that it is inscribed in his name: Akhi-leus.²⁰ Thetis repeatedly complains that her son is not only doomed to a short life but to one dominated by grief. The excess of sorrow, *akhos*, is closely linked to an excess of wrath (*kholos*) which explains his abnormal management of grief, both on an individual level (e.g. Briseis) and in a predominantly collective one (Patroclus). For Achilles' grief over Patroclus is indeed expressed in a context of collective lamentation and funerary ritual, but in a very unorthodox way.

Many scholars have discussed the particularities of Achilles' behaviour and how they manifest themselves in his handling of Patroclus' funeral.²¹ In this paper I discuss two illustrative examples. When the body of the deceased has been recovered, Achilles delays the celebration of Patroclus' funeral in order to return to battle and take vengeance on Hector. Once this goal has been attained, his excess of grief keeps him from participating in the ritual banquet. Achilles takes this self-imposed punishment to extreme lengths by refusing to eat altogether, though he does eventually relent:

κεῖνος ὃ γε προπάρειθε νεῶν ὀρθοκραιράων
ἦσται ὀδυρόμενος ἕταρον φίλον· οἱ δὲ δὴ ἄλλοι
οἴχονται μετὰ δεῖπνον, ὃ δ' ἄκμηνος καὶ ἄπαστος.

Now he has sat down before the steep horned ships and is mourning / for
his own beloved companion, while all the others
have gone to take their dinner, but he is fasting and unfed.

This protracted grief, which threatens to be as never-ending as Penelope's comparison to the nightingale in the *Odyssey* suggested, finally forces Patroclus' ghost to intervene. His friend's shade urges Achilles to hasten the burial of his body, since in its inconclusiveness Achilles' excessive grief turns out to be the exact opposite of what it should be. It becomes a source of forgetfulness (*lelasmenos*) instead of memory, of carelessness (*akédeis*)

²⁰ Palmer (1963) 78-79; Nagy (1976); Muellner (2001).

²¹ Most recently, see Sistac (2018) for a detailed analysis of orthodox and heterodox elements in the description of Patroclus' funeral. Sistac argues that all examples that belong to the second category are directly related to Achilles and his self-imposed isolation from the group.

instead of positive action, in other words, ineffective instead of performative.

εὔδεις, αὐτὰρ ἐμεῖο λελασμένος ἔπλευ Ἀχιλλεῦ.
οὐ μὲν μευ ζώντος ἀκήδεις, ἀλλὰ θανόντος·
θάπτέ με ὅττι τάχιστα πύλας Ἄϊδαο περήσω.

'You sleep, Achilles; you have forgotten me; but you were not careless of me when I lived, but only in death. Bury me as quickly as may be, let me pass through the gates of Hades.'

The funeral itself, when it is performed, is remarkable for a number of unorthodox actions. Achilles orders a human sacrifice as a gift for the deceased. And all the while, Patroclus' funeral, awkward in its own right, is accompanied by Achilles' violation of the corpse of Hector, which amounts to a kind of anti-funeral.²² These actions arise out of Achilles' excess both of wrath (*kholos*) and grief (*akhos*), and invert normal funerary ritual. The body of the deceased is denied a proper burial by his kin. This role is carried out instead by dogs, birds of prey, and/or fish (which are a recurrent motif in the epic from its very first lines). Perhaps even more disturbing are details such as laying the corpse face-down, the reverse position to that prescribed by the ritual. This anti-funeral continues even after Patroclus' funerary rites have been completed, delaying the end of the mourning period for both dead warriors. This will only happen when Hector's body is returned to his kin and the celebration of the second and final funeral. Only then does Achilles finally let go of his excessive anger which also brings the poem that began with his 'wrath' to a conclusion.

Achilles' ambivalent handling of his grief over Patroclus, poised awkwardly between the individual and collective spheres, is also present in the iconography. Beside the representations already discussed, which show him wrapped in his cloak and with his head and/or body turned away from his mother who brings him the new armour, other images show him participating in the collective lament. For example, in a black-figure Corinthian *oinokhoe* (c. 570-50 BC, *LIMC s.v. Achilleus* 478), now in Brussels (Musée

²² Sistac (2018) 88-89.

du Cinquantenaire),²³ he is represented with his mother and a chorus of men and women. He is bringing his hand to his head, probably pulling out his hair, in response to a similar gesture by Thetis, and is thus integrated in the communal ritual lament, in sharp contrast to the wrapped-up ‘mourning’ type.

During the funerary rituals for Patroclus, the anomalous actions we have previously touched upon coexist alongside more normative behaviour. Some of Achilles’ actions, however, more properly belong to female mourners.²⁴ Most conspicuously, he takes the lead in the choral song of lament, the *thrēnos*, echoed by the laments of the rest of the group of mourners in typical responsorial form. The following section contains numerous ritual terms (highlighted), marking Achilles’ integration into the socially accepted and thus ritually effective performance of grief:

Πάτροκλον κλαίωμεν· ὁ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ θανόντων.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κ' ὄλοοιο τεταρπώμεσθα γόοιο,
ἵππους λυσάμενοι δορπήσομεν ἐνθάδε πάντες.
Ὡς ἔφαθ', οἱ δ' ὤμωξαν ἄολλέες, ἦρχε δ' Ἀχιλλεύς.
οἱ δὲ τρίς περι νεκρὸν εὐτριχας ἤλασαν ἵππους
μυρόμενοι· μετὰ δέ σφι Θέτις γόου ἕμερον ὄρσε.
δεύοντο ψάμαθοι, δεύοντο δὲ τεύχεα φωτῶν
δάκρυσι· τοῖον γὰρ πόθεον μήστωρα φόβοιο.
τοῖσι δὲ Πηλεΐδης ἀδινού ἔξῆρχε γόοιο
χεῖρας ἐπ' ἀνδροφόνους θέμενος στήθεσσιν ἐταίρου·
χαῖρέ μοι ὦ Πάτροκλε καὶ εἰν Ἄϊδαο δόμοισι·
πάντα γὰρ ἦδη τοι τελέω τὰ πάροιθεν ὑπέστην.

‘Let us mourn Patroklos, since such is the privilege of the perished.
Then, when we have taken full satisfaction from the sorrowful dirge, / we
shall set our horses free, and all of us eat here. / He spoke, and all of them
assembled moaned, and Achilleus led them. Three times, mourning, they
drove their horses with flowing manes about the body, / and among them

²³ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Achilles_mourning_the_death_of_Patroclus,_Corinthian_Chytra.jpg.

²⁴ Compare also the negative view of men who grieved excessively, especially in the public sphere, in ancient Rome. See Gorostidi (73-78) and Hope (119-120, 132-134, 138-139) in this issue.

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Thetis stirred the passion for weeping. / The sands were wet, and the armour of men was wet with their tears. Such / was their longing after Patroklos, who drove men to thoughts of terror. / Peleus' son led the thronging chant of their lamentation, / and laid his manslaughtering hands over the chest of his dear friend: / 'Good-bye, Patroklos. I hail you even in the house of the death god. / All that I promised you in time past I am accomplishing (...).'²⁵

The last word in this quotation, the verb *teleo* ('accomplish'), emphasizes the performative aspects of this ritually charged context, in stark contrast to the inconclusiveness of Achilles' actions, a charge laid against him by Patroclus' ghost. Achilles' complex relationship with grief, its display and management, highlights the tensions between the individual and the collective, and between feminine and masculine expressions of grief in epic poetry, but also more generally in ancient Greek literature.

Achilles' blurring of gender roles in his behaviour during the funeral of his friend is highlighted in two contrasting passages:

οὐ θέμις ἐστὶ λοετρὰ καρήατος ἄσσον ἰκέσθαι
πρίν γ' ἐνὶ Πάτροκλον θέμεναι πυρὶ σῆμά τε χεῦαι
κείρασθαί τε κόμην, ἐπεὶ οὐ μ' ἔτι δεύτερον ὦδε
ἴξετ' ἄχος κραδίην ὄφρα ζωῶσι μετείω.
ἀλλ' ἦτοι νῦν μὲν στυγερῇ πειθώμεθα δαιτί·

It's not right that water touch my head,
until I've laid Patroclus on his fire, piled up a burial mound,
and shaved my hair, since such grief will never reach my heart
a second time, not while I still remain among the living.
But for the moment, let's agree to dine, though I hate to eat.'²⁶

(...) ὄπιθεν δὲ κάρη ἔχε δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς
ἀχνύμενος· ἕταρον γὰρ ἀμύμονα πέμπ' Ἄϊδος δέ.

and behind them brilliant Achilles held the head

²⁵ *Il.* 19. 9-20.

²⁶ *Il.* 23. 44-48.

sorrowing, for this was his true friend he escorted toward Hades.²⁷

In the first passage, Achilles takes on the typically masculine role of burning the corpse at the pyre and setting up the burial mound, while later on, he organizes the funeral games. In contrast, in the second passage, he cradles the head of the deceased, an action usually assigned to women, most often the mother, as with the lament of the nightingale in the *Odyssey*. This motif is also popular in the iconography, both of mythical and everyday funerals, including Achilles' own, in which Thetis adopts this female position.

Despite these anomalies, the last passages we examined took us further away from the individual expressions of grief I began with. Collective lament is an integral and well-codified part of funerary ritual. This aspect of the epic representation of grief has been studied at length.²⁸ I would, however, like to stress the fundamental importance of chorality, the ritual pattern underlying the whole funerary ritual, especially –but not exclusively– the lament, *goos*. The most elaborate form that a fully-fledged choral composition can take is the *thrénos* or dirge. The choral pattern includes a combination of different performative elements: a) polyphonic song, often arranged as a response between a single voice, the leader of the chorus (*choregos* or *exarchon*) and the rest of the chorus, or parts of it; b) rhythmic movement, sometimes this takes the form of ritual dance sometimes a rhythmic beating of the ground or the bodies of the members of the chorus, be it in an advancing pattern, as in a procession, or in a static pose, usually a circle; and c) music, performed either by a lyre or the flute. But what is most important for our discussion is the performative agency of choral ritual, that is, its effective power to transform those taking part in it, both as actors and spectators, to create or reshape bonds and identities, and to realize the purpose of the ritual performed. In the case of funerary lament, the choral pattern achieves several aims at the same time: to send the dead to his or her new abode and help them take up a new identity. It also helps

²⁷ *Il.* 23. 136-137.

²⁸ See, among many others, Derderian (2001) 15-62; Palmisciano (2017) 13-80. For the Greek tradition more generally, not specifically epic, a standard reference remains Alexiou (1974). See also the revised 2002 edition, available at: http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebook:CHS_AlexiouM.Ritual_Lament_in_Greek_Tradition.2002 (accessed 30/11/2019).

to reshape the community by redefining the bonds between the living by the substitution of the missing member, usually, but not always, in the natural succession of generations.²⁹ Last, but not least, to collectively manage individual grief and to help bring it to a close by affixing the memory of the deceased on the grave and/or in the poem commemorating him or her.

All of these aspects are present in Patroclus' funeral, but they are achieved in paradigmatic and fully performative form only in Hector's funeral, described in the last verses of the *Iliad*. The lament is codified and carefully structured, first by the performance of a choral lament led by professional singers (*aiidoi*) and then a threefold lament led in turn by Andromache (Hector's wife), Hecabe (his mother), and Helen (his sister-in-law). These three individual laments are picked up and enhanced by the laments of the whole chorus of women, and echoed by the whole Trojan community taking part in the ritual.

οἱ δ' ἐπεὶ εἰσάγαγον κλυτὰ δώματα, τὸν μὲν ἔπειτα
τρητοῖς ἐν λεχέεσσι θέσαν, παρὰ δ' εἶσαν ἀοιδοῦς
θρήνων ἐξάρχους, οἳ τε στονόεσαν ἀοιδὴν
οἱ μὲν ἄρ' ἐθρήνεον, ἐπὶ δὲ στενάχοντο γυναῖκες.
τῆσιν δ' Ἀνδρομάχη λευκώλενος ἦρχε γόοιο
Ἴκτορος ἀνδροφόνιοι κάρη μετὰ χερσὶν ἔχουσα·
ἄνερ ἄπ' αἰῶνος νέος ὦλεο, κὰδ δέ με χήρην
λείπεις ἐν μεγάροισι· πάϊς δ' ἔτι νήπιος αὐτῶς (...).

And when they had brought him inside the renowned house, they laid him / then on a carved bed, and seated beside him the singers who were to lead the melody in the dirge, and the singers chanted the song of sorrow, and the women were mourning beside them. / Andromache of the white arms led the lamentation of the women, and held in her arms the head of manslaughtering Hektor: / 'My husband, you were lost young from life, and have left me / a widow in your house, and the boy is only a baby (...).³⁰

²⁹ For an examination of the particular poignancy attached to the death of babies and young people, well before their time, and how this is expressed by their grieving parents in Roman times see Gorostidi's paper in this issue.

³⁰ *Il.* 24. 719-726.

The portrayal of Penelope's and Achilles' individual expressions of grief in the iconographic record are all dated much later than the Homeric epics themselves. In the Geometric and early Archaic periods, only collective lamentation and mourning rituals are depicted when funerary rites are represented. This corresponds neatly to the progression of the *Iliad*, which ends when grief is expressed by the whole community and fully realised via the performance of paradigmatic collective rituals. This is the normative and desirable way of mourning in the Archaic *polis*, and it is represented on vases that are often themselves used in the funeral ritual, be it as grave markers (for example, the monumental late Geometric vases from the Dipylon cemetery), or as offerings accompanying the dead to the grave. In contrast, the examination of individual, isolated grief in the two epics highlight the distinctiveness of the central characters of Achilles and Penelope. In both cases, the motif of individual grief functions as a poetic foil to the collective ritualized behaviour which forms the foundations of ancient Greek society. In the *Iliad*, Achilles undergoes a process that takes him on an emotional journey from his individual, isolating grief for the loss of Briseis, to the more complex tension between the private and public spheres in the case of Patroclus, and finally, thanks to his decision to give back Hector's corpse for burial, to the performance of a truly normative funerary ritual, Hector's funeral, which brings the whole poem to a fitting close. In the *Odyssey*, Penelope's individual grief is compared to the song of the nightingale and to the grief of the captive Trojan woman who is not allowed to bury her dead husband. This pattern is repeated with Telemachus' and Odysseus' grief; an expression both of the isolation of the three main characters before Odysseus' reintegration into his household and of the private and public anxieties and consequences should that reintegration fail.

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