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Ancient Greek and Roman Multi-Sensory Spectacles of Grief

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Ancient Greek and Roman Multi-Sensory Spectacles of Grief

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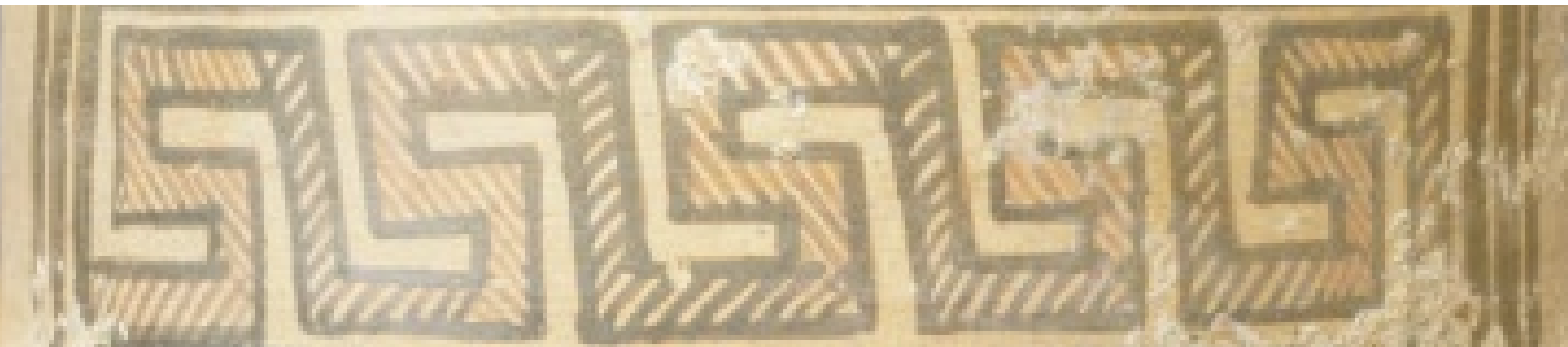

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Introduction: Ancient Greek and Roman Multi-Sensory Spectacles of Grief

1 Introduction: Ancient Greek and Roman Multi-Sensory Spectacles of Grief

GRIEF is one of the most powerful emotions that strongly affects both body and mind. The ancient Greeks and Romans distrusted the disruptive potential of uncontrolled emotions and the impact that open displays of such emotions could have on the body politic in general, and men in leadership roles, in particular. Two well-known examples from the classical world, that specifically reference grief in a time of war, exemplify the ancient perspective. From ancient Greece, comes Pericles' warning to his fellow Athenians of the dangers of excessive mourning. According to Thucydides, this injunction formed part of his *Funeral Oration*, delivered at the end of the first year of the Peloponnesian War.[1] Grieving over the fallen too excessively was discouraged, because it could potentially undermine the city's efforts to win the war against Sparta and her allies. Expanding Athens' sphere of influence thus outweighed the personal cost born by the families of the soldiers who died in pursuit of this goal. Julius Caesar only mourned his beloved daughter Julia for two days, because the news reached him, while on military campaign in Britain, and he could not afford to waste any more time on personal matters. In this Roman example, too, devotion to the state outweighs personal considerations. This was judged an essential quality/virtue for the Roman elite to possess, especially desirable for those commanding the Roman army in the field, or later ruling the Roman Empire. Cicero admired

Acknowledgements: Many thanks to the organising committee of the ISCH 2017 conference, and in particular to Jonas Liliequist (Umeå University). Alessandra Abbattista for being a wonderful panel co-organiser. Last, but no means least we all owe a great debt of gratitude to Filippo Carlà-Uhink for his interest in our work and his many insightful suggestions and editorial help.

1 Thuc. 2.6

Caesar's self-control in the face of grief,[2] and helped to transform this incident into an aspirational exemplar for imitation.[3]

In the ancient world, war was endemic, disease rife and life in general more fragile and precarious. Restraint on the part of the bereaved could be viewed as a practical response to the loss of family and friends in such a harsh and dangerous environment. But this is too easy and unproblematic an interpretation, as the example of Cicero demonstrates. Despite his earlier praise of Caesar's restraint, Cicero went on to problematised this model for dealing with personal grief in his later work, by emphasising the difficulties he himself faced following the death of his own beloved daughter, Tullia.[4] Classical art is full of spectacles of grief, from ancient Greek funerary *lekynthoi* depicting scenes of loss, to the performance of mourning in classical tragedy, to Roman funerary inscriptions, and philosophical thought, to name but a few representative examples. They serve to demonstrate the impact of death and loss on these two ancient societies and the different ways they 'coped' with grief. Restraint and self-control tended to be valorised, because they benefited the state, but these were not the only possible responses as we discover in our ancient evidence, as the six papers that follow demonstrate.

The genesis of this special issue of *thersites* was a panel at the Annual Conference of the International Society for Cultural History at Umeå University in Sweden (26-29 June 2017). It was organised on the principle that the ancient world should be represented at a conference devoted to the history of the senses and emotions.[5] The number of references to ancient Greek and Roman evidence scattered across several papers by colleagues working in other Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines, not only testifies to the relevance of the classical world in the study of the emotions and the senses, but also to the need for classicists to represent our field at such cross-disciplinary forums. Classicists have much to contribute as they have been

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2 Cic. Ad. Q fr. 3.6.3.

3 Later Roman authors, including Seneca (Cons. Marc. 14.3), refer to Caesar's example in their work.

4 In the first book of the *Tusculan Disputations* and on several occasions in the *Letters to Atticus*. See also Altman (2009) 411-445.

5 There was a second panel that examined Roman material only, with a particular focus on cultural memory, materiality and memory, organized by Lewis Webb (Umeå University). Plus, additional individual papers in other panels.

fruitfully engaging with both these approaches to investigating antiquity,[6] and increasingly exploring their overlap with wider debates in the Humanities and Sciences. More work remains to be done, but such intersections open up opportunities for the meaningful cross-fertilisation of ideas, and thus represent the cutting edge of cross-disciplinary research.

There is already a rich and fast-growing body of classical scholarship on ancient emotions,[7] that is increasingly adopting precisely such a cross-disciplinary approach, but it is not my intention here to summarise developments in the field. I will, however, selectively pull on some of the discussion threads that are particularly relevant to the papers in this special issue. David Konstan has argued that the ancients' understanding of grief differs significantly from our own.[8] In their highly performative cultures, the ancient Greeks and Romans largely dealt with loss in the public arena, as an essential part of their socially constructed identities. Intense personal grief, and its expression, is generally codified as anomalous and transgressive, but is nonetheless depicted and memorably explored in our ancient evidence (as the six papers that make up this special issue demonstrate).

The theme of the conference that was the starting point of our investigations was 'Senses, Emotions and the Affective Turn: Recent Perspectives and New Challenges in Cultural History'. The 'affective turn'[9] highlights the false dichotomy between mind and body, drawing on recent advances in cognitive theory and neuroscience.[10] Reason has traditionally been

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6 Examples of scholarship on the ancient emotions include, but are not limited to Fortenbaugh (2002, 2nd edn., originally published in 1975); Stanford (1983); Elster (1998); Konstan (2006); Chaniotis (2012); Chaniotis & Ducrey (2013); Cairns & Fulkerson (2015); Chaniotis, Kaltsas & Mylonopoulos (2017); Alexiou & Cairns (2017); Cairns & Nelis (2017); Kazantzidis & Spatharas (2018); Spatharas (2019). On the senses, see Butler & Purves (2013); Bradley (2014); Toner (2014); Squire (2015); Betts (2017); Purves (2017); Rudolph (2017); Butler & Nooter (2018).

7 Cairns & Nelis (2017) 7.

8 Konstan (2006) 244-58.

9 For a discussion of the importance of 'affect' in cultural theory see Hemmings (2005) 548-567. For a philosophical perspective, see La Caze & Lloyd (2011) 1-13.

10 For a useful introduction to the impact of scientific research on the study of the history of emotions, see LeDoux (2017) 51-61. On the cognitive turn and its usefulness as a framework for thinking about audience reception, see

thought of as superior to emotion, an evaluation that has its roots in antiquity and the Greeks and Romans valorisation of male self-control. The same was not expected of women, who were viewed as easy prey to irrational emotions they could not control, making them the ideal performers of the more unrestrained aspects of funerary rites.[11] In Greek and Roman art and literature, however, we come across striking examples of both male and female abandonment to grief. Ancient philosophers such as Aristotle and Seneca began the process of theorising the ways in which emotion affects both the body and mind and discussed the role played by judgement in human beings.[12] Modern philosophers, scientists, creatives, and scholars working in the Humanities and Social Sciences have followed in their footsteps and the debate continues. One of the reasons why grief over the death of a loved one stands out, both then and now, is precisely because it so strongly affects both mind and body, pushing both to extremes states (see in particular Carruesco, Abbattista, Bakogianni and Gorostidi). As Konstan points out even modern psychologists cannot easily distinguish between 'normal' grief and its pathological version.[13]

This special issue explores a wide range of ancient evidence for the portrayal of grief in ancient literature and material culture, but also draws attention to the key role played by the senses in the performance of grief in ancient funerals, as well as in fictional accounts. If we wish to fully engage with ancient rituals of death and burial, the close connections of the study of the senses and the history of emotions should be acknowledged and addressed (in our issue see in particular Clancy, but also briefly Bakogianni and Hope). Ancient funerary rituals were designed to engage all the senses, turning them into truly multi-sensory spectacles. Ancient Greek and Roman epic, lyric, drama, as well as historical and philosophical texts, sought to create 'spectacles' in the imagination of their listeners and readers. Building on previous work that defined spectacle as a type of

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Yearling (2018) 129-144. On some of the problems that have arisen at the intersection between the Arts and the Sciences that have to be explored further, see Leys (2011) 434-472.

11 Stears (2008) 141-143.

12 On Aristotle, see Konstan (2006). On Seneca, see Konstan (2017) 231-243.

13 Konstan (2016) 30. Sophocles' Electra clearly belongs to the later category.

performance that requires an audience,[14] I apply this term, in its ancient, more positive iteration, in what follows, precisely because it draws attention to the highly performative nature of ancient Greek and Roman culture.[15]

2. Spectacles of Grief in Ancient Greece

In ancient Greece collective expressions of grief constituted the norm, while individual displays, no matter how intense and deeply felt, were expected to eventually be subsumed into the communal forms. In this way the grieving person could be reintegrated back into their society after their period of mourning and the identity of the deceased preserved in cultural memory.[16] Jesús Carruesco explores this divide with reference to two of the most memorable characters in the Homeric epics, Achilles and Penelope. His discussion takes the *Odyssey* as its starting point and analyses Penelope's grief for her husband Odysseus. Her womanly grief is mirrored at different points in the epic by both her son, Telemachus, and paradoxically her husband, who is in fact still alive. The ambiguity of Penelope's status (she spends the majority of the epic unsure of whether she is still a wife or a widow) places her in an uncomfortable liminal place and that has serious implications for Ithaca as a whole. Instability at the top of the social pyramid rolls downward and infects the whole community. Only Odysseus' return and his assumption of kingly power, after both his intellectual and physical skills are put to the test, restores order to his kingdom. Penelope's long-standing grief thus symbolises Ithaca's problems in the absence of its rightful king.

In the *Iliad*, Achilles takes his grief over Patroclus to extremes and rejects all attempts to console him.[17] Instead he rampages over the battlefield and repeatedly desecrates the body of Hector, denying it proper burial. The extreme emotionalism of the Achaeans' best warrior has enthralled audiences down the centuries, but it is codified in the epic as unhealthy and dangerous for the wider community because it isolates the hero. Only when Achilles returns Hector's body to Priam's safe-keeping and grants the Trojan King the necessary time to bury his son with full honours, does the epic story

14 Christesen and Kyle (2014) 2. In ancient Rome 'spectacle', referred to a much-anticipated event that was invested with cultural significance. Kyle (2007) 10.

15 Bakogianni (2015) 1-21.

16 On the importance of communal 'rites of passage', see Davies (2002) 18-19.

17 Munteanu (2017) 83-89.

reach its conclusion. Hector's large public funeral that involves the whole city, might not be the end of the story of the Trojan War, but it is an emotionally satisfying ending, that highlights the clash of personal and communal values and the human cost of the male heroic code that lies at the heart of the epic.

The next pair of papers by Alessandra Abbattista and Anastasia Bakogianni investigate Sophocles' portrayal of Electra's grief from two different, but complimentary perspectives. Abbattista offers readers a close textual analysis of the theme of the nightingale in Sophocles' tragedy, rooted in a detailed comparative study of the Sophoclean dramatic text and the myth of Procne, Philomela, and Tereus. Her careful unpicking of the tragedian's nuanced reception of the mythical exemplum allows us to revisit Sophocles' transgressive heroine with fresh eyes. The juxtaposition of Procne's grief and anger over her husband's rape and mutilation of her beloved sister, and Sophocles' drama serves to deepen the tragedian's characterisation of Electra. It is also a pointed reminder to his ancient audience of the inherent danger in women's voices, especially when they are raised in lamentation.[18] Even the silenced voice of Philomela cannot be contained; in spite of Tereus' removal of her tongue, she manages to inscribe her narrative onto the tapestry she weaves for her sister. Electra's voice raised in a never-ending lament is codified as particularly transgressive in Sophocles' dramatic version of the story, because of its close connection to anger and the desire for revenge, as in Procne's case. The mythical story thus underscores the intensity of Electra's mourning and prepares the audience for the extremes to which the Sophoclean tragic heroine will go over the course of the tragedy in her pursuit of vengeance. This Electra does not hesitate to pray for revenge and she urges her brother on as he commits matricide.

Electra turns her grief into a weapon, and deploys it to both summon back her brother Orestes (the rightful avenger and heir), and to keep her father's memory alive. Such is the intensity of her grief that it even leads her, when she believes Orestes to be dead, to consider carrying out the vengeance herself. Plato was so concerned about the impact of the representation of strong emotions on stage and in poetry that he ended up banning poetry in his *Republic*.[19] His desire to establish an ideal state ruled by the tenets of philosophy was incompatible with Greek tragedy's focus on

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18 Holst-Warhaft (1992) and (2000).

19 *Rep.* X.

violent emotions that are unleased with disastrous results.[20] Electra, Greek tragedy's mourner *par excellence*, is a striking example of the negative type of portrayal of emotion that Plato objected to. Bakogianni's investigation of Electra's performance of grief in modern Greece, employs a comparative model, with the specific aim of reflecting on ancient vs. modern audience response. We can never recover how ancient spectators responded to Electra's grief in the fifth-century BCE, but a comparative study of two modern performances from the end of the last millennium by the National Theatre of Greece, can help us revisit the question of the audience reception of the Sophoclean tragic heroine. In Lydia Koniordou's production of Sophocles' play (1996), Electra enjoys a close relationship with the chorus, which ameliorates, at least to a degree, her isolation. As does the communal rituals they perform together. Koniordou builds on a long tradition of performing the ancient tragedy on the modern Greek stage by stressing ritual and Electra's relationship to the chorus. In contrast, Dimitris Maurikios ensured that his Electra (1998) was cut off from the chorus thus heightening her loneliness and emotional distress that reaches pathological levels.

These two diametrically opposite ways of staging Electra's grief in modern Greece testify to the clash between traditional and innovative approaches to staging ancient tragedy by one of the country's premier theatre companies. Located at opposite ends of the tradition-innovation spectrum, the two productions divided critics with much of the debate centred on how Electra's grief was performed. Modern audiences tend to sympathise with Electra's grief, but her desire to avenge her father, even at the cost of matricide is deeply disquieting and is often downplayed or explained away as pathological. Ancient audiences might have also sympathised with Electra's personal grief, at least to a degree, and they would have understood her desire for vengeance. It is her transgressive behaviour that would have disturbed ancient spectators, because Electra breaks both gender and social norms. Her refusal to moderate her mourning and to begin the process of re-integrating back into her society make her an outcast and thus a deeply unsettling tragic protagonist to ancient audiences. There might be some fundamental commonalities and continuity between the portrayal and performance of ancient and modern grief, but the different historical, political and socio-cultural contexts also mean there are some fundamental differences.

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20 Munteanu (2017) 94-95.

3. Spectacles of Grief in Ancient Rome

In the second part of our special issue we return to ancient Rome and the self-control that elite Roman males were expected to exhibit, and consider to what degree this societal pressure reflected Roman funerary and commemorative practice. The emphasis placed on the necessity of overcoming personal grief for the sake of the state,[21] is revisited in Diana Gorostidi's paper, which distinguishes between public and private Roman displays of grief. She argues that in the private sphere, there was room for a greater range of responses to grief. To demonstrate her point, she synthesises a variety of evidence (inscriptions, iconographical and other material culture evidence, discussed in conjunction with literary texts)[22] on the theme of the grief caused by the premature death of babies and young children. Our ancient sources highlight the reversal of the natural order that such deaths represent. Children were expected to look after their parents in their old age and ensure that they were properly buried, a motif that remained popular and in common use in post-classical times, too. Our ancient Roman sources, however, dwell in particular on the thwarted hopes that the families of the dead children had for their futures. Even in a world of very high infant and young children mortality rates such early losses were viewed as worth commemorating. What is striking, however, is the emphasis placed on the children's missed potential as contributing members of Roman society. The gap between the public and private spheres is thus not as wide as it might at first appear. The individual's obligations to the state dominate both public and private ideology and shape the way the dead are commemorated.

David Clancy returns to the city of Rome and our ancient evidence for funerary rites from a different, sensory angle. His paper covers material from the first century BCE to the second century CE, and investigates the odours associated with ancient Roman funerals. Burning sweet-smelling herbs and spices, a common practice for honouring the gods in Roman religion, became increasingly popular in funerary practice. In addition to the practical consideration of masking the malodorous smells emanating from the corpse, it was also a way to honour the dead and to mark their transition

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21 Graver (2017) 195-196.

22 For an example of the importance of combining textual and material culture evidence to better understand emotions, see Chaniotis, Kaltsas & Mylonopoulos (2017).

from the world of the living to that of the dead. Sourcing and burning expensive and exotic spices for funerals became another marker of elite identity, and a source of competition among the aristocratic families of the Republic. Emperors could, however, afford to outspend their competition, so imperial funerals became lavish state occasions where the transformation of an emperor into a god was accompanied by the burning of expensive herbs and spices. Wonderful smells thus marked an emperor's passage to his rightful place among the gods, underscoring his unique place at the top of the imperial system. Clancy demonstrates the importance of investigating the olfactory dimension of funerary rites. In addition to being a way for those left behind to honour their dead, and a marker of social class and identity, the burning of sweet-smelling herbs and spices at Roman funerals demarcated the line between the living and the dead. It was a potent, public olfactory sign that the dead person had joined the ancestors, and it was time for those left behind to start on the final phase of their journey to re-join their community, having first fulfilled their obligations to the dead. This practice formed part of the ancient Romans' ritual strategies for dealing with grief, and despite the challenging nature of our ancient evidence that requires us to synthesise a wide range of different material, it rewards closer study.

Valerie Hope further problematises the question of public vs. private displays of grief in ancient Rome, with specific reference to the first imperial dynasty, the Julio-Claudians. As in the Republic, betraying too much emotion was frowned upon in the *principate*. An emperor who could not restrain his emotions and passions was viewed as unfit to rule the Roman state. Nero, for example, was considered excessive in his grief, as in every other aspect of his life. Suppressing all visible traces of grief was, however, equally problematic for a Roman emperor, as in the case of Tiberius whose behaviour at his adoptive son's funeral was condemned as unfeeling or even hypocritical. Tears and a sorrowing countenance were expected of an emperor in mourning, but they could be interpreted either positively or negatively. They were viewed as a sign of their true character and functioned as yet another public test of their ability to rule. Roman emperors were expected to take a leading role in directing the communal grief of the people, especially in the case of the death of their predecessor, but also when their heirs preceded them in death, a prominent feature of Augustus' long reign. How the first emperor mourned his dead relatives and friends became the measure by which all his successors were judged. Showing too much or nor

enough grief was equally problematic. Striking the right balance was challenging, especially for the man at the top of the ancient Roman social pyramid, whose every emotion was dissected and analysed not only by those he ruled, but also by posterity.

It is precisely because grief is commonly believed to be a universal,[23] trans-historical emotion that it acts as a useful entry point for a debate of both the commonalities and the differences between these ancient cultures and our own. More generally, it testifies to the ability of the arts to both depict and elicit emotion in their readers and audiences.[24] It also allows us to reflect on the question of the therapeutic value of the arts, and whether they have the power to console the bereaved, both then and now (on this aspect, see in particular Bakogianni and Gorostidi). Human beings are drawn to such fictionalised representations of emotion, in part due to the inherent appeal of strong storylines and memorable characters operating in a world of heightened emotional tensions. As Cairns argues, however, such representations of emotion in the arts also help us to 'extend and deepen our emotional repertoires'.[25] Shifting through our evidence for what it can reveal about how grief was conceptualised, practised and represented in ancient Greece and Rome seems especially relevant in the new millennium, given that so many modern societies have become entrenched in their avoidance of death and everything associated with it. Refusing to deal with the impact of grief on individuals and communities has serious implications, as our ancient case studies aptly demonstrate, and it is a lesson well worth heeding. In a time of ongoing crisis for the Humanities, we need to seize every opportunity to reiterate the value of the Humanities and the ways in which they help us explore what it means to be human.[26]

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23 Gunzburg argues that 'human emotion has not changed in quality throughout recorded time': (2019) ii.

24 Sullivan & Herzfeld- Schild (2018) 118-119. For a discussion of the nuances of the author/playwright-text/drama-readers/audiences relationship, see Halliwell (2017) 105-123.

25 Cairns (2017) 74.

26 Johanna Hanink's recent call to arms in *Eidolon* (1/05/2017) is particularly relevant here. She advocates for 'Reception 2.0', which she defines as research that engages more closely with 'how the ancient past is visibly interwoven in the fabric of the present moment': https://eidolon.pub/its-time-to-embrace-critical-classical-reception-d3491a40eec3 (accessed 11/12/2019). On the

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importance of classicists engaging in contemporary public debates, see Porter (2008) 480.

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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:

> ἡ δ' ὅτε δὴ μνηστῆρας ἀφίκετο δῖα γυναικῶν,
> στῆ ῥα παρὰ σταθμὸν τέγεος πύκα ποιητοῖο,
> ἄντα παρειάων σχομένη λιπαρὰ κρήδεμνα·
> ἀμφίπολος δ' ἄρα οἱ κεδνὴ ἑκάτερθε παρέστη.
> δακρύσασα δ' ἔπειτα προσηύδα θεῖον ἀοιδόν·
> "Φήμιε, πολλὰ γὰρ ἄλλα βροτῶν θελκτήρια οἶδας
> ἔργ' ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε, τά τε κλείουσιν ἀοιδοί·
> τῶν ἕν γέ σφιν ἄειδε παρήμενος, οἱ δὲ σιωπῇ
> οἶνον πινόντων· ταύτης δ' ἀποπαύε' ἀοιδῆς

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.

λυγρῆς, ἥ τέ μοι αἰὲν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλον κῆρ
τείρει, ἐπεί με μάλιστα καθίκετο πένθος ἄλαστον.
τοίην γὰρ κεφαλὴν ποθέω μεμνημένη αἰεὶ
ἀνδρός, τοῦ κλέος εὐρὺ 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 husband, / 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:

> ὣς φάτο, τῷ δ' ἄρα πατρὸς ὑφ' ἵμερον ὦρσε γόοιο·
> δάκρυ δ' ἀπὸ βλεφάρων χαμάδις βάλε πατρὸς ἀκούσας,
> χλαῖναν πορφυρέην ἄντ' ὀφθαλμοῖιν ἀνασχὼν
> ἀμφοτέρῃσιν χερσί.
>
> 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' ἀοιδὸς ἄειδε περικλυτός· αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
> πορφύρεον μέγα φᾶρος ἑλὼν χερσὶ στιβαρῇσι
> κὰκ κεφαλῆς εἴρυσσε, κάλυψε δὲ καλὰ πρόσωπα·
> αἴδετο γὰρ Φαίηκας ὑπ' ὀφρύσι δάκρυα λείβων.
> ἦ τοι ὅτε λήξειεν ἀείδων θεῖος ἀοιδός,
> δάκρυ' ὀμορξάμενος κεφαλῆς ἄπο φᾶρος ἔλεσκε
> καὶ δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον ἑλὼν σπείσασκε θεοῖσιν·
> αὐτὰρ ὅτ' ἂψ ἄρχοιτο καὶ ὀτρύνειαν ἀείδειν
> Φαιήκων οἱ ἄριστοι, ἐπεὶ τέρποντ' ἐπέεσσιν,
> ἂψ Ὀδυσεὺς κατὰ κρᾶτα καλυψάμενος γοάασκεν.

[7] *Od.* 4. 113-116.

> 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' ἔδευεν ὑπὸ βλεφάροισι παρειάς.
> ὡς δὲ γυνὴ κλαίῃσι φίλον πόσιν ἀμφιπεσοῦσα,
> ὅς τε ἑῆς πρόσθεν πόλιος λαῶν τε πέσῃσιν,
> ἄστεϊ καὶ τεκέεσσιν ἀμύνων νηλεὲς ἦμαρ·
> ἡ μὲν τὸν θνῄσκοντα καὶ ἀσπαίροντα ἰδοῦσα
> ἀμφ' αὐτῷ χυμένη λίγα κωκύει· οἱ δέ τ' ὄπισθε
> κόπτοντες δούρεσσι μετάφρενον ἠδὲ καὶ ὤμους
> εἴρερον εἰσανάγουσι, πόνον τ' ἐχέμεν καὶ ὀϊζύν·
> τῆς δ' ἐλεεινοτάτῳ ἄχεϊ φθινύθουσι παρειαί·
> ὣς Ὀδυσεὺς 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.

ἔνθ' ἄλλους μὲν πάντας ἐλάνθανε δάκρυα λείβων,
Ἀλκίνοος 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).

ἤματα μὲν γὰρ τέρπομ' ὀδυρομένη γοόωσα,
ἔς τ' ἐμὰ ἔργ' ὁρόωσα καὶ ἀμφιπόλων ἐνὶ οἴκῳ·
αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν νὺξ ἔλθῃ, ἕλῃσί τε κοῖτος ἅπαντας,
κεῖμαι ἐνὶ λέκτρῳ, πυκιναὶ δέ μοι ἀμφ' ἀδινὸν κῆρ
ὀξεῖαι μελεδῶναι ὀδυρομένην ἐρέθουσιν.
ὡς δ' ὅτε Πανδαρέου κούρη, χλωρηΐς ἀηδών,
καλὸν ἀείδῃσιν ἔαρος νέον ἱσταμένοιο,
δενδρέων ἐν πετάλοισι καθεζομένη πυκινοῖσιν,
ἥ τε θαμὰ τρωπῶσα χέει πολυδευκέα φωνήν,
παῖδ' ὀλοφυρομένη Ἴτυλον φίλον, ὅν ποτε χαλκῷ
κτεῖνε δι' ἀφραδίας, κοῦρον Ζήθοιο ἄνακτος·
ὣς 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 thick 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 ζώει καὶ ὁρᾷ φάος ἠελίοιο
> ἄχνυται, οὐδέ τί οἱ δύναμαι χραισμῆσαι ἰοῦσα.
> κούρην ἣν ἄρα οἱ γέρας ἔξελον υἷες Ἀχαιῶν,
> τὴν ἄψ ἐκ χειρῶν ἕλετο κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων.
> ἤτοι ὃ τῆς ἀχέων φρένας ἔφθιεν· (…)
> (…) ὃ δὲ κεῖται 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 ὅ γε προπάροιθε νεῶν ὀρθοκραιράων
> ἧσται ὀδυρόμενος ἕταρον φίλον· οἳ 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.

> εὕδεις, αὐτὰρ ἐμεῖο λελασμένος ἔπλευ Ἀχιλλεῦ.
> οὐ μέν μευ ζώοντος ἀκήδεις, ἀλλὰ θανόντος·
> θάπτέ με ὅττι τάχιστα πύλας Ἀΐδαο περήσω.
>
> 'You sleep, Achilleus; 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 *thrênos*, 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· ὅ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ θανόντων.
> αὐτὰρ ἐπεί κ' ὀλοοῖο τεταρπώμεσθα γόοιο,
> ἵππους λυσάμενοι δορπήσομεν ἐνθάδε πάντες.
> Ὣς ἔφαθ', οἳ δ' ὤμωξαν ἀολλέες, ἦρχε δ' Ἀχιλλεύς.
> οἳ δὲ τρὶς περὶ νεκρὸν ἐΰτριχας ἤλασαν ἵππους
> μυρόμενοι· μετὰ δέ σφι Θέτις γόου ἵμερον ὦρσε.
> δεύοντο ψάμαθοι, δεύοντο δὲ τεύχεα φωτῶν
> δάκρυσι· τοῖον γὰρ πόθεον μήστωρα φόβοιο.
> τοῖσι δὲ Πηλεΐδης ἀδινοῦ ἐξῆρχε γόοιο
> χεῖρας ἐπ' ἀνδροφόνους θέμενος στήθεσσιν ἑταίρου·
> χαῖρέ μοι ὦ Πάτροκλε καὶ εἰν Ἀΐδαο δόμοισι·
> πάντα γὰρ ἤδη 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.

> 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 ἆσσον ἱκέσθαι
> πρίν γ' ἐνὶ Πάτροκλον θέμεναι πυρὶ σῆμά τε χεῦαι
> κείρασθαί τε κόμην, ἐπεὶ οὔ μ' ἔτι δεύτερον ὧδε
> ἵξετ' ἄχος κραδίην ὄφρα ζωοῖσι μετείω.
> ἀλλ' ἤτοι νῦν μὲν στυγερῇ πειθώμεθα δαιτί·
>
> It's not right that water touch my head,
> until I've laid Patroclos 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 Ἀχιλλεὺς
> ἀχνύμενος· ἕταρον γὰρ ἀμύμονα πέμπ' Ἄϊδος δέ.
>
> and behind them brilliant Achilleus 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 *thrênos* 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 (*aoidoí*) 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.

> οἳ δ' ἐπεὶ εἰσάγαγον κλυτὰ δώματα, τὸν μὲν ἔπειτα
> τρητοῖς ἐν λεχέεσσι θέσαν, παρὰ δ' εἷσαν ἀοιδοὺς
> θρήνων ἐξάρχους, οἵ τε στονόεσσαν ἀοιδὴν
> οἳ μὲν ἄρ' ἐθρήνεον, ἐπὶ δὲ στενάχοντο γυναῖκες.
> τῇσιν δ' Ἀνδρομάχη λευκώλενος ἦρχε γόοιο
> Ἕκτορος ἀνδροφόνοιο κάρη μετὰ χερσὶν ἔχουσα·
> ἆνερ ἀπ' αἰῶνος νέος ὤλεο, κὰδ δέ με χήρην
> λείπεις ἐν μεγάροισι· πάϊς δ' ἔτι νήπιος αὔτως (...).
>
> 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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The Tragic Nightingale Between Lament and Revenge

1. Introduction

IN ancient Greece,[1] female lamentation was a socially constructed and ritually sanctioned expression of grief in response to death.[2] Defined as the 'principal speech genre of women',[3] it was the vocal mode through which suffering was manifested either publicly or privately. Its performance in ancient Greek tragedy might be justified by the history of this poetic form, that has constantly seen women as responsible for mourning their next of kin.[4] Paintings on vases and funerary plaques evidence that women were expected to raise laments in funeral rites from the archaic to the classical age.[5] However, the fact that the celebration of funerary ceremonies was recognised as a female duty does not imply that tragic laments were performed merely to express powerlessness, loss and suffering. A lamenting woman was the medium through which the inexpressible pain and wrath in the case of loss were violently externalised.[6] In fact, it is through ritual lamentation

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1 This article is part of the PhD thesis, entitled *Animal metaphors and the depiction of female avengers in Attic tragedy*, I defended at the University of Roehampton in 2018. I would like to thank my supervisors Prof. Fiona McHardy, Prof. Susan Deacy and Dr. Susanne Greenhalgh, and my examiners Prof. Judith Mossman and Prof. Mike Edwards for their feedback. I am also grateful to Prof. Marco Fantuzzi, Prof. Filippo Carlà-Uhink and Dr. Anastasia Bakogianni for their suggestions.

2 For a definition of grief, and discussion of its representation in ancient Greek tragedy, see for example Cairns (2014) 656-659 and Foley (2014) 863-866.

3 McClure (1999) 44.

4 Alexiou (1974) 10.

5 See for instance the *prothesis* scenes depicted on: the Attic geometric *krater* (750-735 BCE) from Dipylon, Kerameikos, by Hirschfeld Painter, National Archeological Museum of Athens 990; the Attic geometric *krater* (c. 740 BCE), attributed to the Hirschfield Workshop, The Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York 14.130.14; the Attic Black-Figure *pinax* (second half of the sixth century BCE), by the Gela Painter, Walters Art Museum of Baltimore 48.225. For the role of women in funeral rites see Bakogianni in this issue (51).

6 Holst-Warhaft (1992) 1-10.

that female characters manifest both their suffering and anger in their tragic experience of bereavement.

The contradictory emotions expressed by female lamentation are illustrated by the nightingale theme in ancient Greek tragedy. When tragic heroines are metaphorically associated with or associate themselves with the nightingale, they perform ritual lamentation to express their vengeful intentions. In the *Suppliants*, the Danaids refer to the nightingale with the aim of lamenting their abduction from Egypt to Argos on the one hand, and revealing their desire of punishing the wantoness of their cousins on the other.[7] The Aeschylean Cassandra modulates the lament of the nightingale not only to cry out her tragic status at the end of the Trojan War, but also to anticipate the accomplishment of the vengeful plan of Clytemnestra against Agamemnon.[8] Sophocles metaphorically employs the nightingale to depict Electra in her reduced status because of the death of Agamemnon and to highlight her eagerness to take revenge against Clytemnestra.[9] Euripides evokes the nightingale to give voice to the suffering of Hecuba for the sacrifice of her daughter and the death of her son, and to set the scene for her revenge against Polymestor.[10] In the *Helena*, the Chorus calls upon the nightingale to comment on the lament that Helen simulates for the feigned death of Menelaus to help them escape Egypt.[11] By playing the role of mourning avengers, these tragic heroines are represented simultaneously as suppliant, helpless and pitiful, but also as unforgiving, threatening and ominous.

2. The Song of the Tragic Nightingale

With the aim of explaining the contradictory emotions in the tragic depiction of mourning avengers, I set out to outline the lexicon of the nightingale. Rarely used as a masculine form, the feminine noun ἀηδών, 'nightingale', probably derives from the present participle of the Ionic and poetic verb ἀείδω, 'I sing of / chant'.[12] In ancient Greek lexicographic sources, the term is also explained by the fact that the nightingale was believed to ἀεί ἀείδειν,

7 Aesch. *Supp.* 62.

8 Aesch. *Ag.* 1145, 1146.

9 Soph. *El.* 107, 149, 1077.

10 Eur. *Hec.* 337.

11 Eur. *Hel.* 1110.

12 Chantraine (1968) 23.

'sing continually'.[13] Aristotle claims that both the male and the female of the nightingale are able to sing. However, by inferring gender norms in birdsongs, he claims that most of the ancient poets identify the female as the songstress.[14] Aristotle's inference is confirmed by the metaphorical employment of the nightingale in ancient Greek tragedy.

Attic dramatists make use of the feminine noun ἀηδών not only in the description of actual nightingales,[15] but also in tragic characterisation. Among its occurrences, it is significant that the term is mainly applied to female characters.[16] The only exception is the metaphorical employment of the nightingale in the depiction of Palamedes.[17] Furthermore, Attic dramatists evoke the nightingale in tragic characterisation through alternative linguistic expressions. Instead of the feminine noun ἀηδών, they connote the general noun ὄρνις, 'bird', with specific attributive participles and adjectives, such as ἀτυζομένα, 'distraught with grief', ἀέθλιος, 'wretched', and ἄπτερος, 'without wings', to indicate the nightingale.[18] Although these expressions might have referred to other bird species, the noun ὄρνις probably indicates the nightingale in light of the myth of Procne, Philomela and Tereus.

On the basis of classical sources,[19] Procne, the daughter of the Athenian king Pandion, was given in marriage to the Thracian king Tereus, and she gave him a son, Itys. As she felt isolated and alone, she asked her husband to bring her sister Philomela from Athens to Thrace, but on the way Tereus raped Philomela and cut out her tongue to prevent her from revealing his crime. Philomela wove a tapestry to unveil her terrible story to her sister

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13 *EM* α 122,1; *EG* α 29,1.

14 Arist. *HA* 536a28-30.

15 Soph. *OC* 18, 672; Eur. fr. 88,2 N, 556,1 N, 931,1 N.

16 The tragic heroines metaphorically compared to the ἀηδών are: the Danaids (Aesch. *Supp.* 62), Cassandra (Aesch. *Ag.* 1145, 1146), the Women of Trachis (Soph. *Trach.* 963), Eriboea (Soph. *Aj.* 629), Electra (Soph. *El.* 107, 1077), Polyxena (Eur. *Hec.* 337), Helen (Eur. *Hel.* 1110) and Procne (Aesch. fr. 291 R; Eur. *Rhes.* 550, fr. 773,24 N).

17 Eur. 588,3 N.

18 The tragic characters metaphorically compared to the ὄρνις are Electra (Soph. *El.* 149), Deianira (Soph. *Trach.* 105) and Heracles (Eur. *HF* 1039).

19 See for a reconstruction of the myth of Procne, Philomela and Tereus: the *scholium* ad Ar. *Av.* 212; the *hypothesis* of the Sophoclean *Tereus* in the *P. Oxy.* 42, 3013; [Apollod.] *Bibl.* 3.195,6.

Procne and the two women decided to take vengeance. They slew, cooked and served Itys as a special feast for Tereus. As soon as Tereus discovered the truth, he tried to pursue the two sisters with murderous intentions. Zeus took pity and transformed them into birds: Procne became a nightingale, Philomela a swallow and Tereus a hoopoe.[20]

According to Sommerstein et al., there were two main traditions of the myth of Procne, 'both aetiologies explaining the nightingale's song'.[21] The first that would seem to develop from a Boeotian or Asian saga is the version attested in the Homeric tradition;[22] the second is the version provided by Sophocles in the *Tereus*, which is the only extant, though fragmentary, tragedy staging the mythological metamorphosis of Procne into a nightingale. In the *Odyssey*, the nightingale is evoked in the depiction of Penelope, who split between the defence of her household and the attack of her suitors is imagined to sing like Aedon, the personification of the nightingale.[23] Creating an emotional link between Penelope and Aedon, the nightingale is specifically connoted by a verb of mourning. In comparison with Penelope, Aedon's song is linguistically represented through the acoustic verb ὀλοφύρομαι,[24] which used transitively means 'I lament over, bewail', and intransitively 'I lament for the ills of others', hence 'I feel pity'.[25] By citing Pherecydes, the scholiast explains the metamorphosis of Aedon by the lamenting nature of the nightingale's song. Metamorphosed into a nightingale, Aedon θρηνεῖ δὲ ἀεί ποτε τὸν Ἴτυλον, 'forever laments Itylus'.[26]

Because of the intertextual relationship between the epic and the tragic versions of the myth of Procne, the nightingale has been generally interpreted as a symbol of female lamentation. Loraux connects the image of the

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20 For discussion of the myth of Procne, Philomela and Tereus, see Pearson (1917) 221-226; Chandler (1934) 78-84; Thompson (1966) 16-22, 95-121, 315-325; Dobrov (1993) 189-234, (2001) 105-132; March (2000) 119-139; Fitzpatrick (2001) 90-101; Monella (2005); Sommerstein et al. (2006) 141-159; Milo (2008) 7-20, 125-154; Scattolin (2012) 119-142.

21 Sommerstein et al. (2006) 142.

22 For examples of female laments in the Homeric epics, see Carruesco in this issue (2-3, 5-8 and 16-17).

23 Hom. *Od.* 19.518-529.

24 Hom. *Od.* 522.

25 Hom. *Il.* 8.33, 202, 16.450, 22.169; *Od.* 11.418.

26 Pherec. fr. 102 M.

nightingale with the myth of Procne in order to discuss the ritualised performance of female laments in ancient Greek tragedy. As she argues, the nightingale does not give voice only to bereaved mothers, but also to the suffering of all tragic heroines.[27] Similarly, Suksi compares the mythological metamorphosis of Procne with the stagecraft of tragic lamentation. Just as the gods transformed Procne into a mourning nightingale, Attic dramatists transmute horror and chaos into ordered and melodic compositions.[28] By specifically referring to fr. 583 R of the Sophoclean *Tereus*, Milo argues that Procne establishes the taxonomic form of tragic lament. This fragment, which she compares with the laments raised by other tragic heroines, namely Medea[29] and Deianira,[30] represents Procne as bewailing her misfortunes, status and disillusionment.[31] Given the lamenting nature of the song of the nightingale in ancient Greek tragedy, its connection with female vengeance requires further investigation.

3. The Tragic Reversal of the Myth of Procne

I turn now to the differences between the epic and the tragic versions of the myth of Procne to outline the vengeful connotations of the nightingale in Attic tragedy. The first difference appears in the representation of the mythological metamorphoses of Procne, Philomela and Tereus. Whereas in Homer Aedon is captured in her solitary transformation into a nightingale, on the Attic stage Procne is imagined as having abandoned her human aspect altogether, as her sister, and being pursued by her husband. However, the choice of bird in the representation of the metamorphoses of Procne and Philomela varies in the literary tradition. Since Hesiod, and especially in the Latin versions of the myth, the metamorphoses of the two sisters are inverted: Procne is transformed into a swallow and Philomela into a nightingale.[32] Moreover, the choice of bird in the mythological metamorphosis of Tereus varies within the tragic tradition. In fact, Procne is described as a

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27 Loraux (1998) 57-66.

28 Suksi (2001) 646-658.

29 Eur. *Med.* 214-230.

30 Soph. *Trach.* 144-150.

31 Milo (2008) 33-47.

32 Hes. *Op.* 564-569; Verg. *Ecl.* 6.78-81; *G.* 4.511-515; Ov. *Am.* 2.6, 7-10, Ov. *Met.* 6.494-676.

κιρκήλατος, 'hawk-chased', nightingale in Aeschylus.[33] Sophocles provides instead a new model, used in later versions of the myth.[34] As a result of Procne's revenge, Tereus is transformed into a hawk, from whose stomach Itys springs up in the form of a hoopoe. Transmitted by Aristotle in the section of the transformative changes of birds, fr. 581 R of the *Tereus* evidences the Sophoclean remodelling of the myth of Procne.[35] As Sommerstein et al. argue, Sophocles drew on earlier versions of the myth to stage the transformations of Procne and Philomela, but signalled a turning point in the literary tradition for the mythological metamorphosis of Tereus.[36]

Another difference in the comparison of the versions of the myth of Procne, Philomela and Tereus includes its geographical details. Whereas the Athenian origin of Procne is not in doubt, it is the location of her marriage with Tereus and of her consequent metamorphosis that varies. The Sophoclean *Tereus* sets the story of Procne, daughter of Pandion, king of Athens, in Thrace.[37] According to Thucydides, Teres, the founder of the empire that extended over Thrace, should not be confused with Tereus, the mythological husband of Procne.[38] Thucydides locates the marriage of Procne with Tereus in Daulis, rather than in Thrace. By justifying the poetic attribution of the epithet Δαυλιάς, 'woman of Daulis' to the nightingale, he argues that Tereus married Procne in Phocis, where the Thracians used to dwell. He adds that, because of their geographical distance, it is unlikely that Athens and Thrace cemented an alliance through the marriage of Procne. Likewise, Strabo refers to Daulis as the place from which Tereus was believed to derive before conquering Thrace.[39] In his mythological version, Pausanias sets

33 Aesch. *Supp.* 62; cf. Hes. *Op.* 203; Hyg. *Fab.* 45.

34 Soph. fr. 581 R; cf. Arist. *Av.* 209-214; [Apollod.] *Bibl.* 3.195,6-8.

35 Fr. 581 R, which Aristotle (*HA* 633a17-28) transmits and erroneously attributes to Aeschylus, has been interpreted as belonging to the Sophoclean *Tereus* by Walker (1893); Pearson (1917); De Dios (1983); Dobrov (1993) 189-234; (2001) 105-132; Monella (2005); Sommerstein et al. (2006); Milo (2008); Scattolin (2012) 119-141. The Sophoclean authorship of the fragment has been questioned by Burnett (1998) 183, Fitzpatrick (2001) 90-101 and March (2000) 119-139, who suggest it was composed by Philocles, Aeschylus' nephew.

36 Sommerstein et al. (2006) 142.

37 See the references to Thrace in the *hypothesis* of the Sophoclean *Tereus* (*P. Oxy.* 3013, 6,21).

38 Thuc. 2.29, 3.

39 Strab. 9.3, 13.

instead the marriage alliance between Procne and Tereus in the city of Megara.[40] From Milo's perspective, the reference to Megara is not surprising, when taking into account that it was the site of the heroic cult of Pandion and of the tomb of Tereus.[41] Nevertheless, as she argues, Daulis should be considered as the most archaic setting of the myth of Procne, and Thrace as a Sophoclean innovation that Thucydides criticises.

The last, but most significant difference to consider, is the motivation and modality of Procne's vengeance. In the earliest versions of the myth, it seems that Aedon, envious of the prolificacy of her sister-in-law Niobe, accidentally kills her own son Itylus. As attested in the Homeric depiction of Penelope, she is said to murder her own son δι' ἀφραδίας, 'on account of folly'.[42] In the tragic versions of the myth on the other hand, Procne commits infanticide as a deliberate act of vengeance. Despite the difficulty in determining whether this belonged to a different myth playing out comparable themes, it is the motif of jealousy that causes female vengeance both in the epic and tragic traditions. In the *hypothesis* of the Sophoclean *Tereus*, the term ζηλοτυπία, 'jealousy' is specifically used in the description of the vengeful reaction of Procne to the infidelity, rape and violence of Tereus.[43] According to Fontenrose, there were different stories revolving around double marriage and infanticide, which could have generated the myth of Procne.[44] He points out that female jealousy, when caused by the introduction of another woman within the family, brings about wrath and violence. Sommerstein et al. give emphasis to Philomela's rape to justify Procne's vengeance. In reaction to the violent act committed by Tereus against her sister, Procne vengefully kills her own son. Yet, as they argue, 'rape, or the avenging of rape, might not necessarily in itself guarantee the sympathy of the male audience'.[45] Milo also identifies rape, mutilation, infanticide and *teknophagia* as innovative themes in the Sophoclean representation of the myth of Procne. Commenting on fr. 589 R, she infers that the adjective

40 Paus. 10.4, 8.

41 Milo (2008) 11-12.

42 Hom. *Od.* 19.523; cf. Pherec. 102 M.

43 *P. Oxy.* 3013, 6,26.

44 Fontenrose (1948) 125.

45 Sommerstein et al. (2006) 153.

ἄνοος, 'without understanding',[46] refers not only to Tereus but also to the two sisters, and indicates their psychological and physical state of madness.

The intra-familial vengeful dynamics in which Procne, Philomela and Tereus are tragically involved have been explained in the light of the festival of Dionysus. Commenting on *Tereus*' fr. 595a R, Kiso argues that λίβανος, 'frankincense', which suggests a sacrificial scene, reveals the Dionysiac influence on the Sophoclean staging of the myth of Procne.[47] The term is also used by Euripides to denote the fragrant resin, burned as incense in honour of Dionysus.[48] In reference to the worship of the god in Thrace, Dobrov identifies the scene of recognition between Procne and Philomela before revenge is committed as a Sophoclean innovation. From his perspective, the woven robe, sent to Procne by her sister on the occasion of the Dionysiac festival, might have served to highlight the contrast between Thracian savagery and Greek civilisation.[49] Milo also debates to what extent Dionysus is involved in the vengeful act of Procne, with particular reference to fr. 586 R of Sophocles' *Tereus*.[50] She argues that the tapestry woven by Philomela might have been connected to a Thracian festival in honour of the god.[51] Filicide, dismemberment and cannibalism, which occur in both the cult of Dionysus and the myth of Procne, are identified by Burnett as particularly suitable themes for tragic plays. She specifically notes that 'the knife that Procne used to kill Itys is said to have been buried by the Erinyes under the tree where Agave was to kill Pentheus'.[52] McHardy also argues that the misdeed committed by Procne, just like that of other infanticidal mothers, is an appropriate tragic topic.[53] The tragic heroines metaphorically compared to Procne are represented as affected by a form of divinely inspired madness, although their acts of vengeance are committed rationally.

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46 Soph. fr. 589 R, 1.

47 Kiso (1984) 67-68.

48 Eur. *Bacch.* 144. For the use of frankincense and other sweet-smelling herbs in Roman religion see Clancy in this issue (103-106).

49 Dobrov (1993) 189-234.

50 Milo (2008) 62-63.

51 *Cf.* Ov. *Met.* 6.586-600.

52 Burnett (1998) 178; *cf.* Nonn. Dion. 44.265-276.

53 McHardy (2005) 129-150.

Drawing on these interpretations, I would add that the myth of Procne was adapted to the Dionysiac context of tragic plays to build up the characterisation of mourning avengers. Through a reversal of the mythological metamorphosis of Procne, Attic dramatists represent female characters as performing the lamenting song of the nightingale to prepare for a vengeful resolution. Whereas Procne becomes a nightingale to lament the death of her son after killing him, tragic heroines are compared or compare themselves to the nightingale to modulate their lament before vengeance is committed. Creating a dramaturgical moment of suspense, the simile of the nightingale foreshadows the tragic implications of female lamentation in revenge plots.

4. From Ritual Lamentations to Vengeful Laments

My reading of the nightingale-woman metaphor in ancient Greek tragedy is supported by gendered perspectives on ritual lamentation. As Seaford states, women played a fundamental role in death rituals, which the city-state was not only prescribed to celebrate, but also tried to restrict in the fifth century BCE.[54] Despite the necessity of honouring the dead through a collective experience of lament, funerary legislation was in fact promulgated to restrict female involvement in ritual mourning.[55] Alongside restrictive reforms to the celebration of female lamentation, there were an increasing number of funeral orations, where death in the service of the city was praised.[56] This change of attitude towards death and mourning in the fifth century BCE reveals what Loraux calls 'the invention of Athens'.[57] As she states, female lamentations were replaced with the ἐπιτάφιοι λόγοι, 'funeral orations', because of their political and social power in controlling public attitudes towards death.[58]

Classical scholars have extensively discussed why the democratic *polis* considered female laments dangerous and therefore attempted to control

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54 Seaford (1994) 74-105.

55 [Dem.] 43.62; Pl. *Leg.* 958d-60b; Plut. *Sol.* 21.6, Lyc. 27.1-3; *cf.* the funeral legislation discussed by Palmisciano (2017) 105-110, namely LSCG 97 (=LGS 93a), LSCG 77c (=LGS 74c); Cic. *Leg.* 2.64-66; Stob. 4.24; Diod. 11.38.

56 See, for example, Pericles' speech in Th. 2.34.

57 Loraux (1986) 15-41.

58 For discussion of the ἐπιτάφιος λόγος in classical Athens, see also Derderian (2001) 161-188, Marchiandi and Mari (2016) 177-201; Palmisciano (2017) 206-218.

them in the actual celebration of funeral rites. As Seaford explains, there were no economic reasons behind the political restrictions on female mourning. Rather, it was a social attempt to contain the aristocratic clan cults, which aimed to consolidate private property and heritage rights for the γένος. In the classical period, Athens tried to limit cases of rivalry between kinship groups, because the solidarity of the relatives of the deceased and its public manifestation was decisive in fostering civil conflicts.[59] Foley also argues that the political restrictions on female lamentation in the celebration of funeral rites were caused by its social implications. As she states, female 'mourners were thought prone to foment vendetta, to consolidate aristocratic political rivalries, or to undermine public rhetoric promoting war and other service to the state'.[60] According to McHardy, in the society of the fifth century BCE, where bloody feuds were rejected in favour of a kind of revenge through the laws, women were thought to be more conservative and bloody-thirsty than men.[61] Female lamentations were considered dangerous, since they were able to incite reciprocal violence and emphasise the concept of loss rather than the honour of dying in battle.[62]

The Athenian attempt to limit the prominence of women in death rituals and their public expression of grief has raised many questions regarding the tragic performance of ritual lamentation.[63] According to Foley, it did not correspond to contemporary Athenian ritual practices, but rather it reveals the continued gendered tensions in the transition from the aristocratic world to the democratic *polis*.[64] As Dué argues, since 'in recent years laments have been interpreted as powerful speech acts, capable of inciting violent action', it is necessary to redefine the representation of mourning in ancient Greek tragedy.[65] I argue that the vengeful implications of female lamentation are evidenced by the tragic employment of the nightingale met-

59 Seaford (1994) 74-105.

60 Foley (2001) 112; see also Marchiandi and Mari (2016) 183, 198.

61 McHardy (2004) 92-114.

62 See also Loraux (1986).

63 For discussion of the vengeful connotations of female lamentations in ancient Greek tragedy, see for instance Sultan (1993) 92-110; Billing (2007) 49-57; Stears (2008) 139-155.

64 Foley (2001) 19-56.

65 Dué (2012) 236.

aphor. The nightingale is evoked by Attic dramatists to represent tragic heroines who through ritual lamentation incite vengeance within and against their family. Its allusion to the mythological metamorphosis of Procne intensifies the transgressive role of mourning avengers in tragic plays staging intra-familial conflicts. When female characters reproduce the lamenting song of the nightingale, they actively participate in the vengeful dynamics of their household.

Through a comparison of ritual lamentations with tragic laments, it is possible to demonstrate the mediating function of the nightingale's song in the characterisation of mourning avengers. Alexiou outlines three kinds of female lamentations in the ancient Greek world: the θρῆνος, 'lament', the γόος, 'weeping', and the κομμός, 'choral lament'.[66] The θρῆνος, which is a lyric song modulated by professional groups of non-kin members, presented gnomic and consolatory elements.[67] The γόος, which is the solo song modulated by the kin of the dead, was characterised by inarticulate wailings and yells. The κομμός, which is a specific form of lament accompanied by wild gestures, was associated with Asiatic ecstasy. However, according to Alexiou, this archaic distinction disappeared in the classical period and a mixture of all three forms was used to express a poetic lament. This is shown by the employment of the nightingale in the tragic stagecraft of ritual lamentations. Its song in fact gives expression to the three forms of lamentations indiscriminately in female characterisation. When female characters compare themselves to or are compared to the nightingale, they perform a θρῆνος to give voice to their grief.[68] As the tragic product of their lamentation, the γόος sounds like the song of the nightingale.[69] They raise an οἶκτος, 'piteous wailing', to express their suffering, bereavement and loss.[70] The noun, which can also mean 'pity, compassion', specifically denotes the continuous and composite laments of tragic heroines. By merging these different forms of lamentation in the song of the nightingale, Attic dramatists stage the ritualised performance of the tragic laments of female characters.

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66 Alexiou (1974) 102-4; *cf.* Palmisciano (2017) 62-80.

67 See also Cannatà Fera (1990).

68 Aesch. fr. 291 R; Soph. *Aj.* 631, *El.* 10.

69 Aesch. *Supp.* 73, 116; fr. 291 S; Soph. *Aj.* 628; Eur. fr. 773,25 K.

70 Aesch. *Supp.* 59, 64; Eur. *Hec.* 519; cf. Soph. *Aj.* 525.

There is no evidence of the musical similarities between ritual lamentations and tragic laments. However, as Suter argues, from a metrical analysis it is possible to deduce that a tragic lament was performed 'in lyric or spoken meter', 'alone or with other characters', or 'in a κομμός with the Chorus'.[71] She specifies that in the common tradition a chorus accompanied a soloist, so that an imaginary dialogue between the dead and living could be created.[72] This is evident in the tragic laments performed by nightingale-like heroines on the Attic stage. Despite the difficulties in defining the relationship between female lamentation and tragic laments, the dominant role of the Chorus in directing the emotional response of the audience cannot be denied. Witnessing, accompanying, delivering warnings and supporting the lamenting speeches and songs of tragic heroines, the Chorus mediates the interpretation of the nightingale's song. By alluding to the mythological metamorphosis of Procne, Attic dramatists could metaphorically reproduce the nightingale's lament, thus translating a ritual performance into a dialogical response to death. In fact, when a tragic heroine associates herself with or is associated by the Chorus with the nightingale, the lamenting sound Ἴτυς, 'Itys', usually resonates. From Homer to tragedy the name of the slain child of Procne is employed as an interjection of grief,[73] and reproduces the effect of funeral mourning with its repetitions and alliterations.[74] Just as in ritual lamentations the name of the dead was repeated to compensate the loss of a beloved, the name of Procne's son is the tragic tune of female laments.

The dialogical nature of female lamentation is also evidenced by the linguistic description of the nightingale's song in ancient Greek tragedy. Defined as ἀοιδοτάτα ὄρνις, 'the most tuneful bird',[75] the nightingale is portrayed as clever and expertly arranges its song.[76] Its activity is expressed, for example, by the verb συντίθημι, 'I compose',[77] and by the verb μελοτυπέω, 'I strike up a strain, chant',[78] which consists of the noun μέλος,

71 Suter (2003) 3; *cf.* Palmisciano (2017) 222-224.

72 *Cf.* Palmisciano (2017) 7, 40, 48.

73 Hom. *Od.* 19.522; Aesch. *Ag.* 1144; Soph. *El.* 148; Eur. fr. 773,26 K.

74 Aesch. *Supp.* 112-6; see also De Martino (2008).

75 Eur. *Hel.* 1109-1110.

76 Eur. frr. 88,2, 588,3 N.

77 Aesch. *Supp.* 65.

78 Aesch. *Ag.* 1153.

'song', and the verb τυπόω, 'I model'. Just as a poet/musician crafts a composition, the tragic nightingale alternates λίγεια, 'acute',[79] with βαρέα, 'deep', notes.[80] Moreover, the polyphonic effect of the song of the nightingale is expressed through the employment of the adjectives ξουθός, 'shrill',[81] ὀξύφωνος, 'high-pitched',[82] and ὀξύτονος, 'sharp-sounding'.[83] Oxymoronic expressions, such as the νόμος ἄνομος, 'unmusical song',[84] referring to the call of the nightingale, suggest that tragic laments were perceived as denied or suppressed songs on the Attic stage.[85] The acoustic contrasts created by the tragic nightingale cannot be simply considered as the product of its musical virtuosity. I argue that its clear, shrilling, and polyphonic voice was considered particularly effective by Attic dramatists for giving voice to mourning avengers. In light of the mythological metamorphosis enacted by Procne, the nightingale is employed as a musical signal of a turning point in revenge plots.

In addition to the acoustic details of its performance, the song of the nightingale suggests the violent bodily expression of female lamentation. The tearing of cheeks,[86] the rending of hair and clothes,[87] the beating of breasts and the continuous shedding of tears,[88] distinctive gestures during the performance of real-world funeral rites, are deployed in the tragic characterisation of nightingale-like mourning women. By evoking the mythological metamorphosis of Procne, the nightingale expresses not only her grief at the death of her son. It recalls also her κότος, 'wrath' in taking revenge against her husband.[89] Thus, the subversive role played by women in inciting vengeance through lamentation was re-imagined in all its tragic

79 Aesch. *Ag.* 1146, 1154.

80 Aesch. *Supp.* 113.

81 Aesch. *Ag.* 1142.

82 Soph. *Tr.* 963.

83 Soph. *Aj.* 630.

84 Aesch. *Ag.* 1142.

85 For an interpretation of the νόμος ἄνομος and the 'denied song' in ancient Greek tragedy, see Verrall (1889) 131; Fraenkel (1950) 518; Fleming (1977) 222-233; Segal (1993) 16-21; Raeburn and Thomas (2011) 190; Fantuzzi (2007) 173-199.

86 Aesch. *Supp.* 70-71.

87 Aesch. *Supp.* 120-122.

88 Aesch. *Supp.* 113, *Ag.* 1143; Eur. *Hel.* 1110.

89 Aesch. *Supp.* 67.

implications for the Attic stage. By adapting the myth of Procne to the Dionysiac context of dramatic festivals, Attic dramatists could steer the action towards a vengeful resolution. Through a reversal in the causes and effects of the nightingale's song, tragic heroines are imagined to metaphorically abandon their human aspect in the passage from lament to revenge.

5. The Mourning Avenger Electra

Among the tragic heroines who are compared to the nightingale, the Sophoclean Electra is the most transgressive. By modulating the lamenting song of the nightingale, she actively participates in the vengeful act of matricide plotted and committed by Orestes. The gendered contradictions of the involvement of Electra in the cycle of revenge of the House of Atreus have been widely debated by classical scholars. Defined as 'at once the victim and the agent of the Furies', Electra challenges the gender ideologies of fifth-century Athenian society with her lamenting voice.[90] Burnett recognises the disturbing effect of the lament raised by Electra, but denies her an active role in the vengeful act of matricide. She distinguishes the impulse to revenge shown by Electra from the 'pragmatic, masculine plan' of Orestes.[91] In her analysis of the ethics of tragic lamentations, Foley defines instead the Sophoclean Electra as a 'sacrificial virgin', who actively participates in the matricidal act committed by Orestes.[92] She argues that Electra and Orestes do not respectively represent the female and male avengers of Agamemnon, but they do assume complementary roles in the slaughter of Clytemnestra. As Foley states, 'in Electra, female and male [...] pursue different paths until the final scenes bring them back together'.[93] The path followed by Electra is ritual lamentation, through which she can invoke and set the scene for the vengeful act of matricide.

The boundaries between past and present offence are blurred in the aggressive lamentation raised by Electra throughout the Sophoclean tragedy.

90 Winnington-Ingram (1980) 228.

91 Burnett (1998) 119-141.

92 Foley (2001) 145-171.

93 Foley (2001) 148.

According to Wheeler, the transgressive nature of Electra needs to be considered alongside the ambiguous representation of her sexual identity.[94] Depicted as a virgin affected by 'jealous frustration', 'passion and pique',[95] Electra performs a perverted form of marriage.[96] Wheeler argues that it is her παρθενεία, 'virginity', that might have unsettled the audience, by revealing 'male nervousness at the prospect of women escaping control'.[97] From his perspective, Electra does not assume quintessentially masculine attributes to incite and accomplish revenge, but her liminal status displays the complexity of her dramatic role. As he states, 'she is pugnacious yet motherly, emotional yet rational; she transgresses, but in defence of patriarchy and patriliny'.[98] The complex identity of Electra is also discussed by McHardy, who argues that mourning and nubility are the two main aspects of her defiant depiction.[99] Her performance of ritual lamentation as an unmarried girl would have been perceived not only as out of control, but also as threatening. Electra initially incites Orestes to revenge, but on learning about his death decides to take on his vengeful role. As McHardy explains, Electra transgresses gender boundaries by taking on the role of avenger. Wright provides a more nuanced interpretation of the vengeful identity of Electra:[100] rather than arguing for either a positive or negative reaction by the fifth-century Athenian audience, he focuses instead on the tragic representation of emotions in her controversial depiction. He observes that, despite the lamenting nature of Electra's voice, 'the number of references to positive emotions, such as joy or pleasure, is extraordinarily high'.[101] However, due to the tragic 'tendency to pervert positive experiences into negative ones', the joyful lament of Electra displays nothing but the disruption of the blood ties in her own household.[102] Belonging to the tradition of female lamentations, the opening monody of Electra expresses hopelessness,

94 Wheeler (2003) 377-388.

95 Wheeler (2003) 380.

96 For more details of the interpretation of the tragic representation of Electra as performing a perverted form of ritual marriage, see Seaford (1985) 315-323.

97 Wheeler (2003) 378.

98 Wheeler (2003) 383.

99 McHardy (2004) 92-114.

100 Wright (2005) 172-194.

101 Wright (2005) 177.

102 Wright (2005) 178.

despair and bereavement, on the one hand, and danger, power and violence, on the other.

Through analysis of the nightingale theme, it is possible to interpret the controversial identity of Electra, who through lamentation incites vengeance within and against her own household. The nightingale metaphorically occurs in ring composition, both at the beginning and the end of the Sophoclean tragedy, and serves to capture Electra in the dramatic passage from lament to revenge. Embedded in the vengeful dynamics of her family, Electra is depicted nightingale-like because of her unending lament for the death of Agamemnon. The intent of Electra is not only to mourn and preserve the memory of her father, but also to incite revenge against her mother Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus, both guilty of the man-slaughter. Waiting for her brother Orestes to avenge the archaic honour and the tragic misdeeds in her family, she opens the tragedy with an excessively prolonged lament. In the prologue, Orestes while plotting his deceitful plan of vengeance against Clytemnestra and Aegisthus hears weeping sounds.[103] Having started to wail off-stage, Electra enters to modulate a unique lyric song that assumes the tunes of the nightingale's lament. The fact that the tragedy stages a monody before the entrance of the Chorus highlights the lamenting song of Electra. By comparing herself with the nightingale, Electra cries out her suffering, as follows:[104]

> {ΗΛ.} Ἀλλ' οὐ μὲν δὴ
> λήξω θρήνων στυγερῶν τε γόων,
> ἔστ' ἂν παμφεγγεῖς ἄστρων
> ῥιπάς, λεύσσω δὲ τόδ' ἦμαρ,
> μὴ οὐ τεκνολέτειρ' ὥς τις ἀηδὼν
> ἐπὶ κωκυτῷ τῶνδε πατρώων
> πρὸ θυρῶν ἠχὼ πᾶσι προφωνεῖν·
>
> *El.* But I will never cease
> my wailing and bitter laments,
> as long as I see the resplendent rays
> of the stars and this daylight;
> like that nightingale, deprived of her child,

103 Soph. *El.* 77-81.

104 Soph. *El.* 103-109.

> I shall cry out in grief, for all to hear,
> at these doors of my father's house.

Electra's song establishes, from the beginning, a connection with the concept of death, which is enhanced by her prayer to chthonic deities, such as Hades, Persephone, Hermes and the Furies.[105] The polyptoton of the nouns γόος, 'wail' (81, 104), and θρῆνος, 'lament' (88, 94), emphasises the lamenting nature of her monody. Mediated by the image of the nightingale, the lament of Electra not only expresses her grief for the death of her father, but also describes her tragic condition. By evoking the myth of Procne, the nightingale gives voice to the dirges uttered by Electra in her lamentation. The indefinite article τις (107), which literally means 'some', is referring here to the nightingale, so that the connection between Electra and Procne can be established. Electra shares with Procne the status of deprivation, isolation and suffering. Having been deprived of her father, she is now waiting for her brother to take revenge against her mother.

Electra imitates the mourning song of the nightingale not only to commemorate her father's death, but also to denounce the crimes committed by her mother Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. By transgressing the democratic legislation on funeral rites, Electra manifests both her grief and anger publicly. She performs in fact ritual lamentation in front of the palace's entrance (108-9), so that she can be heard and seek revenge. The compound adjective τεκνολέτειρα (107), which is a Sophoclean *hapax*, creates a subtle connection between the vengeful lament of Electra and the mythological metamorphosis of Procne. It consists of the noun τέκνον, 'child', and the verb ὄλλυμι, which means 'I slay' in the active form and 'I lose' in the passive. For, the term has been translated either as 'child-slayer'[106] or as 'child-deprived'.[107] I argue that both despair and violence characterise the song of the nightingale in the comparison between Procne and Electra. The difference consists instead in the fact that, whereas Procne raises her lament after the death of her son, Electra modulates the lamenting song of the nightingale to anticipate the death of her mother.

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105 Soph. *El.* 110-112.

106 Jebb (1880); Dugdale (2008); Raeburn (2008).

107 Campbell (1881); March (2001); Roisman (2008).

The vengeful connotations of the lamenting song of the nightingale are acoustically conveyed in the tragic monody of Electra. With the accompaniment of the Chorus, she manifests both her suffering and anger for the death of her father to incite vengeance against her mother. Although the women of Mycenae warn Electra about the dangerousness of her lamentation, Electra carries on her performance, as follows: [108]

> {ΗΛ.} Νήπιος ὃς τῶν οἰκτρῶς
> οἰχομένων γονέων ἐπιλάθεται·
> ἀλλ' ἐμέ γ' ἃ στονόεσσ' ἄραρεν φρένας,
> ἃ Ἴτυν, αἰὲν Ἴτυν ὀλοφύρεται,
> ὄρνις ἀτυζομένα, Διὸς ἄγγελος.
>
> *El.* Foolish is the child who
> forgets parents pitifully dead;
> but more congenial to my mind is the mournful
> bird that laments for Itys, Itys, evermore,
> distraught for grief, the messenger of Zeus.

Electra ignores the warnings of the Chorus and justifies her lament as filial piety by evoking the nightingale's song. The nightingale is connoted by the adjective στονόεις (147), which can mean 'full of moaning',[109] but also have the factitive meaning of 'causing groans'.[110] The present participle of the verb ἀτύζομαι, 'distraught with grief' (149), emphasises the lamenting nature of Electra's song. By creating a connection with the Homeric depiction of Penelope,[111] the verb ὀλοφύρομαι, 'I lament' (148), suggests the modality through which Electra mourns the death of Agamemnon. Moreover, the name of the slain son of Procne is used as an interjection of grief. Encapsulated between the two accusative forms of Ἴτυς (148), the adverb αἰέν connotes the ever-lasting lament of Electra. The term, which in ancient Greek means 'forever', creates a dramatic connection between Electra and another mourning heroine. The concept of eternity, which justifies the excessive du-

108 Soph. *El.* 145-149.

109 Hom. *Il.* 24.721; Soph. *OT* 187, *Ant.* 114.

110 Hom. *Il.* 8.159, *Od.* 9.12, 11.383, 17.102, 21.60; Aesch. *Pers.* 1053; Soph. *Trach.* 886.

111 Hom. *Od.* 19.522.

ration of Electra's lamentation, is in fact enhanced by the mythological reference to Niobe (150-2). Transformed into 'a rocky grave', Niobe was believed to 'forever shed tears' after the death of her offspring.[112] By modulating the song of the nightingale and referring to the ceaseless tears of Niobe, Electra would have created a tragic effect of pathos in the audience. She does not intend to cease her lament until Orestes comes back home and takes revenge against their mother for the death of their father.

Employed in ring composition, the nightingale's song concludes the lament of Electra to prepare the scene for the vengeful act of matricide committed by Orestes. As soon as Electra is informed of the feigned death of her brother (929-80), she takes on the role of mourning avenger. She claims revenge, by invoking Nemesis (790), the personification of retribution, responsible for ensuring that wrong-doers receive their punishment. The reference to Nemesis emphasises not only the grief suffered and expressed by Electra, but also the disruptive impact of her lamentation on the tragic plot. When Electra tries to persuade her sister to join her in avenging their father, Chrysothemis replies: 'you were born a woman, not a man, your arm is weaker than your enemies' (998-9). In contrast to her sister, Electra shows her loyalty to the dead and her heroism in her desire for revenge. Thus, the Chorus comments on the vengeful intentions of Electra:[113]

> {ΧΟ.} [...] πρόδοτος δὲ μόνα σαλεύει
> Ἠλέκτρα, τὸν ἀεὶ πατρὸς
> δειλαία στενάχουσ', ὅπως
> ἁ πάνδυρτος ἀηδών,
> οὔτε τι τοῦ θανεῖν προμη-
> θὴς τό τε μὴ βλέπειν ἑτοί-
> μα, διδύμαν ἑλοῦσ' ἐρι-
> νύν· τίς ἂν εὔπατρις ὧδε βλάστοι;
>
> *Ch.* But betrayed, she endures the storm alone,
> Electra, forever the death of her father
> sorrowfully lamenting, like
> the plaintive nightingale,

112 *Cf.* the myth of Niobe in Hom. *Il.* XXIV 602ff; [Apoll.] *Bibl.* III 46.

113 Soph. *El.* 1074-1081.

with no care about death,
but ready to leave the light;
could she overcome the double Furies?
Who could be born so noble?

Deserted by Orestes and Chrysothemis, Electra is depicted, through a nautical metaphor, in her courage to 'endure the storm' (1074). She carries on performing the lamenting song of the nightingale to justify her vengeful intentions. Her suffering for the death of her father is expressed by the adjective δείλαιος (1076), which does not occur in Homer and is specifically used in tragedy with the meaning of 'wretched, sorry, paltry'.[114] Her wretched condition is also represented by the present participle of the verb στενάχω (1076), which is frequently used as 'I groan, sigh, wail' in the Homeric tradition,[115] and transitively as 'I bewail, lament' in tragedy.[116] Moreover, the adjective πάνδυρτος, 'all-plaintive', which can connote a song[117] and specifically a lament,[118] here is used by the Chorus to compare Electra to the nightingale (1077). However, the everlasting lament of Electra is interrupted by the recognition of Orestes at the end of the play. Freed from her perpetual waiting and suffering, she is asked by her brother to conceal her joy by carrying on her lamentation. From being an expression of grief and powerlessness, the lamenting song of the nightingale becomes the ominous sign that vengeance is about to happen. This is evidenced by the reference to the δίδυμη Ἐρινύς (1080), 'the double Erinys', the avenging deities in charge of punishing perjury, homicide, and unfilial conduct. This reference made by the Chorus is specifically used at the end of *Electra* to anticipate the killing of both Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. Without losing its transgressive connotations, the lament of Electra foreshadows the accomplishment of her vengeful intentions. Employed to create an effect of suspense in the fifth-century Athenian audience, the nightingale signals the dramatic passage from lament to revenge in the metamorphic depiction of Electra.

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114 Aesch. *Cho.* 517, *PV* 580; Soph. *Ant.* 1311, *El.* 758, *OC* 513, *OT* 1347; Eur. *Hec.* 156.

115 Hom. *Il.* 4.516, 8.334, 18.318, 23.317, 21.417, 24.123; *Od.* 8.95, 534.

116 Aesch. *PV* 99; *cf.* Eur. *Phoen.* 1551.

117 Aesch. *Pers.* 941.

118 Eur. *Hec.* 212.

6. Conclusion

Through a close analysis of the nightingale theme, it is possible to illuminate the emotional contradictions of female lamentation as performed in ancient Greek tragedy. The image of the nightingale gives voice both to the grief and anger of tragic women in response to death. By transgressing the norms prescribed by fifth-century Athenian funeral legislation, aimed at controlling the dangerous implications of ritual lamentation, Attic dramatists metaphorically reproduce the call of the nightingale in key moments of their tragic plays. Through discordant notes, they display the affected status of female characters, in order to provoke a tragic effect of suspense in their audience. When the plaintive, shrilling and sharp-sounding nightingale is evoked, female characters are transformed into mourning avengers. Through a reversal of the mythological metamorphosis of Procne, tragic heroines like the Sophoclean Electra are represented as performing ritual lamentation before revenge is committed. In fact, they metaphorically modulate the song of the nightingale in the dramaturgical passage from lament to revenge. This reading of the nightingale-woman metaphor in ancient Greek tragedy not only opens new perspectives to interpret the contradictory depiction of mourning avengers, but offers also ideas for modern adaptations and representations of Sophocles' *Electra*.

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Performing Grief: Mourning Does Indeed Become Electra

1. Introduction

ELECTRA's personal grief acts as an emotional hook that allows modern audiences to connect with Sophocles' ancient tragic heroine. It is precisely because her unique circumstances have isolated Electra from her community and placed her outside it that she appears so modern. In many of today's developed societies, the emotional journey of grieving for a dead loved one has become an increasingly solitary one. We are not taught how to deal with grief and death[1] and urban individualism exacerbates the problem.[2] In ancient Greece family and friends, as well as the wider community, supported the bereaved. Electra's case is unique for a number of reasons. Her father was murdered and improperly buried and her mother participated in the commission of the crime. This terrible injustice remains unavenged when Sophocles' drama opens. Electra has also been forced out of the center of power (her former status as royal princess) and made an outcast, shunned by her mother and on the outskirts of her community. Her response is a never-ending lamentation for her father and the terrible circumstances she has had to endure. Electra weaponizes grief, using words to fuel her desire for vengeance and as a strident reminder to the wider community that their rightful king was murdered and his power usurped.[3]

We cannot reconstruct the ancient audience's reactions to experiencing Sophocles' *Electra* in performance for the very first time, but we can put forward informed hypothesis based on our surviving evidence about ancient

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In Memoriam: Daphne Ayles (1932-2019), wonderful London landlady and friend.

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[1] Gunzburg (2019) 197 and Holst-Warhaft (1992) 11.

[2] Davies (2002) 22.

[3] For a detailed discussion of grief as a call to arms to take vengeance in Sophocles' drama see Abbattista's paper in this issue.

Greek values and beliefs. Electra is one of Greek tragedy's most transgressive tragic heroines, particularly in Sophocles' and Euripides' eponymous dramas,[4] because her grief is too intense, too long, and too personal. It transgresses ancient accepted norms for the display of grief and she never truly moves on from the personal phase of mourning (*goos*) to the communal (*thrēnos*) performed during the public phase of ancient funerary rites.[5] She is stuck,[6] and because she cannot even begin the process of reintegration back into her society she ends up trapped in this liminal phase.

As for modern audiences, recording spectators' reactions to watching a play remains challenging even with modern technology. As classical performance reception scholars we rely on theatre reviews and our own impressions of an ephemeral medium.[7] The recording and digitization process undertaken by a number of major theatre companies has greatly facilitated our research in recent decades, and this paper is an example of the type of work that repeated viewings of such archival resources now makes possible. Each recording of a theatrical performance comes with its own set of limitations, it is a record of one ephemeral performance and camera angles can and do restrict our field of vision and shape viewer response. Despite all these caveats Electra's grief dominates Sophocles' drama, both then and now, and how this is portrayed in performance determines audience reaction.

In this paper I draw on recent scholarship on ancient emotions, within a Cultural Studies framework, to examine the performance reception of Sophocles' *Electra* in modern Greece at the end of the last millennium. Sophocles' *Electra* is the most often-staged dramatic version of the story of Orestes' revenge featuring his sister. Modern Greece is no exception to this rule, but its claim of a 'special relationship' with ancient Greece complicates its reception of classical antiquity. On the modern Greek stage, the performance of ancient Greek drama has been characterised by an ongoing struggle between tradition and innovation. The traditional approach privileges 'authenticity', the attempt to bring the classical past to life on the theatrical stage, as part of a wider intellectual project that seeks to invest modern

[4] Arguably, Electra takes a more active role in Euripides' play. She places her hand on Orestes' sword as he kills Clytemnestra. Eur. *El.* 1224-25. See also Bakogianni (2011) 57-58.
[5] Giannopoulou (2017) 222.
[6] The mourning period in ancient Greece was thirty days. Stears (2008) 142.
[7] http://www.open.ac.uk/arts/research/greekplays/publications/essays/hardwick-using-reviews (accessed 20/11/2019).

Greece with the glamour and cultural capital of ancient Greece. More innovative approaches seek new ways of performing the ancient dramas in response to contemporary trends in world theatre. Theatre practitioners have to find their own place within this spectrum. The National Theatre of Greece has a long tradition of staging Sophocles' tragedy, but my focus in this paper is on two examples located on opposite ends of the tradition vs. innovation spectrum. Lydia Koniordou's *Electra* (1996) drew on the company's long tradition of performing ritual on stage to highlight the connections to ancient communal funerary rites. Dimitris Maurikios' production (1998), on the other hand, introduced a number of innovations to give audiences an intensely personal take on Electra's grief. Contrasting these two performances is an opportunity to revaluate our evidence for Sophocles' portrayal of Electra's grief and its impact on ancient and modern audiences.

2. Staging Electra's Grief in Modern Greece

In the twentieth century, the performance of ancient drama on the modern Greek stage was characterised by an increasing tension between traditional and more innovative approaches. At the National Theatre it was not until the end of the century that freer adaptations began to gain the upper hand,[8] although the glamour of 'authenticity' continues to cast its spell on the modern Greek stage, even in the twenty-first century. The desire to reproduce as closely as possible the original fifth-century BCE performance informs the quest of the proponents of the traditional approach to revive ancient Greek drama on the modern stage. Such attempts are inherently unrealisable, but both the belief in a continuous tradition that dates back to antiquity and its rejection help to illuminate modern Greece's relationship with the classical past.

Modern Greece offers us a distinctive example of the reception of ancient drama that testifies to the complications introduced by questions of national identity and vested ideological interests.[9] Conditioned by Western

[8] In a personal interview granted to the author (15/8/2015), Stathis Livathinos (Artistic Director of the National Theatre of Greece between 2015 and 2019) pinpointed 1994 as the year when the company finally changed direction and opened itself up to more innovative approaches.

[9] On Greek national identity see Gourgouris (1996). On the importance of names in the cultural construction of self-identity see Kaplanis (2014) 81-111.

Europe's rediscovery of the ancient world,[10] modern Greece constructed the new nation's identity on the belief that the modern state is the rightful inheritor of ancient Greece via Byzantium. As Antonis Petrides has argued: 'Modern Greek national and cultural identities consist, largely, of clusters of cultural memory shaped by an ongoing dialogue with the classical past'.[11] This belief in the continuity between ancient and modern Greeks is a widespread and longstanding attitude, cultivated for centuries by both foreign and Greek intellectuals,[12] which gradually trickled down to the wider public.[13]

On stage, the continuity argument translated into productions with archaising ambitions.[14] Early productions of ancient drama in the modern state date back to the nineteenth-century.[15] They tended to celebrate their self-proclaimed connection to ancient Greece and ideologically positioned modern Greek theatre as the inheritor of ancient Greek theatre. Early twentieth-century modern Greek directors were influenced by Austrian and German practitioners and contemporary theatrical trends in western Europe.[16] However, even these elements were enlisted in the performance of the 'special relationship'. Gradually, Greek theatre practitioners began to free themselves from the shackles of the search for authenticity and responded

[10] Western travellers to Greece in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries played a key role in this process. Brothers (2006) 9-19.
[11] Petrides (2017) 1-2.
[12] For the role played by intellectuals in shaping modern Greek identity, see: Ferris (2000), Güthenke (2008), Beaton (2009) and Van Steen (2010).
[13] On the reception of ancient Greece in modern Greek folklore and the oral tradition, see Kakridis (1997).
[14] For a recent analysis of the continuity debate and its impact on performance see Puchner (2017). He argues that Greek theatre is a unique 'study in discontinuities' (vii) and that a nuanced re-examination of the evidence reveals meaningful commonalities in the history of Greek theatre from ancient to modern times. For a summary of his arguments, see in particular 1-12 and 315-22.
[15] The first performance of an ancient drama featuring a mixture of professional actors and students was organised in 1867 by the University of Athens in the ruins of the Roman Odeum of Herod Atticus. It was a performance of Sophocles' *Antigone*, in a translation by Alexandros Rizos Rangavis, on the occasion of the wedding of King George I.
[16] For example, Dimitris Rondiris (an early National Theatre director, who subsequently became the company's Artistic Director between 1946-1950 and 1953-1955) studied under Max Reinhardt in Vienna (1930-1933). On the early history of Greek tragic performances in the Royal/National Theatre see Arvaniti (2010) and Antoniou on early productions of *Electra* (2011) 27-184.

more creatively to the challenge of staging ancient plays in the modern world.[17]

This clash of approaches to staging ancient drama in modern Greece was still being waged at the end of the last millennium, as can be demonstrated by a comparative analysis of the performance of Electra's grief in our two case studies. Linda Koniordou's production of *Electra* (1996),[18] which she both directed and starred in, added a new chapter to the National Theatre of Greece's long tradition of formalist productions of ancient Greek tragedy that highlight ritual elements and the chorus' interactions with the tragic protagonists.[19] In terms of staging Sophocles' drama in particular, this approach dates back to Dimitris Rondiris' landmark production of *Electra* (1936, and at Epidaurus in 1938),[20] using Ioannis Griparis' translation. Koniordou's production builds on this long tradition of performing Sophocles' drama by emphasising the relationship between Electra and the all-female chorus.[21] Dimitris Maurikios' 1998 production,[22] on the other hand, draws attention to Electra's isolation more strongly. As director, translator and dramaturg Maurikios deliberately sought to break with the modern Greek theatrical tradition for staging the ancient drama.[23]

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[17] On modern Greek reception history of ancient drama as a series of 'turns' and changes of direction, see Van Steen (2016) 201-220.

[18] This production was not digitised, but was recorded is included in the NTG's digital archive: http://www.nt-archive.gr/playDetails.aspx?playID=185 (accessed 04/07/2019). Due to legal reasons no photographs from this production can be reproduced.

[19] I am indebted to Giorgos Sampatakakis (Department of Theatre Studies, University of Patras) for sharing with me the manuscript of a forthcoming chapter on the chorus in modern Greek performance.

[20] Rondiris (1899-1981) returned a number of times to Sophocles' drama: http://www.nt-archive.gr/playDetails.aspx?playID=874 (accessed 04/07/2019). Another important production of *Electra* that he directed was with the Peiraikó Theatro (1959). While on tour in the UK, this production was filmed and shown on British television (1962). For more information, see Wrigley (2015) 55-66.

[21] A number of Greek theatre critics commented on the 'traditional' style of the production. Some did so in positive terms, praising Koniordou's 'respect for tradition' (Vangelis Psirakis in the *Apogeumatini* newspaper, 14/7/1996), while others condemned her production as too conservative, finding it 'passionless' and criticizing it for failing to engage them as spectators (Rozita Sokou also in *Apogeumatini*, 8/7/1996).

[22] http://www.nt-archive.gr/playDetails.aspx?playID=617 (accessed 04/07/2019). Due to legal reasons photographs from this production cannot be reproduced.

[23] For an in-depth analysis of Mauronitis' production from a Theatre Studies perspective, see Antoniou (2017) 127-142.

The main strength of Koniordou's production is the well-trained and choreographed chorus and its interactions with Electra. But that is also, in a sense, its main weakness as the chorus and the performance of ritual comes to dominate her interpretation and smooths away some of the rougher edges of Sophocles' tragic heroine. The members of the chorus enter first and set the scene. In Sophocles, the chorus enters after Electra's first appearance on stage, signalling their subordinate position to the tragic heroine who dominates the drama.[24] Koniordou draws attention to the importance of the Electra-chorus relationship by having them enter in a procession in her production's opening moments. She herself appears for the first time as Electra through a gap in the centre of the chorus and onto the middle of the stage. The chorus joins in her *thrēnos* and a close relationship between them is immediately established, both visually and aurally.

On a number of occasions throughout the performance, the chorus mirrors Electra's gestures and more generally, echoes and reinforces the sentiments of the heroine. Working in concert, they perform a kind of ritual dance with Electra as the loadstone. The chorus thus has an essential, but reactive role to play in this choreography. I offer two examples from the production to illustrate the Electra-chorus relationship. When the chorus advises Electra not to act in such an extreme manner, Koniordou faces away from them. The members of the chorus are positioned on the opposite end of the stage from the heroine, thus visually reinforcing Electra's rejection of their advice.[25] The chorus' sympathy for Electra is evident in the scene that follows the false news of Orestes' death. Koniordou falls to her knees and, in Giorgios Chimonas' translation, utters the despairing cry 'εγώ είμε η αφανισμένη' ('I am destroyed', although 'annihilated' also works, particularly in this context). The chorus stands at her back, but they draw closer in sympathy. The actress turns to face them, clutching her outer garment to her middle in an attitude of pain. The stage lights are lowered and Electra approaches a wide golden bowl that dominates the centre of the stage and acts as a focal point. Electra buries her face in her garment, veiling her pain from the eyes of the chorus.[26] The chorus mirrors Electra's great anguish,

[24] Soph. *El.* 86. Her first offstage cry is heard at l. 77. On the subordinate role of the chorus in the drama see Lloyd (2005) 38-39 and Finglass (2017) 499.
[25] Soph. *El.* 129-36.
[26] On the significance of this type of gesture in epic as a signal that a grieving in a solitary, non-normative manner, see Carruesco's discussion of Achilles (9-10 and 12) and Penelope (2-4) in this issue. For Electra in the iconographic record see below.

their hands are visibly trembling, and some of its members are on their knees. Their voices overlap as they desperately seek to comfort Electra who refuses to be touched, cutting herself off from all human contact, while she sinks back into her grief, now re-awakened by the 'death' of her brother, her last hope.

In Sophocles' famous urn scene, Electra performs an unnecessary lament over what she believes is the vessel that holds her brother's mortal remains.[27] In Koniordou's performance this includes a kind of cleansing ritual, where she anoints the urn with water from the bowl, as if she was cleansing the body of her brother and preparing it for burial. Washing the corpse and laying it out was one the religious duties assigned to women in the ancient world. The *prothesis* ritual was usually conducted in the privacy of the *oikos*, [28] before the more public *ekphora* (funeral procession followed by burial).[29] In Koniordou's production the ritual anointing of the urn mirrors an earlier moment in the performance when Clytemnestra (Aspasia Papathanasiou) throws water on her face after hearing that Orestes is dead. If the hope is that these rituals can cleanse the *miasma* (ritual pollution) of crime and death that envelops the House of the Atreidae, they not only fail,[30] but are actually unnecessary since Orestes lives.

These two key moments in the production reinforce the sense that this is a ritual occasion. Indeed, one could argue that the performance itself becomes a 'ritual', performing the National Theatre's relationship with Greek tragedy in the twentieth century. Modern Greek directors like Dimitris Rondiris, sought to revive ancient Greek drama by employing a 'Greek' performance style that stressed the continuities between the classical world, Byzantium and the modern state. [31] To that end, many directors sought to downplay foreign influences, stressing instead how their directorial vision was shaped by Byzantine and modern Greek folkloric elements. In terms of the performance of Electra's grief these included elements drawn from

[27] Soph. *El.* 1126-67.
[28] Stears (2008) 140-141.
[29] Stears (2008) 142.
[30] Cleansing blood polution through ritual acts of washing is an ancient tradition but for the modern Greek audience it also has Christian overtones.
[31] For an analysis of Rondiris' productions of *Electra* in terms of his desire to create a distinctive 'Greek' style of performance, see Roilou (2003) 200-253.

Greek lamentation practices, thought to have their roots in antiquity.[32] These include ritual gestures such as raising the arms to the head, beating one's breast, tearing off one's garments and the singing of *moirologia* (laments often performed by or in conjunction with professional mourners). Koniordou's approach to staging Sophocles' drama combined this rich tradition of the emotive display of grief with the National Theatre's signature performance style, whose features include stylised acting, choreography, and an emphasis on ritual.

Two years later, Dimitris Maurikios took a different approach to staging Electra's grief.[33] Seeking to position himself at the opposite end of the tradition vs. innovation spectrum vis-à-vis the National Theatre's long history of staging Sophocles' tragedy, he heightened Electra's isolation by more emphatically separating her from the chorus,[34] and he deliberately drew attention to his use of modern technology. One critic even described the production as theatre with cinematic special effects.[35] The most striking example of his use of technology was in reality a decoy. On the right-hand side of the stage, prominently displayed, was a lighting, sound and video console, normally found in a modern theatre's control booth. At first it appears to work and is operated by a technician with a headset, who turns out to be Pylades (Laertis Vasiliou). As the performance unfolds, however, it quickly becomes apparent that the board is not operational. When the plan to tell the false story of Orestes's death is discussed in the prologue, the console goes haywire prompting Orestes (Nikos Karathanos) to rush to his aid. But the story of the House of Atreus cannot be controlled as its members continue to murder one another. As the performance unfolds the console is transformed into an altar and a visual reminder of Agamemnon's tomb that Electra does not get to visit in Sophocles' play.

Two other notable multi-media features in the production were the soundscape and the dramatic use of lighting. A crack of thunder officially began the performance, although in a nice metatheatrical touch the

[32] On ancient mourning rites and their commonalities with modern Greek practises, see Alexiou (1974, rev. 2002), Holst-Warhaft (1992) and Sutter's edited collection.

[33] His was not the only *Electra* at Epidaurus in the summer of 1998. The other was a production by the experimental theatre company 'diplous eros', directed by Michalis Marmarinos and starring Amalia Moutousi. For more information, see Antoniou (2011) 332-341.

[34] This is discussed further below.

[35] Listed only as 'χ.σ.' (*Ethnos* newspaper, 24/08/1998).

audience were treated to the chorus' pre-performance warm-up, reminding spectators that they were in fact about to watch a play. Loud, sharp sounds punctuated the performance, contributing aurally to its disquieting effect. When the false story of Orestes' death in a chariot race at the Pythian Games was re-told,[36] sounds of hoofbeats, neighing and other sounds associated with the popular ancient sport were played over the sound system, accompanied by video footage to strengthen the illusion that this fatal accident really happened. This is a notable feature of Sophocles' drama, where the *paidagogos* builds up a masterful false narrative for the benefit of Clytemnestra. Maurikios alternated light, darkness and deep shadows to great effect in his production. The performance begins and ends in near darkness, as if the horrible crimes in the royal family cast a visible pall of darkness over the city. Beams of light throw some light onto the actors at key moments [for example, as Orestes is forcing Aegisthus (Aristotelis Aposkitis) into the palace to kill him], but at other times it was hard to work out what was happening on stage. This, however, serves to reinforce the overall effect of uncanniness.

At the heart of Maurikios' production stands the popular film, television and stage star Kariofillia Karabeti as Electra. Karabeti is well-known to modern Greek theatre audiences for playing many of the famous ancient tragic heroines (she was Medea the previous year).[37] Karabeti gives a disturbing and edgy performance in the central role. Her Electra is positioned closer to the ground, performing the Sophoclean Electra's wish to join her family in the underworld.[38] Karabeti is prostrate, face down, lamenting her 'curse', when the chorus enter. When she complains of her miserable circumstances she crawls along the ground. Even her costume, looks heavy and cumbersome. When she first appears Karabeti is wearing a heavy overcoat with a large shawl wrapped round her neck, her hair confined in a tightly bound scarf with a chin strap that resembles the bindings used to wrap a corpse's head. Visually these elements symbolise the heavy burden of grief she is carrying.

The juxtaposition between the tragic heroine and the chorus is sharper in this production, further isolating Electra and depriving her of even that

[36] Soph. *El.* 680-763.
[37] For an analysis of this production and its deliberate mix of Japanese and modern Greek theatrical elements, see Bakogianni (2013) 197-212.
[38] Soph. *El.* 820-822.

small connection to her community. In Sophocles, the chorus is Electra's only source of support for the majority of the play.[39] Maurikios added a new character, a blind old female seer (Lina Lambraki), dressed in a costume that resembles the bindings used to wrap a corpse, signalling her close association with death. This uncanny female with supernatural powers is portrayed as the only character in the Maurikios' directorial vision, who can penetrate the darkness cast by the crimes of the Atreidae.[40] The role of chorus leader is shared by Lambraki and another actress (Margarita Tzepa, who also has two facets to her character, the second being that of nurse).[41] This division of the role of the chorus leader fragments the cohesion of the chorus. Electra's attention as well as that of the audience is also divided and emphasis is placed on individual relationships rather than collective ones. The fragmentation of the theatrical space itself by the use of lighting further reinforces not only Electra's distance from the chorus, but also all the characters from each other, including the different members of the chorus. Maurikios' approach contrasts sharply with the closer relationship Koniordou enjoyed with the chorus in her production. It might only be a matter of degree, but in performance small changes have a big impact.

Karabeti plays Electra as a woman so traumatised by her father's murder that she exhibits characteristic Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms.[42] She feels trapped in a miasma of bad thoughts, dwells constantly on the unfairness of her circumstances, has a dark view of the world, is disconnected from her community and when she thinks Orestes is dead she loses all hope. Electra's intense mourning keeps her constantly on edge and she is aggressive in thought and plans to be in deed. Sophocles' Electra is prepared to kill Aegisthus and Clytemnestra even at the cost of her own life.[43] Although this is admittedly an anachronistic framework to apply to

[39] Lloyd (2005) 38.

[40] This adds an Aeschylean touch to Maurikios' production, a glimpse of the wider implications of the family curse. The female prophetess is also reminiscant of Teiresias in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*.

[41] Antoniou (2017) 139.

[42] The first edition of the DSM to include PTSD is DSM-III published in 1980 https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/what/history_ptsd.asp (accessed 20/11/2019).

[43] Symptoms of PTSD include: flashbacks, bad dreams, bad thoughts, feeling emotionally numb, guilt, depression, worry, showing no interest in activities one enjoyed in the past, having trouble remembering the traumatic event, feelings of helplessness, dwelling on the unfairness of the situation, distrust, viewing the world as malevolent, no hope for the future, alienation, no sense of identification with others (terminal uniqueness) difficulty returning

an ancient Greek tragedy, there is a case to be made for a meaningful connection, both in terms of relating Electra to modern performative trends, but also understanding why modern audiences find Electra such a disturbing character. When that is, she is allowed to give full rein to the intensity of her grief, rage and desire for vengeance, as she is in this production.

Maurikios' production challenged the National Theatre's signature style of acting, and was not as concerned with 'authenticity', which caused some controversy in the Greek press.[44] Karabeti's portrayal of the tragic heroine also divided the critics with some praising her performance of Electra's grief while others found it too extreme. The language in which criticism of Mauronitis' production and Karabeti's performance of Electra's grief is couched offers us a snapshot of the public debate surrounding the clash between traditional and innovative approaches to staging Greek tragedy on the modern Greek stage at the end of the last millennium. Some theatre critics took exception to the modern elements that Maurikios introduced into the production, which they thought pointless and/or distracting.[45] One reviewer singled out Karabeti's lamentation scenes for particular criticism. He labelled her performance during these moments of high emotion as 'hysterical', and not befitting the performance of a classical drama at the ancient theatre at Epidaurus. Another reviewer criticised Mauronitis for undertaking the translation of the ancient drama himself,[46] rather than commissioning a scholar to produce one for him, or using an existing one. The underlying message of these criticisms being that there is a 'right' way to perform Greek tragedy and Mauronitis and Karabeti did not adhere to it. In an earlier phase of their history the company would have been less accepting of productions that pushed boundaries in this way. But, in the closing years of the twentieth century, the National Theatre of Greece was in a position to

into normal life, lack of attachments/broken attachments. Another pertinent symptom for our discussion is hyper-vigilance, the subject is easily startled, is constantly on edge, experiences sleep problems, and can become aggressive in both thought and deed. https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/ptsd/what-is-ptsd (accessed 22/11/2019).

[44] On the production's reception see also Antoniou (2017) 141-142.

[45] Stella Loizou, argued that these modern elements were not properly intergrated into a convincing directorial vision (*To Vima* newspaper, 30/08/1998).

[46] Matina Kaltaki in *Ependitis* newspaper (19/09/1998). Maurikios even added lines taken from the modern Greek poet George Seferis's poem *Mythistorema* (section 16) to his performance text. This was an innovation that challenged the notion of fidelity to the ancient source texts, so important to many conservative modern Greek theatre critics.

accommodate productions at different points on the tradition vs. innovation spectrum.

3. Electra, Greek Tragedy's Mourner *par excellence*

Even in a 'highly emotional genre'[47] like Greek tragedy, Sophocles' portrayal of Electra's grief stands out because of its intensity. The different ways in which Lydia Koniordou and Dimitrios Mauronitis responded to the question of how best to perform Electra's grief for their audiences at the end of the last millennium, forms but one chapter in a much larger debate about how to portray emotion effectively on stage. Koniordou and Mauronitis highlighted particular aspects of Electra's grief, while downplaying others, within a specifically modern Greek cultural, political and social context. The fact that these productions were filmed means that it is still possible to watch and analyse them in detail. Contemporary theatre reviews also offer us a glimpse of how their audiences reacted. But what about ancient audiences, where such evidence is lacking and we rely almost entirely on internal evidence from our ancient dramatic source texts? If we adopt a Cultural Studies perspective we can synthesize a theoretical and methodological framework that allows us to approach this thorny, and essentially unanswerable question, from a number of different angles.[48] What follows is just such an experimental attempt that uses the portrayal of Electra's grief in our two modern Greek case studies, as a way into reflecting on its portrayal in Sophocles' drama and its impact on the ancient audience.

Grief is generally believed to be a universal emotion that all human beings can relate to. But as David Konstan has argued with reference to classical texts, grief is conditioned by cultural, moral and social values, beliefs and norms.[49] We cannot divorce the performance of Electra's grief from its fifth-century BCE historical, political and socio-cultural context. But translocating it to a different time and place helps us to tease out some of the commonalities and differences, and allows us to revisit the question of

[47] Wright (2005) 174.
[48] On the difficulties involved when we are 'considering the possible reponses of those who inhabited a very different culture from our own', see Yearling (2018) 130. She is discussing Shakespearean drama, but her observation applies even more forcibly to Greek tragedy, which is seperated from us by nearly two and a half millenia, instead of a mere 400 years.
[49] Konstan (2006) 4-5. On the importance of considering how such contexts affect the act of spectating from a Cultural Studies point of view, see Yearling (2018) 129.

audience response both in antiquity and in the later period(s). Finally, it testifies to the continuing appeal of the tragic heroine. Modern audiences might experience and interpret Sophocles' drama in different ways than ancient audiences, but the theatrical spectacle of Electra's grief continues to enthral and appal.

Electra's status as Greek tragedy's mourner *par excellence* is attested to in the pictorial record.[50] Most of our evidence comes from ancient pottery, but we cannot tell which of her representations refer to the myth of Electra, and which depict specific scenes from the Greek plays in which she features.[51] Once Electra made her debut on the fifth-century BCE Athenian stage, her visibility in art rose dramatically. By far the most popular scene is the meeting of brother and sister at the tomb of Agamemnon.[52] The earliest surviving examples of vases that depict this meeting date to c. 440 BCE,[53] but the scene was particularly popular in the fourth-century,[54] especially among south-Italian painters.[55] Taplin argues that the depiction of the meeting of brother and sister on a Lucanian *bell-krater* (c. 350s BCE)[56] could be 'plausibly related to the urn scene' in Sophocles' *Electra*.[57] The attribution is reinforced because one of the male figures on this vase is carrying an urn that he presents to a veiled woman who is standing in front of a column. The urn that supposedly contains the ashes of Orestes is an essential theatrical prop in Sophocles' tragedy. Electra's moving, although entirely unnecessary, lament is one of the highlights of Sophocles' dramatic version.[58] The

[50] On the depiction of Electra in ancient art, see LIMC, 1986, III1: 709-19 and III 2: 543-49 and 801. Knoepfler (1993) 58-65 (Electra and Orestes at the tomb of Agamemnon) and 96 (fresco of Electra at the tomb of Agamemnon from an ancient villa in Egypt). Taplin, (2007a) 50-56 and plates 1- 4 for Aeschylus' *Choephori*, 96-97 and plate 25 for Sophocles' *Electra*. See also Bakogianni (2011) 20-29.

[51] On the difficulties of relating vase scenes to our dramatic texts see (2007a) 2-4 and (2007b) 178-79.

[52] Taplin (2007a) 96 and March (2004) 10.

[53] Taplin (1997) 72.

[54] Lucanian *pelike*, c. 350 BCE: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Orestes_Elektra_Hermes_Louvre_K544.jpg (accessed 25/11/2019).

[55] On the popularity of scenes from tragedy among south-Italian potters, see Taplin (1997) 88-90.

[56] Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum (ANSA IV 689) https://www.khm.at/objektdatenbank/detail/57936/ (accessed 25/11/2019).

[57] Taplin (2007) 96-97.

[58] Soph. *El.* 1126-70.

inclusion of the urn suggests that the artist used Sophocles' drama as his source of inspiration. There are also some vases that depict Electra alone at the tomb of her father in a mourning attitude.[59] This depiction of Electra without her brother emphasises her devotion to her dead father and highlights her isolation. Such scenes would also have had 'a general appeal for the market for funerary offerings'.[60]

Electra's relationship with the chorus and on-stage ritual, are crucial to understanding modern Greek audience response to the performance of grief in Koniordou's and Maurikios' productions. In what follows, I outline some of the key elements in our Sophoclean source text that would have conditioned the ancient audience's response.[61] Audience members in antiquity (and in later periods), can take a measure of consolation from the fact that they are watching the Sophoclean tragic heroine's suffering, rather than experiencing it for themselves. This would have been especially true for those members of the audience who had recently suffered the death of a loved one.[62] Having said that, the Sophoclean version of the tragic heroine would have been particularly disturbing for ancient audiences because she violates so many societal norms. Electra has been mourning for so long that her never-ending grief has transformed her into an outcast. To be cut off from one's community was a terrible fate in ancient Greece and was used as a deterrent to bad behaviour. Electra chose her path willingly and refuses to change course, despite both the chorus' advice to moderate her behaviour and Clytemnestra's admonitions. In other words, Electra has, at least to a degree, brought her suffering upon herself.[63]

[59] On the popularity of depictions of Electra and Penelope as mournful female figures in ancient Greek art, see Robertson (1981) 60. On Penelope's iconography, see also Carruesco in this issue (2 and 16-17).
[60] Taplin (1997) 72.
[61] Our lack of evidence makes it nigh impossible to account for the 'diverse and mixed responses' [Yearling (2018) 131] to Electra's grief that different audience members would have experienced in the theatre of Dionysus, when the drama was first performed. I do mostly refer to the ancient audience in a homogenizing way, but acknowledge that this does not do justice to the richness and variety of ancient audience responses.
[62] Munteanu calls this the 'practical purpose' of these tragic narratives: (2017) 79.
[63] Wheeler (2003) 378.

Electra problematises her own behaviour, by reporting her mother's words,[64] leading the audience to reflect on how and why she mourns so deeply in Sophocles' drama:

> ὦ δύσθεον μίσημα, σοὶ μόνῃ πατὴρ / τέθνηκεν; ἄλλος δ' οὔτις ἐν πένθει βροτῶν; / κακῶς ὄλοιο, μηδέ σ' ἐκ γόων ποτὲ / τῶν νῦν ἀπαλλάξειαν οἱ κάτω θεοί.[65]
>
> Oh godless, hated being, do you think you are the only who has / lost a father? Does no other mortal mourn a death; / May you be destroyed, and may the gods of the underworld / never release you from your weeping.

Electra argues that her grief is exceptional, because of the unique circumstances surrounding her father's death. She continues to mourn precisely because she is convinced that her grief is not like that of other people, but deeper and therefore unique. This belief isolates her from her community and leads her to reject all attempts to console her, even by the sympathetic chorus.[66] For ancient spectators, Electra's self-proclaimed exceptionalism and defiance would have been especially problematic. She is knowingly breaking the rules of her society, [67] as she herself admits to the chorus,[68] and even to her mother.[69] Sophocles' Electra has become addicted to mourning,[70] especially the public performance of her grief, as it gives her the only small measure of emotional release she enjoys until Orestes avenges their father near the end of the play. But given how long she has been stuck in this liminal place of never-ending grief, it is doubtful that even the fulfilment of

[64] We cannot be sure that Electra is a reliable narrator, but the verbal confrontations between mother and daughter that follow, suggest that she accurately represents Clytemnestra's point of view.
[65] Soph. *El.* 289-92.
[66] For Electra's steadfast rejection of all consolation, see Munteanu (2017) 82-92.
[67] On Electra's self-awareness see Lloyd (2005) 83-84.
[68] ἐν δεινοῖς δείν' ἠναγκάσθην· / ἔξοιδ', οὐ λάθει μ' ὀργά. 'I resorted to fearful deeds born out of terrible suffering; / The truth about my disposition does not elude my notice.' Soph. *El.* 221-22.
[69] Soph. *El.* 605-609.
[70] Wheeler (2003) 379 and Wright (2005) 182.

all her hopes will alter her underlying condition.[71] Sophocles' Electra is damaged beyond repair by her performance of grief. To mourn, as Electra does, is also a call for revenge and an act of vengeance. Electra hopes that her mourning will summon her brother home to fulfil his duty to avenge their father. Her never-ending lamentation hurts Clytemnestra's standing in the city and is an uncomfortable reminder of the queen's past criminal behaviour. She would not mistreat or verbally attack her daughter, if Electra's words did not hit their target.

Electra's only power might lie in her words, but they are also the source of all her troubles. The anthropologist and theologist Douglas J. Davies calls attention to the importance of 'ritual language' in funerals, as a key coping mechanism for those left behind.[72] The closer the relationship with the dead person, the worse the burden of grief and the greater the need for 'words against death'.[73] But, Electra's words are not adequate to the task because her father's death ritual remains incomplete until his murder is avenged. The fact that the vengeance has been delayed for so many years stretches out the mourning period for Electra, well beyond ancient norms. As we have seen, her despair further isolates her from her community, who has accepted the rule of his murderers, while she remains trapped in grief, longing for a past way of life that has been irrevocably lost. The second reason why her words are ineffective is that ancient and modern funerals are construed as public events that should involve a network of family, friends and members of the community.[74] Electra mourns alone, long after her father's death and even the sympathetic chorus of Sophocles' *Electra* tell her she is grieving excessively.[75] They advise the tragic heroine to curtail her lamentations for her own sake, but Electra, fuelled by a potent cocktail of grief and anger refuses to listen. In the end the chorus give in and agrees to follow her lead;[76] an early indication of the power of Electra's rhetoric over the all-female chorus.[77]

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[71] Wright (2005) 192-194.
[72] Davies (2002) 1-4.
[73] Davies (2002) 1.
[74] Davies (2002) 7-8 and 16-17.
[75] Soph. El. 137-144, 213-220 and 233-235.
[76] Soph. *El.* 251-253.
[77] Soph. *El.* 1081-89. Gardiner stresses the importance of the chorus' support of Electra at this critical point despite their earlier words of caution. Gardiner (1987) 154. See also Burton (1980) 208-9 and March (2004) 14.

The attempt to limit female lamentation in the archaic and classical times testifies to the power of female lament and how patriarchal societies sought to bring it under control.[78] Electra, supported by an all-female chorus in performing her grief, is a force to be reckoned with.[79] Her relationship with the chorus in Sophocles' drama, and how this is performed, shapes audience response to Electra's grief. His Electra's long isolation from her family means that she is no longer capable of interacting fully with other members of her society, even the sympathetic chorus. When Electra believes her brother dead, not even the chorus is able to comfort her.[80] What adds significantly to Electra's distress is that she did not have the opportunity to bury Orestes herself, and send him to the underworld with full mourning rites.[81] What happened to her father, now appears to be happening to her brother. The opportunity to fulfil her religious ritual duties is thus denied Electra. All the chorus can do, is to join in with her as she laments.

Orestes' decision to deceive even his sister about his 'death', further isolates Electra and pushes her closer towards becoming her father's avenger;[82] in deed as well as in word. This aspect of Sophocles' portrayal of Electra, her bloodthirsty desire for vengeance, is one that modern audiences tend to find more disconcerting than her endless mourning. Ancient audiences are more likely to have sympathised with Electra's desire for revenge, despite her gender, because there was a strong societal and moral obligation to avenge crimes committed against ones' *philoi*.[83] Family and friends normally fell into this category, but the Atreidae are a family where kin, has turned against kin. Electra is firmly on the side of her father and brother. When she believes Orestes to be dead, Electra proposes to Chrysothemis that they avenge their father themselves,[84] knowing full well that any such attempt will most likely result in their own deaths. As Agamemnon's only surviving children (or so Electra thinks), they cannot let their father's

[78] On the legislation restricting female lamentation, see Stears (2008) 143 and Hall (2010) 74-75.
[79] On the affective capacity of music and of the human voice, see Strumbl (2018) 205-225. She refers to modern examples, but her discussion of how music and singing can affect the body and shape its emotional response is worth exploring further in relation to the performance of Electra's grief.
[80] Soph. *El.* 834-36.
[81] Soph. *El.* 869-70.
[82] Ringer (1998) 164.
[83] Blundell (1989).
[84] Soph. *El.* 954-57. See also McHardy (2008) 11.

murder go unpunished.[85] Sophocles' heroine thus moves from a suicidal desire to join her brother in death, to a suicidal desire to try to avenge her father, and back again. Her mind is disordered and her behaviour extreme.

The construction of gender roles and ancient Greek society's view on normative female behaviour is essential for understanding how transgressive Electra would have appeared to an ancient audience. As Sophocles' Electra herself admits, she is only able to grieve out in the open, because Aegisthus is away.[86] The fact that she remains outdoors/on stage for nearly the entire play is a direct challenge to his authority, as the *kurios* of both her *oikos* and the city (even if he is a usurper in both the private and the public spheres of Electra's life). The ancient audiences' negative responses to Electra's grief were further reinforced by contemporary medical thinking. Women's health was interconnected with their primary function in society, producing children to perpetuate the family bloodline.[87] But Aegisthus and Clytemnestra have forbidden Electra from marrying, because any noble-born male child that she produced is a potential avenger.[88] As Edith Hall argues 'every single transgressive woman in tragedy is temporarily or permanently husbandless'.[89] It was believed that women, like Electra, who remained unmarried would eventually go mad.[90] The extreme emotions of Sophocles' Electra is a cautionary tale that reinforces ancient gender norms.

Just as the Sophoclean Electra is poised on the verge of action, Orestes returns in disguise with the urn that supposedly contains his ashes.[91] This destroys Electra's heroic resolve and throws her back into fresh paroxysms of grief.[92] Ultimately, even Sophocles' Electra returns to her traditional role

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[85] For Electra's role as *epikleros* see Ormand (1999) 72-73 and Foley (2001) 162-63. Foley refers to modern cases from Corsica, Mani and Albania where women have carried on a vendetta themselves because all their male relatives had died.

[86] *El.* 310-13. Dunn explores the key question of what sort of space Electra occupies in this tragedy. He argues that she is actually 'nowhere', which only serves to reinforce Sophocles' portrayal of Electra as someone who is permanently excluded. Dunn (2009) 345-55.

[87] Hipp. *De Mul.* viii.12-22, 30-34, 60-62, 64-68, 78 and 126. According to the Hippocratic corpus and Aristotle 'the female body is shaped to procreate and, only if it procreates, can it be healthy'. Sissa (2013) 106.

[88] For other mythical examples of the fear of a daughter's child, see Hall (2010) 263-64.

[89] Hall (2010) 128.

[90] Hipp. *De Virg.* viii 466-70.

[91] For a discussion of how Electra 'nearly upstages Orestes as avenging hero' see Foley (2001) 163.

[92] Soph. *El.* 1126-70.

as the 'arch mourner of Greek tragedy',[93] and once again she gives voice to a desire for death.[94] Orestes's decision to reveal his true identity, makes Electra's assumption of the role of the avenger 'unnecessary'[95] and after the *anagnorisis* scene, Electra is relegated to the more traditional role of a 'female supporter'.[96] But such is the intensity of Sophoclean Electra's hatred for her mother that when she follows her brother into the palace even the ancient audience would have been in a state of suspense about whether she would actively participate in the act of matricide.[97] Instead, she comes out again to act as a messenger to the chorus, but remains emotionally involved with Orestes' action. Her shocking, obsessive cry 'παῖσον, εἰ σθένεις, διπλῆν'[98] (Strike with redoubled force, if you have the strength) captures her joy in the accomplishment of the longed-for vengeance. The intensity of her passion, and the fact that through her interactions with the chorus she acts as an emotional conduit to the audience, makes Electra feel like she is killing Clytemnestra herself.[99] There is no time to contemplate the matricide in Sophocles' drama,[100] before Electra has to help her brother lure Aegisthus to his death.[101] Electra anticipates her release from all her troubles, but the play ends without a re-enactment of this resolution on stage.[102] I agree with the 'dark' interpretation of Sophocles' ending, as a prelude to more suffering for Electra and her brother. How can it be otherwise when the proper funerary rituals were never observed, and Electra's grief has permanently damaged her relationship with her family and the chorus.

[93] Ringer (1998) 187.

[94] Soph. *El.* 1168-70.

[95] Ringer (1998) 180.

[96] Foley (2001) 166 -167 and McHardy (2008) 109.

[97] Electra goes into the palace after l. 1383, but returns after the choral interlude, which ends with l. 1397. On the question of when exactly Electra leaves the stage in Sophocles' play, see Dunn (2009) 352. He believes that the chorus address the last lines of the play to both Orestes and his sister: n. 13 on p. 352. If this was indeed the case then Electra acts as a silent witness to the ending of the play, but is excluded from the action.

[98] Soph. *El.* 1416.

[99] Blundell (1989) 175 and Ringer (1998) 201.

[100] Even March admits this despite her 'light' reading of the play: (2001) 18.

[101] Ringer (1998) 209.

[102] Wright (2005) 172.

4. Conclusion

Over the long course of her reception history,[103] the tragic heroine Electra, has come to both embody and symbolize mourning. In the visual and performative arts, she exemplifies the otherness and isolation produced by extreme states of grief. In the post-classical era her passionate anger and desire for vengeance was whitewashed thus confining her to the more passive role of mourner, deemed more acceptable for women.[104] Beginning in the nineteenth century but gathering momentum in the twentieth with the popularity of psychoanalysis the process of unleashing Electra's anger returned to the fore of her reception especially on stage and in the visual arts.[105] Sophocles' portrayal of the tragic heroine was instrumental in this transformation. Mourning does indeed become Electra, but let us not forget so does vengeance. Balancing these two elements is what gives the Sophoclean' Electra's grief its particular power to emotionally engage audiences.

The study of the history of the emotions can aid us in our quest to locate Electra's grief within her fifth-century BCE context, and to reflect on how audiences have responded down the centuries to her grief. Koniordou's more traditional approach to staging Electra's grief emphasised the communal aspects of mourning and funerary rites as performed by Electra and the chorus. Ironically, this traditional interpretation distances her production from Sophocles' fifth-century BCE drama and its audience, where Electra's separation from her community would have been one of the most disturbing elements for ancient spectators. In Sophocles it is not normative communal lamentation that brings Electra a measure of consolation but vengeance and even that is left incomplete at the end of the drama. Maurikios was well served in Karabeti's more extreme portrayal of the ancient tragic heroine. However, in his production he severed the majority of her ties to the chorus. Sophocles' drama requires a balance be struck between Electra's connection to and disconnection from the chorus. Electra's unusual degree of isolation from her community in Sophocles is also what makes her interactions with the chorus so important. This is the only semi-functional relationship she has with members of her community. She longs

[103] On the reception of Electra, see Bakogianni (2011), on Sophocles' *Electra* specifically, see Lloyd (2005) 117-135 and Finglass (2017) 475-511.
[104] For examples of this phenomenon in eighteenth-century British art, see Bakogianni (2009) 19-57; in Victorian art, Bakogianni (2011) 119-151.
[105] Landmark receptions of Electra in the first half of the twentieth century that bring to the fore her passionate desire for vengeance are Richard Strauss' opera *Elektra* (1909) and Eugene O'Neill's play *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931).

for, but cannot find her way back into either her family or city. Her grief has made her a permanent exile, even if she lives within the boundaries of her city. Ancient audience members are more likely to have been repelled by the extreme ways in which Electra performs her grief and her disregard for societal norms, and codes of behaviour. Modern audiences, on the other hand, seem more disturbed her desire for vengeance, fuelled by her endless supply of grief.

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'Too Young to Die': Grief and Mourning in Ancient Rome

1. Introduction

Roman authors can and do help us to better understand our troubled modern world and age-old problems like how to cope with the death of a loved one.[1] Latin texts are today at the forefront of multidisciplinary research, at the intersection where philology, iconography and archaeology meet. The expression of emotions, feelings and other emotive reactions to fateful events in antiquity present social historians with an exciting conundrum because they force a closer examination of how the ancient Romans themselves understood and processed these emotional situations. Such investigations allow scholars to form historical assessments of the social behavioural patterns inherited from ancestors, an important aspect of Roman responses to death.[2] Roman authors tended to reflect on powerful emotions in philosophical terms. Robert A. Kaster, for example, has explored the key question of how they openly expressed intimate, private feelings such as embarrassment (*verecundia*), modesty (*pudor*), repentance (*paenitentia*), envy (*invidia*) and aversion (*fastidium*).[3] Valerie M. Hope's work in this area focuses on exploring how the ancient Romans acted and understood pain, loss and sorrow.[4] Luigi F. Pizzolato (1996) addressed the topic of *immatura mors* from the perspective of the classical and late ancient Christian world, arguing that we can form a meaningful connection between it and modern spirituality and practice. Like us, the ancient Greeks and Romans developed

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[2] Hope (2007) 172. For more information on death in Rome, see Hope's analysis of the ancient evidence (2007, 2009 and 2017).

[3] Kaster (2005).

[4] Hope (2007 and 2011).

individual and social strategies to cope with the pain, anguish and fear engendered by death. When lamenting the death of a young person, responses centred on the interruption of their natural cycle of life. This was acutely felt by the parents, especially since these youngsters had managed to survive the high infant mortality rates prevalent in antiquity. Particular emphasis was placed on the *topos* of great expectations cut short by early death.[5] Some scholars have focused on the Romans' acceptance of violent and/or premature death, especially in infancy and adolescence. I would like to draw attention to the work of two scholars in particular: Laura Montanini's research on the mortality of young mothers (2009 and 2010) and Maureen Carroll's valuable archaeological perspective (2011).[6] My aim in the present paper is to explore Roman thinking and displays of mourning and grief as reactions to unexpected loss, mining our ancient Roman authors of the imperial period for examples of real practice in the form of ancient epitaphs and the funerary iconography developed for deceased young people. This is by no means intended as an exhaustive investigation, but I hope that it will serve as a useful exploration of Roman attitudes to grief caused by the death of young people.

According to the Roman way of thinking, emotions that revealed the irrational side of humans should not be openly displayed in front of the whole community.[7] These emotions covered a wide spectrum, from extreme joy and enthusiasm to the deepest sadness, anger, disappointment, pain and fear. Such manifestations of emotional excess undermined traditional Roman values. The Roman way valorized self-control and decorum. The golden mean, the Horatian *aurea mediocritas*, was a cornerstone of ancient

[5] On the archaeological evidence for high infant mortality in ancient Rome, see Scott (1999) and Pilkington (2013); on *mors immatura* as a literary *topos*, see Griessmair (1966); and on religious aspects, see Vrugt-Lentz (1960).

[6] The subject of Roman funerary practices has attracted much attention. For archaeological perspectives, Toynbee's work ([1971] 1996) and, more recently, Carroll's (2006) are particularly useful. See also Hinard (1995), Pearce, Millett and Struck (2001), Vaquerizo (2002) and Andreu, Espinosa and Pastor (2011). On the architecture of funerary monuments, see Hesberg (1992). For an updated bibliography on Roman funerary practices, see Criniti (2016a).

[7] See also Hope in this issue (132-134).

moral convention (*mos maiorum*), practised almost unchanged for generations until Christianity transformed the Roman Empire.[8] Roman texts bear witness that this emotional inhibition was firmly established in their intellectual milieu. In private, however, Romans expressed pain in what we would consider a more natural way. Ordinary people were more disposed to share their worries and joys, and such evidence enables us to re-evaluate the traditional view. Epigraphy provides us with compelling evidence that the Romans did in fact grieve, especially in cases of sudden death due to illness or violence.[9] The death of children or young women due to childbirth-related complications was deeply mourned. Tombstones give us invaluable information about how the ancient Romans dealt with sudden death. Their individual reactions illustrate human attitudes towards loss and grief. In what follows I examine two types of evidence. I begin by analysing several anecdotes found in our ancient Roman authors that deal specifically with the unexpected loss of children and young adults. I then turn to illustrative examples of funerary epigraphs and ancient iconography.

2. Roman Responses towards the *mors acerba* of Babies and Young Children

Death undoubtedly aroused – and still does – not one but any number of emotions and feelings. Premature death (*mors acerba*), an ungodly, unexpected and cruel demise that goes against the natural order of things (*katà moiran, sua die*), provokes strong reactions. Parents and the wider family express their grief by acting in a socially acceptable way in accordance with ancestral traditions that regulate mourning protocol. In such a context, the so-called "absence of feelings" over the death of babies and young children can be explained by exploring deep-rooted Roman philosophical and ethical principles. For example, in archaic times mourning was proportional to the length of time infants and young children had lived. Their funerals were

[8] Pizzolato (1996), 45-83, who examines *consolatio* in a Jewish-Christian context, argues that acceptance of pain and death is a fundamental precept of Christianity.
[9] On violent death, see for example Gunnella (1995), Panciera (2006), Buonopane (2016) and Ricci (2018). On women and femicide, see Clark (1998), Pavon (2011), Pasqualini (2015), Carucci (2017) and Casella (2017).

held at night in the strictest privacy, the so-called *funus acerbum*. This custom minimized the visibility of such deaths in the community to which the infant did not yet belong.[10]

Cicero reflected extensively on premature death. In one of his dialogues on happiness he argues that parents who lose children under one year of age have not yet had the chance to build up their hopes for these children's futures:

> *Idem, si puer parvus occidit, aequo animo ferendum putant, si vero in cunis, ne querendum quidem. atqui ab hoc acerbius exegit natura quod dederat. 'nondum gustaverat', inquit, 'vitae suavitatem; hic autem iam sperabat magna,quibus frui coeperat'.*
>
> They that complain thus allow that if a young child dies, the survivors ought to bear his loss with equanimity; that if an infant in the cradle dies, they ought not even to utter a complaint; and yet nature has been more severe with them in demanding back what she gave. They answer by saying that such have not tasted the sweets of life; while the other had begun to conceive hopes of great happiness, and, indeed, had begun to realize them.[11]

Given the high mortality rates for infants and young children in classical antiquity, the longer they survived, the more secure their parents could feel about planning their future. To do so at an early stage was inadvisable. Dwelling on the pain of a young life cut short was considered excessive and even ostentatious. An example of this 'cold' attitude can be found in Pliny the Younger's letter to his friend Attius Clemens, in which he coldly criticizes Regulus for his lack of self-control on the occasion of his son's death, a young boy who had barely reached his teenage years:

> *Regulus filium amisit [...]. Amissum tamen luget insane. Habebat puer mannulos multos et iunctos et solutos, habebat canes maiores minoresque, habebat luscinias psittacos merulas: omnes Regulus circa rogum trucidavit. Nec dolor erat ille, sed ostentatio doloris.*

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[10] On lamenting the death of new-born and small babies, see Golden (1988) and Martin-Kilcher (2001). For an archaeological perspective on infant mortality, see Scott (1999) and various papers in Justel (2012).
[11] Cic. Tusc. 39.

> Regulus has lost his son [...]. Now that his son is dead he expresses his loss in an extravagant manner. The boy used to own a number of ponies for riding and driving, dogs both big and small, and many nightingales, parrots and blackbirds. Regulus had all these slaughtered around the pyre. This was not grief, but a parade of grief.[12]

These beloved pets sacrificed on the funeral pyre of their young deceased owner reflect the iconography on sarcophaguses and epitaphs for infants. Such funerary reliefs portray children and teenagers happily playing with their pets, a visual reminder of frustrated potential. A characteristic example is the sarcophagus of Marcus Cornelius Statius from Ostia during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian.[13] It depicts the highlights of a young Roman child's life, from a new-born to an older child engaged in his studies.

Even Pliny the Younger laments the death of the daughter of his friend, Senator C. Minicius Fundanus. He praises Minicia and describes her death as being due to illness. In this instance Pliny does give voice to his grief. He makes it clear that he admired her fortitude in dealing with her precarious condition. The author records her age and talks about her imminent wedding. In a tragic reversal of ceremonies, the bereaved father ends up spending the dowry he intended for his daughter's marriage on her funeral:

> *Tristissimus haec tibi scribo, Fundani nostri filia minore defuncta. Qua puella nihil umquam festivius amabilius, [...]. Nondum annos xiiii impleverat, et iam illi anilis prudentia, matronalis gravitas erat et tamen suavitas puellaris cum virginali verecundia [...] O triste plane acerbumque funus! o morte ipsa mortis tempus indignius! iam testinata erat egregio iuveni, iam electus nuptiarum dies, iam nos vocati. Quod gaudium quo maerore mutatum est! Non possum exprimere verbis quantum animo vulnus acceperim, cum audivi Fundanum ipsum, ut multa luctuosa dolor invenit, praecipientem, quod in vestes margarita gemmas fuerat erogaturus, hoc in tus et unguenta et odores impenderetur [...]*
>
> I write to you in great distress: the youngest daughter of our friend Fundanus is dead. I have never seen such a cheerful and lovable girl [...]. She was not yet 14, and yet she was wise beyond her age, combining the dignity of a matron with the sweetness of a girl and the modesty of a

[12] Plin. Ep. 4.2, as translated by Hope (2007:114).
[13] Sarcophage de Marcus Cornelius Statius (Louvre Museum, Paris Ma659).

> virgin […]. This is a truly sad and untimely end. The timing of the death was more shocking than the death itself. She was already engaged to marry a distinguished young man […]. I cannot express the grief I felt when I heard Fundanus giving his own orders […] for the money he had intended for clothing, pearls and jewels to be spent on frankincense, ointment and spices for the funeral […].[14]

The funerary altar of Minicia Marcella, whose name and age correspond exactly to Pliny's testimony, survives:

> *D(is) M(anibus) / Miniciae / Marcellae / Fundani f(iliae). / V(ixit) a(nnos) XII, m(enses) XI, d(ies) VII.* [15]

Fundanus adopts a more traditional Roman stance in contrast to Regulus' extravagant display of grief. But we find a happy medium in Iulius Agricola, the 'perfect mourner'.[16] This Roman general lost his one-year-old baby boy, and his son-in-law. Tacitus, praises his reaction to this loss:

> *Initio aestatis Agricola domestico vulnere ictus, anno ante natum filium amisit. Quem casum neque ut plerique fortium virorum ambitiose, neque per lamenta rursus ac maerorem muliebriter tulit, et in luctu bellum inter remedia erat.*
>
> Early in the summer Agricola sustained a domestic affliction in the loss of a son born a year before, a calamity which he endured, neither with the ostentatious fortitude displayed by many brave men, nor, on the other hand, with womanish tears and grief. In his sorrow, he found one source of relief in war.[17]

Agricola's self-control exemplifies the Roman military way. His loss is compared to a war wound whose aching must be endured.

This idea of loss as a wound can also be found in Seneca's words of condolence on the passing of his friend Marullus's little son. In his opinion the bereaved father acted in too 'womanish' a manner, which went against

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[14] Plin. Ep. 5.16, as translated by Hope (2007) 187.

[15] Funerary altar for Minicia Marcella (*CIL* VI, 16631= EDR103422, Rome, Domitian Baths). On Minicia Marcella see Bodel (1995).

[16] Hope (2017) 86.

[17] Tac. Ag. 29.

Seneca's core moral and philosophical ideals. The philosopher condemns this 'indulgence in grief':

> *Epistulam quam scripsi Marullo cum filium parvulum amisisset et diceretur molliter ferre misi tibi, in qua non sum solitum morem secutus nec putavi leniter illum debere tractari, cum obiurgatione esset quam solacio dignior. Adflicto enim et magnum vulnus male ferenti paulisper cedendum est; exsatiet se aut certe primum impetum effundat: hi qui sibi lugere sumpserunt protinus castigentur et discant quasdam etiam lacrimarum ineptias esse.*
>
> I enclose a copy of the letter which I wrote to Marullus at the time when he had lost his little son and was reported to be rather womanish in his grief – a letter in which I have not observed the usual form of condolence: for I did not believe that he should be handled gently, since in my opinion he deserved criticism rather than consolation. When a man is stricken and is finding it most difficult to endure a grievous wound, one must humour him for a while; let him satisfy his grief or at any rate work off the first shock; but those who have assumed an indulgence in grief should be rebuked forthwith, and should learn that there are certain follies even in tears.[18]

Marullus's sorrow is condemned as reprehensible because he is acting like a woman. Indeed, the Latin word *mollis* alludes to gentle manners in connection with female deportment. When applied to men it becomes derogative, a way of reprimanding them for effeminate behaviour.[19] Marullus's 'womanish' grief, however, is not the only Roman example of such behaviour we can read about in our ancient sources. A number of reputable men are portrayed as being moved to tears when faced with the death of their young children, although this generally took place in private. For example, Augustus used to kiss an effigy of his favourite grandson after the child's death:

> *Habuit* [sc. *Germanicus*] *in matrimonio Agrippinam, M. Agrippae et Iuliae filiam, et ex ea novem liberos tulit: quorum duo infantes adhuc rapti,*

[18] Sen. Ep. 99.

[19] See ThLL s.v. "*mollis*" as a synonym of *effeminatus* (Isid. Or. 10, 179: "mollis, quod vigorem sexus enerviati corpore dedecoret, et quasi mulier emolliatur"). On effeminate men in Rome and how they were perceived, see Olson (2014).

> *unus iam puerascens insigni festivitate, cuius effigiem habitu Cupidinis in aede Capitolinae Veneris Livia dedicavit, Augustus in cubiculo suo positam, quotiensque introiret, exosculabatur.*
>
> Germanicus married Agrippina the Elder, daughter of Marcus Agrippa and Julia, who bore him nine children. Two died in infancy, and a third, a charming child, just as he was reaching the age of boyhood. Livia dedicated a statue of him, dressed as Cupid, in the temple of Capitoline Venus; Augustus had another statue in his bedroom and used to kiss it fondly whenever he entered.[20]

Portraits of children in a funerary context reminded those who saw them of a time when their young lives were flourishing. They were a tangible, idealized relic, like the statue of Augustus's grandson as Cupid. But, what about the common people? How did they bid farewell to their beloved young dead? To answer these questions we must turn to Roman epitaphs, which provide us with a range and variety of evidence from different social classes. This can help us to build up a picture of how the Romans mourned people who were 'too young to die'.

3. 'Too Young to Die': Roman Epitaphs and Premature Death

Acerbus is a Latin adjective that means 'immature' or 'unripe', mainly used to refer to fruit.[21] When applied to the premature death of humans, it forms part of an ancient metaphor that can be traced back to Latin poetry, including that inscribed on stone. For example, in the following epitaph, Nymphe, a five-year-old girl, narrates her short life, comparing it to an apple on a tree, gathered prematurely. Death put a stop to the natural cycle of her life before she could accomplish any of the things expected of a woman-to-be:

> *D(is) M(anibus) / Nymphes / Achelous et Heorte / filiae dulcissimae / have. / Tu [hic q]ui [stas atque spectas] monimentum meum, [aspice quam indign]e sit data / vita m[ihi. Quinque] annos / sui[--- pare]ntes. / Sextu[m annum insce]ndens anim[am deposui mea]m. / Nolite no[s dolere, paren]tes: mori/endum fuit. Pro[pe]rav[i]t aeta(s). Fatus / hoc voluit meus. Sic quomodo mala / in arbore pendent si(c) corpora nostra*

[20] Suet. Cal. 7, as translated by Hope (2007) 11.
[21] See ThLL s.v. "acerbus".

/ aut matura cadunt aut cit(o) acerba [r]uunt. / Te, lapis, optestor leviter super ossa [re]sidas, / ni tenerae aetati tu [ve]lis gravis. / Vale.

"To the Spirits of the Departed of Nymphe. Achelous and Heorte (sc. had this made) for their sweetest daughter. Greetings! You, who stand here and look at my memorial, behold how undignified a life was given to me. For five years . . . the parents. As I was approaching the sixth year, I departed from my life. Do not vex yourselves, parents: I had to die. My lifetime was rushed. My fate desired this. Thus, how apples hang in a tree, thus our bodies either tumble to the ground when ripe or, all too quickly, they plummet, unripe still. I ask you, stone, to rest lightly above my bones, lest you wish to be a heavy burden to a tender age. Farewell!!"[22]

Parental hopes for children were cut tragically short because of *fatum*, each person's allotted time on earth established at birth. The tombstone of Telesphoris's baby girl reminds other women-to-be about the precariousness of life.[23] She was a six-month-old baby whose parents wanted to memorialize her as a testament to the strength of their grief. They built a sumptuous funerary monument, which included a lifelike effigy of their daughter:

D(is) M(anibus) / Telesphoris et / maritus eius parentes / filiae dulcissimae / queri necesse est de / puellula dulci / ne tu fuisses si futura / tam grata brevi reverti / unde nobis edita / nativ<u>m esset et paren/tibus luctu / semissem anni vixit / et dies octo / rosa simul florivit / et statim periit.

Telesphoris and her husband, the parents, to their very sweet daughter. One must lament for this sweet girl. Oh that you had never been born, when you were to become so loved! And yet it was determined at your birth that you would shortly be taken from us, much to your parents' pain. She lived half a year and eight days. The rose bloomed and soon wilted.[24]

We only know the mother's name, Telesphoris, because the father is identified in the inscription as her husband (*maritus eius*). Notably, the baby

[22] *CIL* XI 7024 = *CLE* 1542. Lucca, Italy, as translated by Kruschwitz (2015).
[23] Funerary altar of Telesphoris. Landesmuseum Mainz (inv. S996), Germany.
[24] CIL XIII, 7113 = CLE 216. Mogontiacum (Mainz), Germania Superior, as translated by Hope [(2007) 13] with one minor amendment.

girl's name is missing, perhaps because she was too young to have been given a recognized, confirmed name. Nevertheless, the beautiful relief commemorates their anonymous beloved daughter, described as blooming like a short-lived flower. This metaphor is one of the most common literary *topoi* used to describe a young life tragically cut short, not only in Roman texts but also in later literature.[25] In this particular case, the omission of the deceased baby's name could be explained because it is not as important as the fact that she died at such a tender age. The impressive monument with its beautiful relief of the deceased baby girl testifies to the importance of being remembered.

Another funerary *topos* was to blame fate and portray death as being jealous of youth and opposed to a full life (*invida fata, invida mors*). Afterlife divinities are portrayed as capricious and apt to reclaim their plunder:

> […] */ disce quisque pius pater es vel / mater qu(a)e generasti natos / habere bonu(m) est si non sint / invida fata sic tibi non ra/piat mors invida tam cito / natos ut meis atque tuis / dignis <le>ve(m) terra(m) preceris / ut mors involtum vivat / semperque colatur /* […].
>
> Learn this whoever you are, a worthy father or perchance a mother who has borne children, to have offspring is a good thing if only there were no jealous fates, for then invidious death would not carry off your children so swiftly, compelling you to beg the earth to rest lightly upon your children and mine, who deserve such treatment, and so that death must seem a living being before our faces, requiring worship always.[26]

The death of children was viewed as a type of consecration *in forma deorum* for private worship,[27] and thus a type of sacred ritual. It is for this reason that some deceased children and young adults are represented as little gods and goddesses (for example, Augustus's grandson as Cupid). In a similar vein, a pair of siblings are depicted in a beautiful funerary portrait, one girl

[25] A famous example from Victorian literature is Tennyson's poem *In Memoriam A. H. H.* (VIII, 19-24). Rowlinson (2013) 44.
[26] CIL VI, 10731 = CLE 647 = EDR14999, Roma (Shore [1997] 68).
[27] See Wrede (1981) and Laubry (2015).

in the guise of Luna (an aspect of the Roman goddess Diana, divine protector of young girls before marriage),[28] and ten-year-old Iulia Victorina, also depicted as Luna next to an altar on the front, and Sol on the reverse. [29]

Roman parents could choose to be represented alongside their dead children on funerary monuments. Couples or mothers are often depicted together with their sons and daughters on monuments that can be found from Pozzuoli to Palmyra. In the realistic funerary relief of the Servilii, we bear witness to the passing of a freedman's family, including the father, mother and their freeborn offspring. The freeborn young boy embodies all his family's hopes for social advancement, so he is depicted as a mature child, but his mortuary mask reveals that he was still only a baby when he passed away. Nevertheless, the iconography captures the idealized memory of his frustrated potential:

> *P(ublius) Servilius Q(uinti) f(ilius) / Globulus f(ilius) // Q(uintus) Servilius Q(uinti) l(ibertus) / Hilarus pater // Sempronia / C(ai) l(iberta) Eune uxor.*[30]

Unfulfilled promise is a recurring motif on the funerary relief of ten-year-old C. Petronius Virianus from Rome. His grandfather commissioned the monument, in which the child is represented as a little knight:

> *D(is) M(anibus) / C(aio) Petronio C(ai) f(ilio) Cam(ilia) / Liguri Viriano Postumo. / Vix(it) ann(os) X, m(enses) X, d(ies) XX. / D(ecimus) Valerius Niceta / av<u>s nepoti fecit.*[31]

The family's expectations and hopes were destroyed on the child's premature death and this significant loss is being recorded for posterity.

Girls, like Fundianus's daughter, were expected to marry. Her fate was particularly poignant because she died just days before her marriage. The wrecked hopes of the families of nubile girls who died before marriage are depicted on a number of funerary monuments, such as on the altar of ten-year-old Caetennia Pollita, a richly clothed and bejewelled young girl,

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[28] Roman grave relief of boy and girl. Danish National Gallery in Copenhagen.
[29] Altar of Iulia Victorina (*CIL* VI, 20727), Paris, Louvre Museum (Ma1443).
[30] Tombstone of Servilii (*CIL* VI, 26410 = EDR115580). Rome, Vatican Museums (Augustan period).
[31] Tombstone of C. Petronius Virianus (*CIL* VI, 24011 = EDR121426). Rome, Capitoline Museums (AD 100-110).

dressed as if for a wedding.[32] Another example would be the funerary altar for ten-year-old Antonia Panaces, which is decorated with a reclining skeleton, a recurring symbol of death.[33] Such *memento mori* are typical of the visual clichés that Romans used to represent the uncomfortable but unavoidable human truth: 'remember (that) you will die'. Young deceased persons could be depicted alongside skeletons (Antonia Panaces) or, more palatably, as if they were sleeping (as on the sarcophagus at J. Paul Getty Museum).[34] However, death was and still is ubiquitous, as the Romans realized all too well.

Roman iconography for those deemed 'too young to die' reproduces tropes that are familiar to us. The parents' hopes and the offspring's potential are forever frozen in time. In the normal course of life, young people are expected to take care of their parents in old age, because it is settled on non-written rules of social convention. Death disturbs this pattern and causes much unease and distress in addition to the pain of loss. Such losses intensify feelings of sadness, and the process of ageing becomes more challenging, especially for those who end up alone.[35] Old age, bad health, poverty and neglect are matters of grave concern, in particular for widows, since only children can guarantee protection and proper commemoration after death.[36] The funerary monument commissioned by Papiria Tertia illustrates such concerns, although the quality of the inscription (a verse epitaph) suggests a well-to-do family. The elderly woman buried both her husband and children, so her lament is doubly sad, since she ended up alone in her old age. In the Roman context, such a mother would have been worthy of commiseration. Her condition was sorrowful like that of an infertile married woman:

> *cernis ut orba meis, hospes, monumenta locavi*
> *et tristis senior natos miseranda requiro.*
> *exemplis referenda mea est deserta senectus*

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[32] Altar of Caetennia Pollita. Mander (2013) nr. 71. Rome, second-century CE. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
[33] Altar of Antonia Panaces (*CIL* VI, 12059 = EDR140636). Naples, Archaeological Museum (inv. 2803) (AD 71-150).
[34] Kline monument with a reclining girl (inv. 73.AA.11) (AD 120-140).
[35] Ancient authors who reflect on old age include Cicero (Sen.), Plutarch (An Seni) and Seneca (Ep. 12). See also Parkin (2003) and Cokayne (2003).
[36] On young people's "duty of care" for old relatives, see Parkin (2003) 207.

ut steriles vere possint gaudere maritae.

You behold how I, bereft of my loved ones, erected their memorials, / And sad, of a rather advanced age, and pitiable, long for offspring. / My old age, in its abandonment, should be included among the evidence / For the view that barren wives may truly rejoice.[37]

4. Conclusion

Roman attitudes towards the death of young people range from the traditional prescription to avoid public displays of emotion (as in the examples of Marullus and Agricola) to ostentatious performances of grief (Regulus and Augustus).[38] These four case studies by themselves reveal the sharp contrast that existed between public and private performances of grief as attested to by Roman authors. Writers such as Pliny and Tacitus criticize exaggerated manifestations of grief in men and praise Agricola's self-control. Despite such high-minded moralizing, more emotive expressions of pain were quite common, as our epigraphical evidence confirms. Archaeology thus adds an important qualification to our understanding of Roman grief. Inscriptions of wealthy people might be couched in formulae and *topoi*, but they still testify to the importance of memory and the social representation of the deceased family member(s). In imperial times, deceased babies under three years of age were included in the family circle and viewed as worthy of being openly mourned. Memorials and effigies of baby boys and girls give voice to the sorrow and sadness of parents confronted with the death of their loved ones, and their effigies embody would-be people and their unfulfilled wishes and shattered hopes.

What separates Roman memorials from today's commemorative practices is the emphasis they placed on how these prematurely deceased young people would never fulfil their family's ambitions for them. The death of adolescent boys and girls was regrettable because they died before they could become productive members of the community, i.e. before they could begin their service to Rome. It is worth asking oneself whether the Roman ways of expressing pain for the death of children and young people is based on a morally codified attitude at a societal level, as Roman elite writers

[37] CIL V 2435 = CLE 369 (Ferrara, Italy), as translated by P. Kruschwitz (2015). Ausonius (Par. 9) wrote a reflection on solitude in old age. See Kruschwitz (2015).
[38] For a discussion of what was expected from emperors regarding this, see Hope's paper in this issue.

would have it, or whether it reflects the human need to relieve the grief and sadness shared by all classes of Roman society. The *immature mors* of children destroys their parents' hopes for them. Parents raising and caring for children expected in turn to be protected and maintained in their old age, but their dead offspring never achieved independence or became useful contributing members of society. This frustrated potential impacts those left behind, who are condemned to sorrow and loneliness. Investigating how the ancient Romans expressed their grief for those 'too young to die' can thus tell us a great deal about how they conceptualized and processed death and grief on an emotional as well as a societal level.

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The Smell of Grief: Odour and Olfaction at the Roman Funeral

1. Introduction[1]

IN April of 1485, workmen searching for marble and other stones along the Via Appia made an altogether more remarkable discovery: the tomb of a young Roman girl, whom witnesses quickly (and erroneously) identified as Tullia, daughter of Cicero.[2] Accounts of the discovery emphasise the immaculate condition of the corpse, with her skin, hair, nails, eyes, and eyelashes all extremely well preserved. The whole of Rome flocked to gaze upon a face 'so lovely, so pleasing, so attractive, that, although the girl had certainly been dead fifteen hundred years, she appeared to have been laid to rest that very day.'[3] In addition to her physical appearance, various accounts describe in some detail the thick aromatic paste which covered her body, and which they believed responsible for its pristine condition. Upon lifting the lid of her sarcophagus, the workmen were said to have been greeted by 'a strong odour of turpentine and myrrh,' while other discerning noses detected frankincense, aloe, and oil of cedar. Indeed so potent was this aroma that it soon attracted a large swarm of bees. The rich fragrance contributed to one observer's assertion that the grave's occupant was an illustrious one: 'none but a noble person could afford to be buried in such a costly sarcophagus thus filled with precious ointments.'[4]

A witness to the funeral of 'Tullia' some fifteen hundred years previous would doubtless have reached the same conclusion. While those too poor to afford proper burial rites might be left to rot in pits beyond the city's gates,[5] Rome's well-to-do spent lavish sums importing foreign perfumes and spices,

1 My sincere thanks to Anastasia Bakogianni, Valerie Hope, Nicholas Purcell, Neil McLynn and Mark Bradley for their insight and critique at various stages of this paper's development.

2 Lanciani (1892).

3 Lanciani (1892) 297.

4 Lanciani (1892) 296.

5 *Var. De Ling. Lat.* 5.25.

whose exotic aromas accompanied them in death, whether atop the pyre or in the tomb itself. However, as we shall, see the presence or absence of odour was a key consideration for all social classes.[6] This paper sets out to examine the extent to which Roman funerary rituals were markedly olfactory experiences, and explores the significance of odorous materials, such as those that accompanied 'Tullia,' to these rituals' function, both as rites of passage, facilitating the deceased's transition to an afterlife, and as symbols of grief and social status.

Until very recently, any attempt to trace the historical significance of odour would likely have been met with confusion or outright scepticism from those unsure of its purpose, or even validity. Contemporary scholarship has long privileged vision above all other sensory modalities; in the field of Classical Studies this is perhaps most evident in work dedicated to 'the gaze' or 'reading' the body in antiquity. Despite the undoubted value of such work, this trend has at last begun to give way, with multiple edited volumes addressing the plurality of sensory experience in antiquity.[7] As a result, scholars are beginning to consider with greater depth and clarity how the varieties of sensory experience shaped daily existence in the ancient world.[8] Much of this work has concentrated on smell, breaking what was once termed the 'rule of olfactive silence'.[9] Both Glen Bowersock (1997) and David Potter (1999) have examined the contribution of odour to the creation and maintenance of social gradations. Béatrice Caseau (1994) and Susan Ashbrook Harvey (2006), whose primary concerns lie in the significance of smell in early Christian contexts, have similarly discussed its prominence in pre-Christian religious traditions. More recent still, an edited volume by Bradley (2015) traced the influence of ancient odours across a range of genres and contexts, while Derrick (2017) and Flohr (2017) have focused on the

6 Odour was frequently associated with social status, as shall be discussed below, and this is no less true in the case of the poor; Varro (*De Lingua Latina* 5.25) speculates that the mass graves outside Rome's walls took their name (*puticuli*) from the rotten odour they produced.

7 E.g. Butler and Purves (2013); Toner (2014); Bradley (2015) and Betts (2017).

8 For a critique of the historically and culturally contingent nature of '*the* senses' (that is, the five distinct senses with which Western society is most familiar), see Ingold (2011).

9 Howes (1991) 128.

olfactory atmosphere of the Roman fort and *vicus* near Vindolanda and Roman *fullonicae,* respectively. Nevertheless, such work remains in its infancy, and there is still much to consider. The Roman funeral has long received considerable scholarly attention as a highly public spectacle, with emphasis on its visual and auditory components: the procession of family members and those hired to imitate family members (the *pompa*), the funerary dirge (the *nenia*), and the public eulogy in the forum (the *laudatio*).[10] By contrast, its olfactory dimensions have received little attention in contemporary scholarship, which tends to dismiss the use of perfumes and spices as no more than a means of offsetting the dismal odours produced by a decaying corpse.[11]

While their ability to ameliorate the smell of putrefaction was undoubtedly important, I instead argue that for Romans themselves the olfactory dimension of funerals was as much a matter of eschatological significance as it was practical necessity. Not only did it aid in the demarcation of funerary space and serve as a ritual expression of grief and/or mourning, but it might also communicate social, ontological, and epistemological information about the funeral's participants, both living and dead. And, as the funeral and its participants moved through the city, that sense of funerary space was transported with them, advertising this information to a wide audience. A primary concern of this paper is therefore to reposition odour away from the margins of Roman funerary experience, and instead integrate it more fully into our appreciation and understanding of these rites. To do so, it employs an embodied approach in considering Roman attitudes to death, exploring the impact of bodily experience – in this case smell – on Romans' understanding of the world around them. It treats odour not merely as a passive or impotent by-product of funerary rites, but as an active and affective agent in their realisation, moving the act of smelling to the foreground of the sensorium. In the process, it aims to demonstrate the centrality of smell to the spectacle of funeral rites, and how this underpinned the success of the rites as a ritualised expression of grief, a performance of social class, and of course as a rite of passage.

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10 To give just five examples: Toynbee (1996); Flower (1996); Dutsch (2008); Bodel (1999) and Hope (2019).

11 See for example Potter (2014) 36-7: 'funerals tended to activate sight and sound to reify the concept of sadness, while using scent to eclipse the reek of a dead body.' Cf. Hope (2017).

The geographical focus of this paper is the city of Rome itself, and on material ranging from the first century BCE to the second century CE, a period in which cremation largely replaced inhumation as the Romans' preferred method of disposing of the corpse.[12] The period between the first centuries BCE and CE also witnessed the most rapid increase in the trade of south Arabian incenses across the ancient Mediterranean world.[13] It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that this period should provide us with the majority of our evidence for their incorporation in Roman funerals.[14] However, it is important to note that this paper's limited geographical focus does not reflect similar limitations in the spread of this phenomenon. Consider, for instance, the burial of an adult woman in Dorchester in the third century CE: chemical analyses have indicated that her body was treated with odiferous gum resins from the genus *Boswellia*, better known as frankincense or olibanum, which would have been sourced from destinations as distant and exotic as east Africa, southern Arabia or north-western India.[15] Similar examples have been found across Roman Europe, but the Dorchester burial provides a particularly striking insight into just how integral this olfactory component was, such that even inhabitants on the very fringes of the empire were willing to spend considerable sums on the purchase and transportation of these materials.

The material discussed is treated in a broadly synchronic manner. Evidence is limited when it comes to the study of Roman funerals; that pertaining to the funerary use of odours even more so. A synchronic analysis of the limited evidence is therefore better suited to an exploration of the meanings and functions of incense and perfumes in elite funerals, despite the inevitable risk of anachronism. Finally, while much of this evidence – and, in turn, the focus of this paper – concerns itself with the funeral customs of Roman (male) aristocrats, the consequences of odour's incorporation in imperial funerals will also be briefly considered.[16] Above all, this paper suggests that Romans' odiferous funeral practices were intimately connected to their conceptions of death and the afterlife, and that its olfactory dimension

12 Hope (2009), 81-2.

13 De Romanis (1996) and McLaughlin (2010).

14 Of course, the majority of our textual evidence comes from the writings of elite males, and the inherent biases of this evidence must be borne in mind.

15 Brettell et al. (2015).

16 For a further discussion of imperial funerals see Hope's paper in this issue.

helped facilitate the funeral's purpose as a rite of passage, aiding the deceased's transition from this life to the next. But before considering in detail the reasons for odour's incorporation within funerary ritual, it is worth examining how this was done.

2. Preparation, Pollution and Procession

Following a Roman's death, custom dictated that the deceased lie in state for up to seven days, but this may have been rare, even for the wealthy; most corpses were probably disposed of quite hastily, particularly in summer when the heat would have exacerbated the smell of decomposition. During this period of lying in state, the corpse was treated with perfumes and ointments, as we have already seen.[17] Pots of burning incense (*accerae*) might also be placed beside the bier,[18] as illustrated on a famous relief from the tomb of the Haterii (Fig.1), where one attendant in the lower right-hand corner can be seen poised to add more incense to the flames. This would certainly have provided some relief from the less palatable odours of the corpse, but the fragrances produced also played an important role in combating the metaphysical pollution wrought by the corpse's interstitial nature.

The Roman concept of death pollution exemplifies an understanding of death as a 'protracted social process',[19] rather than an instantaneous event. As such, one of the primary functions of funerary rites was to ensure the deceased's safe transition to the afterlife, thereby allowing him to take up the position of ancestor. Whilst awaiting these rites' completion, the corpse occupied an indeterminate and uncomfortable grey zone; belonging properly neither to the world of the living nor that of the dead, its liminality brought with it an unwanted and keenly felt contagion.[20] The application of fragrant odours to the corpse also closely parallels their role in ancient medicine, where they were employed to combat the malevolent odours thought

17 For an overview of Roman funerary practices, see Toynbee (1996) 43-61 and Hope (2009) 65-96.

18 Bodel (1999) 267.

19 Hopkins (1983) 217.

20 Lindsay (2000); Bradley (2012) and Lennon (2012). These accounts of Roman metaphysical pollution draw heavily on Douglas (2002). On its effects see Hope (2009) 71-2.

to be symptomatic of sickness and disease.[21] On occasion, such malodours might even be thought to prove fatal; Lucretius, for instance, memorably describes a tree whose nasty odour could kill a man.[22] As a result, medicinal treatments were frequently chosen for their fragrant properties, an attempt to treat both the symptom and the source of illness or disease. Similarly, with regard to a funerary context, despite the individual in question having died (and ostensibly being in no need of further medical care), the stench of the degenerating corpse as it lay in the *domus* was emblematic of its polluted state, warranting its continued treatment with fragrant aromas in order to combat the odour of pollution.

Death pollution was contagious, indeed unavoidable for those closest to the deceased, and family members publicly indicated their polluted status by adopting black mourning garments. Some even refrained from washing, in a physical expression of their metaphysical impurity.[23] Branches of the pungent cypress plant, placed outside the *domus*, alerted passers-by to the polluted nature of its inhabitants, both living and dead. All this served to differentiate and distinguish those in mourning from everyday society, as the household was instead transformed into a *familia funesta* or even 'en quelque sorte des morts vivants'.[24]

On the day of the funerary procession, both corpse and family members departed the house and made their way along the processional route, where they were joined by musicians and professional mourners (*praeficae*) singing funeral dirges. Incense bearers might also accompany the bier as it bore the corpse through the city, as illustrated on a limestone relief from Amiternum (Fig.2), where the figure is shown immediately behind those carrying the bier. The procession's initial destination was the forum, where a member of the deceased noble's family would deliver the *laudatio funebris* from the Rostra, before then moving beyond the city walls to dispose of the corpse. Unfortunately, we possess few details about the specific route that would have been taken. Given that the nobility generally lived close to the forum (along the Via Sacra or on the nearby Palatine hill, for instance), it is

21 Potter (1999), Caseau (1994) and (2001).

22 *De Rerum Natura* 6.1124.

23 Lennon (2012) and Scheid (1984). In doing so, the mourners' behaviour and appearance reversed expected norms, placing them in opposition to both those not in mourning and the corpse. See Hope (2017).

24 Scheid (1984) 119.

possible that in many cases the procession would not have had far to travel to complete the initial leg of its journey. While this may appear convenient, a short journey would have afforded little opportunity to attract a suitably large audience, the size of which was, after all, a reflection of the esteem in which the family was held. It is therefore likely that a more circuitous route, taking in some of Rome's sidestreets, would have been deliberately adopted.[25] In turn, the choice of route would have impacted upon the speed and ease with which the procession moved. The growth of the city of Rome led to the development of new concepts of space, new systems of traffic flow, and new technologies of mobility.[26] These factors, not to mention its sheer scale and hilly terrain, meant that traversing this space was an altogether different experience than would have been encountered in any other Roman town or city. For members of the funeral procession, and particularly for those bearing the weight of the bier, their speed of movement would have been hindered by narrow streets, thronging crowds, and all the accompanying and competing sights, sounds, and smells. As a result, the cortege's rate of progress across the city is likely to have been fitful and uneven.[27]

Once again, however, and for the purposes of attracting attention, this may not have been completely undesirable. Indeed, from the moment it set out, we can safely assume that the funeral cortege would have adopted the measured, deliberate pace associated with the upper classes. As was so often the case when it came to Roman social mores, the ideal gait was one of moderation; an unhurried and considered speed that distinguished itself from the haste of slaves, but was not so slow as to suggest a similarly sluggish and laboured mind.[28] The moderate pace of the funeral procession was therefore both a socially conscious affectation and a consequence of the physical constraints placed upon it by Rome's urban environment. And, just as the wails of lamentation and the sounds of horns and trumpets contributed to the creation of a particular and distinct auditory environment, so too did its rich aromas provide an olfactory advertisement of the procession's movement through the city – setting it apart from the tumult of daily life through which it passed. As the procession wound its way further along

25 Favro and Johanson (2010).

26 Laurence (2016).

27 Cf. Johanson (2011).

28 O'Sullivan (2011).

the route, the lingering aromas which trailed behind represented a temporary trace of the funeral's passing (as well as that of the individual in question) to those left in its wake. In this respect, the funerary *pompa* was no different from religious processions in employing odour to demarcate ritual activity (see below); where it differed, however, was in simultaneously communicating the polluted nature of its participants. Given odour's capacity to evoke memories with an immediacy and impact unmatched by the other senses, the rich scents emanating from the procession would also doubtless have reminded participants and onlookers of previous funerals attended. In doing so, odour helped emphasise the ritual's role in the creation and consolidation of social and familial identity.[29]

3. Scent and Sensibility

If the deceased was to be cremated, then the funeral reached its olfactory climax at the site of the pyre. Here a variety of fragrant substances (such as cinnamon, saffron, and myrrh) might be set alongside the corpse, and the pyre itself constructed from sweet-smelling woods.[30] These materials joined the corpse in being reduced to ashes, their rich aromas mingling in the air. After the pyre had burnt itself out, the bones and ashes would be collected, again liberally doused with perfumes, and placed in some form of urn or receptacle.[31] The enthusiasm with which olfactory elements were incorporated within funerary ritual, as well as the novel nature of this behaviour, was recorded and summarily condemned by Pliny the Elder, writing in the first century CE. He complains that his contemporaries 'burn over the departed the products which they had originally understood to have been created for the gods.'[32] Here Pliny alludes to the common Roman practice, adopted from the Greeks, of offering an olfactory sacrifice to the gods, in place of one of wine or meat, for example. The significance of this alleged misappropriation will be returned to, but it is clear that, as substances that were intimately associated with the divine, Pliny deems their use in mortuary ritual inappropriate, indeed near-blasphemous. His objection is exacerbated by the scale on which this was done: 'perfumes such as are given to

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29 See further below, and cf. Baroin (2010).

30 Lilja (1967), 55; Noy (2000).

31 Toynbee (1996) 50 and Hope (2009) 84. *Cf.* Herodian, 3.15.7-8.

32 *Plin. Nat.* 12.83-4.

the gods a grain at a time... are piled up in heaps to the honour of dead bodies.'[33] Nero, to take an extreme example, is said to have burned more incense than Arabia could produce in an entire year upon the death of his wife Poppaea: a demonstration of the emperor's extravagance,[34] but also, for Pliny, an action that bordered on religious sacrilege. However, Pliny would appear to be in the minority in opposing the use of perfumes to honour the dead. Indeed, his comments only highlight the phenomenon's ubiquity, as the Roman elite eagerly adopted and incorporated odour in their funerals. Upon the death of Sulla in 78 BCE, for instance, the women of Rome were said to have provided such vast quantities of spices that two hundred and ten litters were required to carry it all in the funeral procession.[35] Despite having been a divisive figure whilst alive, the high regard in which Sulla is held by those who mourn him is mirrored in the sheer scale of olfactory offerings: no expense was spared in acquiring high-quality materials to burn alongside the body.

In life, a fondness for scenting oneself with oils or perfume might leave a Roman male open to accusations of *mollitia* – softness or effeminacy. Yet even those who, like Pliny, scorned the wearing of perfume by the living, might see its use in funerary ritual as appropriate, even necessary.[36] Cato the Younger, for instance, was one such man, widely famed as an arch-traditionalist and a paragon of moral virtue. Unlike his beloved brother Caepio, Cato shunned the wearing of perfume, and this was taken by Plutarch to be an exemplary demonstration of his strict and severe character, as well as his tendency toward moderation in eschewing luxury and the effete.[37] Following Caepio's death in 67 BC, however, Plutarch records how Cato went to

33 *Plin. Nat.* 12.83-4.

34 See also Hope in this issue (132).

35 *Plut. Sull.* 38.

36 The vehemence which Pliny reserved for the wearing of perfume is perhaps best illustrated by his account of one Lucius Plotius. Having been condemned to death, Plotius attempted to hide but was betrayed by the smell of his perfume. He receives little sympathy from Pliny, however, who remarks: 'who would not consider that people of that sort deserved to die?' (*Plin. Nat.* 13.24). On the association between the use of perfume and accusations of effeminacy and immorality, see Edwards (1993) 68-9 and 186-8.

37 *Plut. Cat. Mi.* 3.

great trouble to have incense and costly raiment burned with the body,[38] suggesting that, for Cato at least, the provision of such materials, and the odours they generated, were a crucial component in giving Caepio the burial he deserved. It is clear from Plutarch's account that Cato's actions were not universally condoned by his contemporaries, some of whom saw his willingness to publicly express his grief in this manner as a lapse into ostentation.

The importance of fragrance in bestowing honour on the dead, and the willingness of the wealthy to spend lavishly in order to do so, are themes that occur frequently in Statius' *Silvae*, which provide some of the most vivid and evocative accounts of funerary odours. Statius, writing in the first century CE, was a direct contemporary of Pliny, and makes frequent reference to the use of odiferous materials in a work largely concerned with evoking the sense of loss following bereavement, testifying to its magnitude and helping those left behind to deal with their grief. In a poem consoling Flavius Ursus on the death of his favourite slave, for instance, Statius describes how the slave is joined on the pyre by some of the most expensive of spices:

> *sed nic servilis adempto*
> *ignis. odoriferos exhausit flamma Sabaeos*
> *et Cilicum messes Phariaque exempta volucri*
> *cinnama et Assyrio manantes gramine sucos,*
> *et domini fletus.*
>
> But no servile flames for the deceased.
> The fire consumed the fragrant harvests of myrrh and
> Cilician saffron, and cinnamon stolen from the Phoenix,
> and the juices flowing from Assyrian herbs,
> as well as your master's tears.[39]

The poem thus records in rich and loving detail the range of aromatics burnt alongside the body, including *odoriferos Sabaeos* (most likely myrrh), Cilician saffron, which Strabo and Pliny,[40] report as being the highest quality variety, and cinnamon stolen from the nest of a phoenix (or *Pharia volucris*).

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38 *Plut. Cat. Mi.* 11.

39 *Stat. Silv.* 2.6.85-89.

40 *Strab.* 14.5.5 and *Plin. Nat.* 13.2.

The great value of these odiferous materials is therefore made clear, with the heady aromas they produced reminding those present of Ursus' great wealth, and the extravagant act of conspicuous consumption communicating the depth of his grief.

Once again, the ability of odour to communicate important information regarding social status is apparent. As Statius makes clear, the 'fragrant harvests' are bound to ideas of wealth and the marvellous that elevate the deceased slave above the status he endured in life. The threat of 'servile flames' is banished and he can now look forward to enjoying a more redolent afterlife. Statius' allusion to the phoenix is particularly apt given the funerary context: a bird said to subsist on incense and cardamom, which, when it is about to die, builds a nest of cassia and incense, before 'end[ing] its life among the perfumes.'[41] In death it gives birth to a young phoenix, likewise destined to live for five hundred years or more.[42] The fragrant phoenix thus embodies the connection between death, odiferous substances, and the hope of an afterlife. So keen is Statius on the phoenix as a literary device that he again makes use of it in a second poem. This time, however, the deceased is not human, as Statius' verse laments the death of the parrot of Atedius Melior:

> *at non inglorius umbris*
> *mittitur: Assyrio cineres adolentur amomo*
> *et tenues Arabum respirant gramine plumae*
> *Sicaniisque crocis; senio nec fessus inerti*
> *scandet odoratos Phoenix felicior ignes.*
>
> But he is not sent to the shades ingloriously:
> his ashes steam with Assyrian cardamom,
> and his delicate feathers are fragrant with Arabian myrrh
> and Sicilian saffron. Unwearied by old age,
> he will mount the perfumed pyre, a blessed Phoenix.[43]

The poem is notable for two reasons. First, because it is well worth imagining what would no doubt have been Pliny's apoplectic reaction to the use of

41 *Ov. Met.* 15.391-417.

42 *Hdt.* 2.73; *Plin. Nat.* 10.2; *Ov. Met.* 15.391-417.

43 *Stat. Silv.* 2.4.33-37.

perfumes in mourning a parrot. And second, because however tongue-in-cheek the poem may be,[44] by playing on established tropes it again underlines the connection between the need to honour the dead and the provision of a fragrant funeral, one that ensures Melior's parrot 'is not sent to the shades ingloriously.' In addition to advertising and honouring the social standing of the deceased, of course, the quantity of olfactory dedications likewise demonstrated the status of those paying for the funeral, who could afford to spend vast sums of money in grandiose acts of conspicuous consumption, only to see their investment literally go up in smoke.[45] In this, as in many other ways, funerary ritual expressed the wealth and power of the surviving family members as much as that of the deceased, and in doing so sought to emphasise familial continuity and unending prestige.[46]

4. Smell and Social Transition

As we have seen in discussing its resultant pollution, death necessitated a careful re-negotiation of social structures and relations, and this focus on social continuity is but one illustration of the extent to which the Roman funeral was a multi-faceted and multi-functional ritual.[47] From the perspective of the deceased (and the deceased's family), however, its primary function was that of a rite of passage, removing the deceased from this world and integrating him into the next.[48] As highly public rituals, Roman funerals aimed to enable and demonstrate both this successful transition and, contingent upon its success, the re-integration of death's 'survivors' into the world of the living. In turn, any failure on the part of the living to provide the dead with adequate post-mortem treatment could potentially jeopardise this transition, with considerable consequences. Should funerary rites go unperformed or be performed incorrectly, the deceased was at risk of being

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44 Hardie (2006) 207, describes it as 'an unashamed parroting of Ovid's dead parrot poem, *Amores* 2.6.'

45 Cf. *Stat. Silv.* 2.1.157-65, where this custom is taken to such extremes that it ultimately proves counterproductive: Melior adds so many odiferous tributes to the pyre of his son that 'the jealous fire will not take hold, and the weak flames are unable to burn so great a pile of offerings.'

46 Baroin (2010) 19-48.

47 Bodel (1999) and Kyle (1999).

48 Metcalf and Huntington (1991) 79-130.

condemned to a shadowy or ghost-like existence; neither wholly living nor yet fully at rest, he occupied an indeterminate and interstitial space.[49]

Odour provided sensory confirmation of a successful funeral, one that would lay the deceased's spirit to rest. By contrast, the absence of odour could be taken to indicate that the individual in question had failed to successfully transition to the afterlife. Tibullus, lying ill in a land far from home, worries about the consequences should he die without receiving all aspects of a proper burial, including the pouring of 'Assyrian perfumes' on his remains.[50] Propertius similarly has Cynthia rebuke him from beyond the grave, as her restless spirit laments the lack of aroma which contributed to her current, undesirable, manifestation:

> *cur nardo flammae non oluere meae?*
> *hoc etiam grave erat, nulla mercede hyacinthos*
> *inicere et fracto busta piare cado.*
>
> Why were my flames not perfumed with nard?
> Was it too much effort, to scatter cheap hyacinths,
> to honour my tomb with a shattered jar?[51]

Writing a century later, Persius satirised this requirement that the dead be treated with perfumes, describing how a jealous heir might seek post-mortem revenge by refraining from having the deceased's remains treated with good quality cinnamon or cassia:

> *sed cenam funeris heres*
> *negleget iratus, quod rem curtaveris; urnae*
> *ossa inodora dabit, seu spirent cinnama surdum*
> *seu ceraso peccent casiae, nescire paratus:*
> *"tune bona incolumis minuas?"*
>
> But your heir, angry you've diminished your wealth, will skimp on
> The funeral banquet, commit your ashes unperfumed to the urn,

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49 Johnson (1999) 127-8; Kyle (1998) 128-31.

50 *Tib.* 1.3.5-8.

51 *Prop.* 4.7.32.

> Indifferent to whether the cinnamon smells stale, or the cassia's
> Tainted with cherry. How can you lessen your fortune unscathed?[52]

The passage expressly (albeit mockingly) highlights the importance of the odours themselves; it was not just the expense of the raw materials that was crucial, but the quality and potency of fragrance they emitted. But Persius' mockery, and the genuine importance attributed to its presence by others, raises the question of why odour, in particular, should be so integral to an understanding of the success of the rite. The answer may lie in the qualities of smell itself, qualities which were employed by the Romans to evoke and transcend certain conceptual dilemmas, and which have been explored by modern cultural theorists.

Of all the senses, smell is perhaps the most confounding. Having recognised a smell, we find ourselves unable to articulate what exactly it is we are experiencing without recourse either to the source of the smell, the evaluative categories of good or bad, or the use of a simile. Unlike other sensory modalities, we lack the vocabulary with which to discuss smells on their own terms, and may instead be forced to borrow language from the domains of taste or touch, for example, in describing something as having a bitter or sharp smell.[53] Resistant to language, smells are distinguished by their 'formlessness, indefinability and lack of clear articulation. [They are] characteristically incomplete'.[54] Yet it is precisely this ability to evade conceptualisation that makes the sense of smell so potently evocative. It is these very characteristics that led Dan Sperber to describe them as 'symbols par excellence,'[55] and it is their very incompleteness that positions smells on the fringes of human experience, straddling the boundary between the tangible and the conceptual. An appreciation of these qualities has the potential to provide significant insight into the Romans' use of odour in a number of

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52 *Pers.* 6.33-37.

53 For the fascinating suggestion that this deficiency may be a cultural and linguistic one, see Majid et al. (2018), and the succinctly titled article by Majid and Burenhult (2014) 266-70, which describes how Jahai speakers share an olfactory vocabulary in which terms are not restricted to a narrow class of object, but instead refer to different odour qualities. *Cɲɛs*, for example, is used for the smell of petrol, smoke, bat droppings, and some species of millipede.

54 Gell (1997) 27; *cf.* Sperber (1975) 115-7 and Rindisbacher (1992) 330-1.

55 Sperber (1975) 117-8.

contexts, including but not limited to our current concern with funerary ritual.

Roman religion, for instance, is another such context, within which odour helped to communicate and resolve the riddle of divinity: that of supernatural beings, the nature of whose existence was altogether separate and distinct from that of mortals, but who were nevertheless capable of exerting great influence in the natural world. We have already seen how Pliny alluded to the close connection between certain odiferous materials, the odours they produced, and the gods, such that their dedication to mortals was at best misplaced, and at worst a gross impiety. This association is echoed (however crudely) by Artemidorus' analysis of a dream in which a man wipes his anus with frankincense. His fate was to be convicted of sacrilege, 'since he treated with insolence that with which we honour the gods.'[56] In contrast to Artemidorus' villain, pious religious actors made use of incense and other odours in a range of contexts to honour and evoke the divine. Whether in physical temples or literary descriptions, divine odour was often indicative of divine presence, and the gods were thought to take great pleasure, even nourishment, from these odours.[57] Sacrificial victims, therefore, might be loaded with a range of aromatics before being burnt in offering to deities who feasted on the resulting odours. The burning of the fragrant carcasses, their subsequent transformation from solid to vapour, and the fragrant smoke rising heavenwards established a connection between the physical world of mortals and the metaphysical world of the divine. This connection was made possible by smell's ability to exist partly, simultaneously, but never wholly satisfactorily, in both. The prevalence of this form of worship and the conceptual framework underpinning it was ridiculed by Lucian, who describes how the gods eagerly await the 'steam of burnt offerings,' and are supplicated by 'a godly steam, and fit for godly nostrils, [which] rises heavenwards, and drifts to each quarter of the sky.' The grateful deities are pictured thronging about the altar, their mouths 'open to feast upon the smoke.' [58]

56 *Artem. Oneir.* 5.4.

57 Cf. Clements (2014) 46-59.

58 *Luc. Sacr.* 9-13.

Sweet smells were intimately connected with how the gods were perceived, a 'sign of their supernatural condition.'[59] Divine presence and divine smells were thus indelibly linked, a connection seen not only in religious ritual, but also in literary descriptions of the gods, with Roman authors following a Greek tradition in which the gods are recognizable as sweet-smelling.[60] In Vergil's *Aeneid*, for instance, Aeneas comes to recognise the departing Venus, in part, by the 'divine fragrance'[61] that wafts from her hair. Returning to her home in Paphos, the goddess is said to reside in a temple steaming with Sabaean incense and fresh garlands.[62] Likewise, Plutarch highlights Isis' supernatural condition through reference to the 'wondrous fragrance from her own body' that she shares with others,[63] while the island on which Cronus is thought to sleep is 'suffused with fragrances scattered from the rock as from a fountain'.[64] As they themselves were fragrant, it was fitting that the gods should receive fragrant offerings as nourishment. This need for olfactory offerings was met not only by the community at large, but also by individual Romans, who might place gifts of flowers, perfumes or incense at the foot of statues of the gods. Odours emanating from temples or sanctuaries likewise provided instantaneous understanding of divine presence.[65] Ovid, for instance, vividly relates the heady aromas radiating from the temples on the Kalends of January:

> *cernis odoratis ut lucat ignibus aether,*
> *et sonet accensis spica Cilissa focis?*
> *Flamma nitore suo templorum verberat aurum*
> *et tremulum summa spargit in aede iubar.*
>
> Dost mark how the sky sparkles with fragrant fires,
> and how Cilician saffron crackles on the kindled hearths?

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59 Detienne (1994) 48.

60 Clements (2014) 46-59.

61 *Verg. A.* 1.402-5.

62 On the Sabaei, traders from south-west Arabia (roughly modern Yemen) who were said to travel as far as Troglodytica (modern Somalia) to procure high quality frankincense and myrrh, see *Plin. Nat.* 12.51-3, 12.66.

63 *Plut. De Iside.* 15.

64 *Plut. De Facie.* 26.

65 Caseau (1994) 54-65.

> The flame with its own splendour beats upon the temples'
> gold and spreads a flickering radiance on the hallowed roof.[66]

While temples could afford to spend considerable sums on the most expensive fragrances, there was a wide price range for incense, making it easily accessible as a means of worshipping the gods.[67] Cheap incense allowed those of humbler means to venerate the gods in their own home, by throwing a few grains on the brazier of the Lararium, and Ovid eloquently expresses the inherent egalitarianism of olfactory sacrifice:

> *nec quae de parva pauper dis libat acerra tura,*
> *minus grandi quam data lance valent.*
>
> The incense offered by the poor man from his humble censer
> has not less effect than that given from a huge platter.[68]

The use of perfumes and incense thus provided an olfactory indication of religious action. As Harvey puts it, these aromas 'attuned the mind to devotion and adoration both before and long after the act… had taken place.'[69] Religious processions, to take another example, often had censers placed along their route, wafting incense over the participants.[70] Describing the reception of the goddess Cybele in Rome, Livy records how:

> *turibulis ante ianuas positis quae praeferebatur atque*
> *accenso ture, precantibus ut volens propitiaque urbem*
> *Romanam iniret.*
>
> Censers had been placed before the doors along the route
> of the bearers, and kindling their incense, people prayed
> that gracious and benignant she might enter the city of
> Rome.[71]

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66 *Ov. Fast.* 1.75-8, trans. Frazer.

67 Caseau (1994) 40-2.

68 *Ov. Pont.* 4.8.39-40, trans. Wheeler.

69 Harvey (2006) 14.

70 Caseau (1994) 54-7.

71 *Liv.* 29.14, trans. Moore.

The need for this ceremony indicates that there was an element of doubt as to whether the goddess would choose to enter the city. However the combination of prayer and incense – both ephemeral, intangible manifestations of the citizens' communal piety – aims to secure and facilitate the deity's arrival. The incense is of particular importance in establishing a suitable olfactory environment for Cybele's entry, instigating an olfactory aura of religious sanctification which sought to supplant any and all secular or more mundane aromas. The fragrant smells thus served as a materialisation (however fleeting) both of the citizens' religiosity and of the goddess's presence in the streets of Rome.[72]

This association between smells and the gods helps us to understand the presence of pleasing aromas at Roman funerals. By adorning and burning their bodies with perfumes and incense, the Romans recreated the wonderful aromas which were said to await those who had led honourable lives, received proper burial, and now dwelt in blessed conceptions of the afterlife. In Vergil's Elysium, for instance, the dead are said to reside among 'fragrant groves of laurel,'[73] while that of Tibullus is characterised by the sweet scent of roses and cassia.[74] Plutarch's account of Lethe is that of an idyllic grotto, filled with flowers and accompanied by 'a soft and gentle breeze that carried up fragrant scents, arousing wondrous pleasures.'[75] By incorporating a range of olfactory treatments in their burial practices, Romans aimed to ensure that their dead would smell just as good as the new worlds they would hopefully occupy.[76] Indeed this olfactory connection may also have been intended to ensure the dead's favourable reception among the gods of the underworld.[77]

5. Conclusion

In 1991, sensory anthropologist David Howes proposed a universal association between olfaction and transition. Howes drew on a diverse series of examples, including the Jewish rite of Havdalah, the moment of transub-

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72 Cf. Cicero's account (*Cic. Ver.* 2.4.77) of Diana's exit from Segesta.

73 *Verg. A.* 6.658.

74 *Tib.* 1.3.61-2.

75 *Plut. De Sera.* 27.

76 Cf. *Stat. Silv.* 2.6.85-9, as discussed above (98).

77 Lilja (1967) 54.

stantiation in Roman Catholic mass, and the circumcision and marriage rituals of the Malagasy speakers of Madagascar. Assessing the use of odour, he concluded that in each case 'the primal/sensory emotive experience of smell is used to fill in the gaps of logical/semantic structures, and thus instigate transition between social categories'.[78] In order to understand why smell is so ubiquitous in these contexts, he points to its intrinsic qualities, as outlined earlier in this paper and underlined by Alfred Gell: 'the incompleteness, the disembodiedness of smells... makes them the model for the ideal which hovers on the edge of actualization'.[79] This indeterminacy and intangibility allows smell to confound the usual distinction between concept and object, making it ideally suited to matters of liminality and category change.

This paper has demonstrated how these qualities were incorporated and played an active role in Roman funerary ritual, working alongside other elements such as music, the performance of lamentation and the length of the procession itself. It has also attempted to establish how an understanding of smell as a sensory phenomenon may contribute to a more holistic appreciation of these rituals' efficacy as rites of passage and displays of elite identity. In doing so, it has examined the extent to which stimulating and potent aromas pervaded all aspects of elite Roman funerals, from the pungent cypress branch to heady blends of Arabian spices. The ubiquity of these materials within Roman funerary contexts is suggestive of the model proposed by Howes, with odour and its intrinsic properties serving as a symbolic mechanism through which Romans might approach the incomprehensible nature of death itself. The use of odour in Roman funerals was therefore multi-functional, but went well beyond the obvious necessity of masking the stench of rotting and decaying flesh. As the writings of Statius, Plutarch, and others reveal, the quality and quantity of olfactory offerings secured by wealthy Romans served as a ritual expression of grief and mourning, and a way of bestowing honour and prestige upon the recipient. Simultaneously, however, their incorporation within the funeral spectacle itself helped communicate the social rank and status of the participants. As the procession moved with measured step across the city, the odours emanating

78 Howes (1991) 133.

79 Gell (1997) 29.

from it extended the geographical area in which its presence was felt, contributing to a multisensory display of elite identity.

In doing so, olfactory offerings came to provide an outlet for elite competition, one that was to be eventually usurped by the pre-eminence of the emperors. Imperial obsequies drew on many elements of traditional aristocratic funerals, and in this the use of odour was no different. While living emperors might adopt the wearing of perfume as an expression of their imperial power over mortals,[80] the use of odour at imperial funerals expressed a different, divine power, promoting an appreciation of their impending deification. Consider the funeral of Septimius Severus, as recounted by Herodian, which is worth quoting at length:

> The bier is taken up and placed on the second storey. Every perfume and incense on earth and all the fruits and herbs and juices that are collected for their aroma are brought up and poured out in great heaps. Every people and city and prominent person of distinction vies with each other to send these last gifts in honour of the emperor. When an enormous pile of these aromatic spices has been accumulated and the entire place has been filled, there is a cavalry procession around the pyre in which the whole equestrian order rides in a circle round and round in a fixed formation, following the movement and rhythm of the Pyrrhic dance... After this part of the ceremony the heir to the principate takes a torch and puts it to the built-up pyre, while everyone else lights the fire all round. The whole structure easily catches fire and burns without difficulty because of the large amount of dry wood and aromatic spices which are piled high inside.[81]

The emphasis on the role of smell is considerable; the culmination of the funeral is expressed not only through visual displays (a cavalry exhibition, the flaming pyre), but also by sustained reference to the presence of odour throughout the rite. The emperor's worldwide dominion is reflected in the scale and diversity of olfactory offerings, while Herodian also underlines how the provinces from which these substances were sourced were only too happy to offer them as a means of honouring the emperor. Their subsequent cremation is of central importance to consolidating the intended result of

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80 Potter (1999) 169-89 and Bowersock (1997) 544-56.

81 *Herodian Hist.* 4.2.8-11, trans. Whittaker.

the ritual and the emperor's new status: 'after that he is worshipped with the rest of the gods'.[82] The connection between odour and the gods, and odour's subsequent incorporation within funerary ritual, so bemoaned by Pliny, reached its logical conclusion under the principate, as the extravagant use of incense and perfumes impressed upon observers the imminent apotheosis of the emperor: he was made to smell like a god in the expectation that this was what he would become.

Returning to funerary odours more generally, however, we have also seen how their use on the corpse and along the processional route differentiated and demarcated funerary space from that of everyday existence. The heady aromas not only advertised the presence of funerary ritual, but also contributed strongly to the creation of what Scheid has called an 'espace funéraire,'[83] within which the status of the deceased could be broken down and re-established as that of an ancestor. This facet was of obvious importance in a society where remembering one's ancestors and following in their footsteps was a significant aspect of elite identity. Within this space, smell served to advertise, and simultaneously combat, the pollution afflicting both the corpse and those closest to it.

What emerges from this discussion is the close association between death and odour which persisted in both theory and practice. Funereal smells inspired an understanding of the deceased's metaphysical destination as much as their final earthly journey. Our sources indicate that the connection between the Roman dead and odour did not end with the conclusion of the liminal period, but that the dead might be imagined as residing in a fragrant paradise. It is therefore no surprise to find that this association continued to be actively maintained long after the completion of the funeral itself. Nine days later, the family returned to the tomb for the *cena novendialis*. Now dressed in white and having undergone the ritual of *suffitio*, they no longer suffered the stigma of death pollution and could thus engage in feasting and revelry.[84] Festivals such as the Lemuria and Parentalia, held annually, attempted to ensure that interaction between the living and the dead remained benevolent. In each case, gifts of incense and perfume might be set before the tomb, with one inscription recording an explicit request

82 *Herodian Hist.* 4.2.11.

83 Scheid (1984) 119.

84 Toynbee (1996) 51; Bodel (2000) 141-2.

that former slaves of the deceased continue to burn incense at his tomb three times a month.[85]

The preservation and active re-enactment of this association allowed the Romans to employ a similar conceptual framework in imagining their dead as that used to denote deities. Just as it pointed to the otherwordly nature of the gods, so too did the use of odour evoke the conceptual gap that lay between the worlds of the living and the dead, while also acting as a bridge between them. Ashley Clements' observation on the connection between the nature of odour and the nature of divinity, namely that 'odour emerges as an experience of divinity, and divinity, in turn, as an experience of odour'[86] can therefore be seen to apply just as readily to the connection between odour and death. Considered in olfactory terms, then, death itself was simultaneously othered yet familiar, and the scents that pervaded the Roman funeral intimately bound up with the expression and negotiation of grief.

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85 *CIL* 6.10248.

86 Clements (2014) 59.

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Illustrations

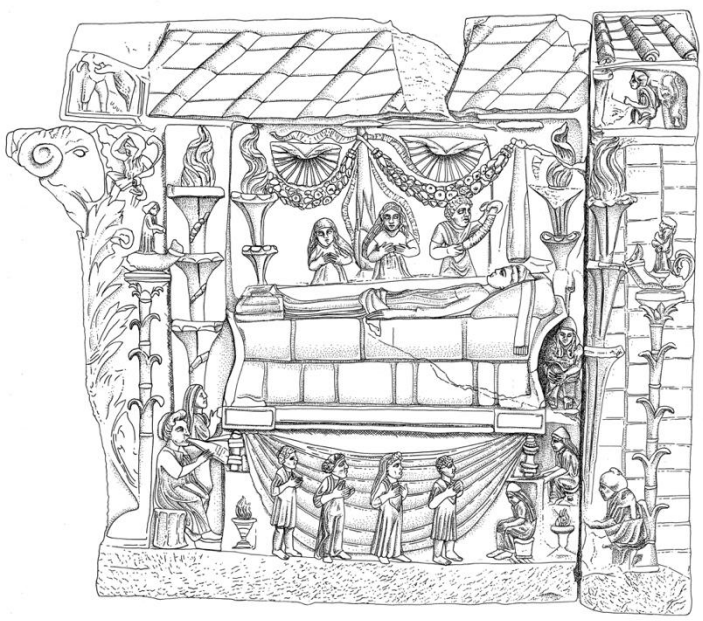

Figure 1. Lying-in-state relief from the tomb of the Haterii, Rome, c.100-110 CE. Illustration by Jerneja Willmott; copyright Maureen Carroll.

Figure 2. Funerary relief from Amiternum, c.50 BCE. Photograph: copyright Christopher Johanson.

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An Emperor's Tears: The Significance of the Public Mourning of the Julio-Claudian Emperors

1. Introduction: An Emperor's Tears

AT the death of Germanicus in 19 CE, the behaviour of the emperor Tiberius came under scrutiny. How would Tiberius react to his nephew's death? According to Tacitus, the failure of Tiberius, and his mother, to make a public appearance was telling, since it revealed that Tiberius and Livia did not wish their lack of sorrow to be witnessed:

> ….all men knew that Tiberius was with difficulty dissembling his joy at the death of Germanicus. He and Augusta abstained from any appearance in public, either holding it below their majesty to sorrow in the sight of men, or apprehending that, if all eyes perused their looks, they might find hypocrisy legible.[1]

All eyes wished to be upon the emperor, and thus Tiberius judged it best not to be seen at all. In Tacitus' account, Tiberius' behaviour as the lead mourner for Germanicus needed to match his behaviour as the leader of the Roman world; as both mourner and emperor, Tiberius was characteristically secretive, untrusting and in many respects quintessentially bad.

The intention here is to investigate how the Roman emperors from Augustus to Nero were presented as mourning for those that they had lost, placing a new emphasis on an often previously over-looked aspect in the evaluation of ancient character. The reputations of emperors were grounded in many things, but personal attributes and the balancing of the traditional qualities, such as *gravitas*, *dignitas*, *pietas* and *virtus* were central to the definition of what is was to be a good Roman, and a good Roman emperor.[2]

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1 Tacitus *Annals* 3.2-3. Translation by John Jackson (1931: Loeb Classical Library 249, 525).

2 For virtues see, for example, Wallace-Hadrill (1981); Noreña (2001), Balmaceda (2017); for the importance of exemplarity and models of conduct and character in ancient history writing in particular see Roller (2009); Roller (2018); Balmaceda (2017).

One of the greatest challenges to such qualities, which interconnected the personal and the public, was the emotion of grief, its management and display.

2. Welling up – Displaying Grief

Reconstructing how emperors felt during bereavement, or the intensity of their grief, is not the objective (nor possible). Instead this is an investigation of how emperors were presented in the surviving textual sources as mourners, and the significance attached to their public mourning.[3] How to define 'the emotions' – psychologically, physically, socially, linguistically, culturally and cross-culturally – is complex and challenging.[4] A Roman experience of grief would not have been identical to the experience of grief in other times and places, and the understanding of what grief entailed differed. In the ancient world grief was not always identified as a separate emotion (or passion) and could be seen as a subcategory of pain.[5] Aristotle did not include grief among the emotions in his *Rhetoric*, as Konstan has put it because it was 'a component of emotions, rather than a fully-fledged emotion in its own right'.[6] Equally Cicero, following Stoic arguments, classed grief under the passion of *aegritudo* (distress), which he described as the most challenging.[7] Nevertheless, in the Roman world grief was viewed as entailing certain expected (if not always accepted) reactions, and grief, or at least the pain of loss, was also seen as natural and part of the human condition.[8] Further, the rituals associated with the disposal of the dead had a public aspect, and mourners, whether experiencing grief or not, could be spectated and commented upon.[9]

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3 The focus here is on literary texts rather than material culture. The latter (for example, funeral monuments, statues, relief sculptures, coins) also had the potential to represent emperors as mourners, though it rarely did so explicitly, instead more often commemorating the dead (and thus the connections of the living to the dead) rather than grief.

4 Cairns (2008); Cairns and Fulkerson (2015).

5 Erskine (1997) 41.

6 Arist. *Rh.* 2.1, 1378a 20-23; Konstan (2016) 17.

7 Cic. *Tusc.* 3.27.

8 See, for example, Cic. *Ad Brut.* 1.9.2; Sen. *ad Marc.* 7.1; Sen. *Ep.* 63.1; Sen *Ep.* 99.16; Plut. *Cons ux.* 4.

9 See also Bakogianni in this issue (45-46).

In ancient Rome, mourning, that is an expected and often scripted enactment of grief, was a public, ritualised, body-focused, sensory performance.[10] In the days following a death and especially at the funeral, mourners were visible and audible, adapting bodies, faces, hair, clothing, gestures and sounds to mark the state of bereavement and their role in the essential death rites. The extent, and ways, in which these markers were used varied according to factors such as the gender, status and age of the individual mourner, and the closeness and nature of the relationship between the mourner and the deceased. Elite men, who suffered bereavements, were generally not tasked with the messiest, noisiest and most demonstrative ritual acts, which were performed by paid undertakers, hired mourners and the women of the household. At a family funeral, a man could help carry the bier, or follow it, deliver the eulogy and appear sorrowful; and up until nine days after the death, a man might don dark clothing, could elect not to shave or wash, and could give some visible and physical expression to suffering through countenance and tears.[11] Ideals existed, and to some extent were promoted via legislation, that male mourning was to be limited and controlled.[12] Not everyone, however, viewed grief as an emotion that had to be largely suppressed; poetic consolations, for example, could note and celebrate both male and female suffering, although still often counselling the bereaved to be strong, and accepting of their losses.[13] These consolations may also reflect some changes to traditional mourning conduct which occurred as a result of the move from Republican government to rule by the emperors; elite men may have compensated for diminishing public roles by placing more emphasis on family, personal relationships and *pietas*, values

10 Here a broad distinction is maintained between grief (the emotional reaction to loss) and mourning (public processes and actions that express and accommodate loss), with the focus upon the latter. For overviews of the difficulties of distinguishing between grief and mourning, and also Latin terminology for grief and mourning, see Hope (2011) 92-95; (2017a) 40-44; (2017b) note 3. For the idea of cultural scripts and performative bodies, including in mourning see, Goffman (1959); Walter (1999); Waskul and Vannini (2013).

11 For mourning behaviours and gender distinctions in mourning roles see Presendi (1995); Richlin (2001); Corbeill (2004); Mustakallio (2005); Šterbenc Erker (2009); Mustakallio (2014); Hope (2017b); Hope (2019).

12 For legal rulings on mourning periods see Plut. *Num.* 12; Sen. *Ep.* 63.13; Paulus *Sent.* 1.21.2-5; *Dig.* (Paulus) 3.2.9.

13 See, for example, Stat. *Silv.* 5.3.

that were also central to the Imperial family.[14] It was never the case, however, that men were expected to suffer no grief or no pain, just that open and extensive expression of loss could be seen as unmanly and incompatible with public office-holding. Men might grieve in their hearts, but for others to witness expressions of this grief, beyond certain scripted and codified mourning roles, was often problematic.

Mourning was then public, something to be seen and commented upon, but how it (and the grief that it tokened) was performed by men was limited by convention. Within these limits tears were important. The face was the most visible, most exposed part of the body of a mourner, and one of the standard emblems of bereavement was for the face to be marked by tear-filled eyes and tear-stained cheeks.[15] The face, and eyes in particular, could be viewed by Roman writers as central to the expression of emotion and character, and for tears to fall as a result of grief was viewed as a natural, spontaneous, humane and simple reaction to the pain of loss, the shedding of which could also be cathartic for the bereaved.[16] Weeping, including by men, was an accepted medium for the representation of sorrow, a way of expressing the suffering of the inner self.[17] Crying could also be a communal act; to cry for and with the bereaved, as well as for the dead per se, was perceived as part of human character.[18] Juvenal, for example, observed that Nature gave the human race the gift of tears as a sign of compassion for the afflicted, to express an understanding of distress, and to bind communities

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14 Dixon (1991); Bodel (1999); Hope (2011); McCullough (2011); Hope (2019).

15 This is not to dispute that some mourners may have covered their heads, veiled their faces or kept their heads bowed, these gestures in themselves also symbolising grief, cf. Cairns (2009).

16 For the face and character: Cic. *Leg.* 1.9.27; Cic. *Orat.* 3.221-23; Plin. *HN* 11.143-46. For ancient physiognomy, see Rizzini (1998); Swain (2007) 180-86. For the naturalness of tears: Sen *Ep.* 99. 15; 99.18-19; Sen. *Thyestes* 950; Ov. *Tr.* 4.3, 37-8; Plut. *Mor. De cohib. ira* 455c.

17 Male tears could have symbolic significance, being a rare expression of genuine emotional disturbance, humanity and empathy, Rey (2015). For the power in tears more generally, including gendered aspects, see Hagen 2017.

18 Emotions, including physical reactions such as crying, may be shared due to empathy (consciously situating oneself in another's psychological state) and/or emotional contagion (the often involuntary 'catching' of the emotions of others which then become one's own) see for example, Hatfield, Cacioppo and Rapson (1994); Coplan (2011).

together.[19] Tears were also owed to the dead as an act of religious and familial piety and thus it was the duty of the bereaved to supply them, even if some of the weeping was paid for, or forced.[20] The tears could be viewed as a gift to the spirits of the departed, a liquid offering to be set alongside other libations such as blood, milk and wine.[21] The presence (or absence) of tears was then linked not just to grief, but also to piety, duty, honour, ritual and thus cultural as well as emotional expectations.[22]

Tears, subtly and appropriately shed, could be an acceptable public symbol of loss.[23] For the emperors, their unique social and political position, and also that of the family members they mourned for, entailed both close public scrutiny of their mourning, and also some scope to adapt (or even ignore) traditional codes of behaviour. The emperor's mourning, especially at funerals, was a public event, an opportunity for the emperor to display authority, power and traditional virtues, and to communicate with his subjects. An emperor in his mourning had to mediate between, and appeal to, both an elite and non-elite audience, and thus traditional elite male mourning scripts needed to be balanced with wider expectations. How an emperor was seen to mourn, and in particular weep, could be part of his public self-fashioning, but also something that was recorded, interpreted and used to shape his lasting reputation. In a high mortality society, death was very much a part of life, and for the living their responses to and management of the

19 Juv. 15.132-58.

20 For tears and piety see, for example, Ov. *Met.* 13. 621-22; Sen. *Oct.* 270; Stat. *Silv.* 3.3.7. For false, forced and performed tears see, for example, Cic. *Tusc.* 3.27.64; Hor. *Ars. P.* 431; Mart.1.33; Juv. 13.133.

21 Tib. 2.4.44; Ov. *Pont.* 1.9.53-54; Sen. *Troades* 133; Stat. *Silv.* 3.3.213; Stat. *Silv.* 5.3.46. Despite some excavated glass vessels, including from graves, being labelled as lachrymatories there is no evidence that a mourner's tears were collected, bottled and then interred with the dead, cf. *Psalm* 56.8.

22 For the importance of situating tears, rather than judging them as real or false, and the ritual performative role of tears, see, for example, Ebersole (2000).

23 This could be true in other contexts too; compare, for example, crying and mourning appearance (*squalor*) performed in the law courts and by orators, and as political protest in the late Republic see, for example, Hall (2014); Hagen (2017), 67-109. But how public tears were evaluated and judged, could be context specific, thus dramatic crying in court may have been more acceptable for an elite man than dramatic crying at a family funeral.

deaths of others, could become a powerful factor in framing their own character, and how it was in turn framed by others. For the Julio-Claudian emperors mourning was writ large on a very public stage.

3. Teary-eyed

As with so many aspects of his rule, Augustus provided the model as to how an emperor should take his losses. A long life meant that Augustus was well schooled in bereavement, and these bereavements were not just familial and personal tragedies, but also moments of public tension and thus potential instability for the state. The biographer Suetonius claimed that Augustus accepted the deaths of his loved-ones with resignation, in fact with greater resignation than when members of his family disgraced themselves, the implication being that death, unlike debauchery, was not a failing of character. Suetonius emphasised in particular that late in Augustus' life the death of his two young grandsons (and adopted sons) did not break his spirit.[24] Seneca the Younger also held up Augustus as a paradigm, since despite his repeated losses, Augustus was brave and did not rail against the gods.[25] Augustus, according to Seneca, won the battle with grief, 'Augustus rose victor, not only over foreign nations, but also over sorrows'.[26] Seneca places Augustus alongside other famous men, for example, Scipio Africanus, Sulla and Julius Casear, who put duty to the state above personal loss.[27] Augustus could be a model for others who were facing grief because, despite enduring repeated bereavements, he placed his responsibilities before his own suffering and thus conformed to philosophically idealised views of how an educated, office-holding, elite Roman male should behave.[28]

However, Augustus' characterisation as a successful public mourner, his control and acceptance, was tempered both by careful execution of his expected duties towards the dead and the belief that he did genuinely grieve. Seneca notes not only the extent of Augustus' losses – his sister, sons-in-law, children and grandchildren – but also that these were real 'sorrows'

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24 Suet. *Aug*. 65.2. For exemplarity in Suetonius' Life of Augustus see Gunderson (2014).

25 Sen. *ad Marc*. 15.2-3. For an overview of Seneca's engagement with Augustan culture see Ker (2015).

26 Sen. *Polyb*. 15.3

27 Sen. *ad Marc*. 12.3-15; Sen. *ad Polyb*. 14.4-16.3

28 Sen. *ad Marc*. 7.3; compare Sen. *Ep*. 63.13; [Plut.] *Cons. ad Apoll*. 22.

(*eius luctus*) that distressed him.[29] Public duty may have come first, but Augustus was thought to have experienced the pain of his bereavements, and moreover he shared this pain with, and was supported in it, by the Roman people. The bereavements of Augustus made him human, his sorrows were clear 'evidence that he was a man', a figure people could empathise with and from whom they in turn expected empathy.[30] Giving public expression to sorrow could be seen as an essential characteristic of good rule. Augustus' losses were not just his own, and to deny them by showing no signs of grief, would have been just as foolhardy as to be overwhelmed by grief.

Augustus was artful in stage-managing his public grieving, presenting a suitable mixture of sorrow and strength. During his rule, Augustus escorted many family members to his large mausoleum, adapting and extending traditional funeral rites. These adaptations included: the lengthy and elaborate transportation to the city of the remains of his prospective male heirs (whose deaths all occurred away from Rome); the locating of the pre-funeral display of the body of the deceased in the Forum and/or the temple of Julius Caesar, rather than in the family home; and the delivery of two funeral eulogies, rather than the more usual one.[31] In addition a *iustitium,* or formal suspension of public duties, legal and political life, could be decreed at the

29 Sen. *ad Polyb*. 15.3; Sen. *ad Marc*. 15.2. See also Sen. *Ben*.32-2-4, for how Augustus struggled (if somewhat disingenuously) with the loss of his friends, Agrippa and Maecenas. For the sense of his repeated losses see Plin. *HN* 7.150; for deliberate irony in Suetonius and Dio Cassius, especially about Augustus' domestic affairs, see Kemezis (2007), Langlands (2014); and for Seneca's subtle highlighting of imperfections in the imperial family see Gloyn (2017).

30 Sen. *ad Polyb*. 15.3.

31 Marcellus and Agrippa died in Campania (Prop. 3.18; Dio Cass. 54.28.3); Elder Drusus on the German frontier (Suet. *Tib*. 7; Plin *HN* 7.84; Dio Cass. 55.2.2), Lucius Caesar in Gaul, and Gaius Caesar in Lycia (Dio Cass. 55.12.1). Agrippa lay in state in the Forum, though exactly where in the Forum is not specified (Dio Cass. 54.28.3) and Octavia's body was displayed in the temple of Julius Caesar (Dio Cass. 54.35.4). Double eulogies were delivered for the Elder Drusus (Dio Cass. 55.2.2) and for Octavia (Dio Cassius 54.35.5). For these eulogies, and the locations for their delivery, see Sumi (2011) 225-26; Marrone and Nicolini (2010). Other aspects of these funerals, such as the procession were also probably elaborated, see Dio Cass. 54.28.5.

death of a member of the Imperial household.[32] The *iustitium* was a pragmatic approach to control behaviour and a symbol of the increasing legal authority of the emperor, but in effect it placed the whole city in mourning, and created a sense of expectation for the funeral. At these funerals Augustus fulfilled the usual duties, most notably delivering eulogies.[33] Texts of these speeches do not survive, except for a few lines of the eulogy Augustus delivered for Agrippa (12 BCE), which noted Agrippa's authority and powers.[34] The funeral speeches given by Augustus may have been more about lauding the achievements of the dead (and thus his own family) than marking grief, but the latter may have at least been acknowledged.[35] Funeral speeches, however, were more than just words, which would have been only audible by a few people (even if subsequently published), but a performance of emotions and gestures, with available props such as ancestor masks (*imagines*), delivered in evocative settings. The funeral, eulogy and all, was a multisensory event with a deliberate emotive pull, and Augustus, as the head mourner and orchestrator of events, had to represent (and lead the expression of) both personal and public loss, and mediate and control any

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32 The deaths of Gaius and Lucius Caesar were each marked by a *iustitium* (*CIL* 6, 31195; *Insc. Ital.* 13.1.7), although it is unclear whether this was also the case for other deaths during Augustus' reign. For length of *iustitia* and the relationship to public mourning see Agamben 2005, 65-73; Kerkeslager 2006.

33 Eulogies were traditionally delivered by a senior male relative, often the eldest son, Polyb. 6.53.2. In the case of a public funeral a senior officeholder might be chosen to make the speech. The double eulogy at Imperial funerals thus allowed for two speakers, both distinguished office holders, but often of different generations of the Imperial family. Augustus is said to have spoken at the funerals of Marcellus (Dio Cass. 53.30.5), Agrippa (Dio Cass. 54.28.3), Elder Drusus (*Cons. Livia* 29-16; Livy *Per.*142; Dio Cass. 55.2.1-2) and Octavia (Dio Cass. 54.35.4). Whether he spoke at the funerals of his grandsons' is not known.

34 *P. Köln* I 10.

35 The double eulogy may have allowed for sentiment in at least one of the speeches. Dio Cassius notes that at the funeral of Augustus, Tiberius spoke a public eulogy, requested by the Senate, from the temple of Julius Caesar, while the Younger Drusus spoke from the rostra words of a more private nature (56. 34.4- 35.3). Compare also the fragmentary text of a speech delivered by Hadrian after the death of his mother-in-law (119 CE) which noted the emperor's personal sorrow; though the speech may have been delivered in support of Matidia's deification, Jones 2004.

negative implications and repercussions.[36] These Imperial funerals needed to be dignified, respectful and sorrowful, but also celebratory and in some respects positive and transformative.

The performance of grief needed to be visible, to be perceived as heartfelt and thus an emotion that united emperor and subjects. Augustus and everyone else needed to cry together. A decree issued and recorded in Pisa at the death of Gaius Caesar (4 CE), noted that the death, so soon after that of Lucius Caesar, had 'renewed and multiplied the grief of everyone singly and collectively', and that the people of Pisa would change their clothes, stop public business, shut temples, baths and shops until after the funeral.[37] In communicating their own grief (and public demonstrations of this), the people of Pisa were laying claim to a share of the mourning, and thus a connection to the Imperial family. This idea of the universality of the impact of these deaths was perhaps most forcefully communicated in poetry, especially that associated with the death of the emperor's nephew, Marcellus (23 BCE). Book 6 of Virgil's *Aeneid* elevated the demise of Marcellus to a national loss, while acknowledging real pain and sadness.[38] Furthermore, in poetry Augustus' own tears, his personal grief, and its public expression could be celebrated, and thereby memorialised. A poetic consolation – ostensibly composed at the death of the Elder Drusus (9 BCE), but probably later in date - suggested that the emperor, when bereaved, frequently shed tears.[39] Noting how Augustus had mourned and buried Marcellus, Agrippa and Octavia, the poet states that Drusus' death 'is the fourth to draw tears from mighty Caesar'.[40] Later in the same poem it is emphasised that at the deaths of Marcellus and Octavia, the tears of Augustus were public and witnessed, 'each in the sight of the people did Caesar weep'.[41] The poet also

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36 For multi-sensory aspects of funerals see Potter (2016) 36-44; Hope (2017b); Beck (2018).

37 *CIL* 11, 1421, 52-62. See Lott (2012) 73-74.

38 Verg. *Aen.*860-886. See also Prop. 3.18. For literary representations of Marcellus and the associated mourning see Harrison (2017) and Hope (forthcoming).

39 The authorship and date of this work is uncertain, but it is possibly Tiberian. It toys with familial grief reactions which elevate the reputations of the deceased and the mourners. For discussion see Schrijvers (1988); Schoonhoven (1992); Jenkins (2009); Peirano (2012) 205-41; Ursini (2014).

40 *Cons. Livia* 72.

41 *Cons. Livia* 442.

suggests that Augustus delivered the funeral eulogy for Drusus using both voice and tears, with sorrow checking the flow of sad words.[42] Propertius, in a poem that would have been published in Augustus' lifetime (the subject, Cornelia, died in 16 BCE) notes that Augustus even wept for his ex-step-daughter, 'we saw a god's tears flow'.[43] There may have been some intended irony in references to Augustus' tears, that even the most powerful cannot cheat the suffering brought by death, but simultaneously the tears underlined the emperor's humanity, that he was thought to have suffered like others, and thus was connected to, not distant from, his subjects. In his public mourning Augustus was remembered as openly weeping at the deaths of Marcellus, Drusus, Octavia and Cornelia, with poets picturing Augustus revealing his sadness to the Roman people in an acceptable and dignified fashion.[44] These tears were an act of religious and familial piety, yet were also readily interpreted as a testament of genuine grief. Augustus' tears allowed him to communicate with his subjects (from a range of status groups), were a symbol of the emperor's strength rather than weakness, and created a bond of shared emotional experience between emperor and people. The tears were also a mark of esteem for those Augustus wept for – they were deserving of an emperor's tears, and this esteem could retain value long after Augustus' own death.

The reign of Augustus was in many ways marked by deaths and disappointments, and to a large degree his responses, and indeed those of the wider populace, were scripted and controlled acts of social obligation and duty. Everyone knew what they were expected to do, from the people of Pisa who had to enact mourning for a prince they had never met to Augustus himself in his prioritising of his public responsibilities while showing his common humanity. Augustus' losses were elevated, and the expression of sorrow justified, by being universally shared, yet these losses could not be allowed either to break him or the state. Grief needed to be both witnessed and then controlled. Solidarity, common cause and continuity were the

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42 *Cons. Livia* 209-10.

43 Prop. 4.11.60. For the complexities and ironies in the poem (especially in Cornelia's presentation as an idealised *matrona*) see, for example, Dufallo (2007) 84-88; Lowrie (2009) 349-59; Racette-Campbell (2016).

44 Note Augustus, before becoming *princeps*, was also said to have wept at the deaths of Julius Caesar (Nic. Dam. 51) and Antony (Plut. *Ant.* 68).

characteristics of Augustan mourning.[45] How Augustus was subsequently presented as a mourner, reflected his own careful crafting of his mourning image, but also the usefulness of the first emperor as a model in all things, including idealised qualities centred on *pietas*, modesty, self-control and empathy. Augustus the mourner could be a philosophical paradigm (this is how one should take grief), a biographer's benchmark of character in the face of adversity (grief did not break him), a poet's symbol of the suffering inherent in the human condition (even an emperor must shed tears) or an esteem-marker for those mourned (reflecting well on their surviving relatives). Augustus as a mourner could not be separated from who he was, his wider reputation and his enduring usefulness as a model of what a (generally) good emperor should be.[46]

4. Dry-eyed

The successors of Augustus rarely fared well in how their mourning behaviour was recorded and assessed. Some may have been less astute than Augustus in understanding the value of mourning, but the negative characterisations are also a legacy of the surviving texts, which are marked by an absence of sympathetic poetic stances, and the survival of the judgemental posthumous voices of history and biography. When evaluating an emperor's character mourning roles were grist for the mill. Augustus' balance of control and emotion was a hard act to follow, and commentators were quick to focus upon misjudged mourning as a benchmark of wider failings.

Tiberius was rarely dewy eyed, and this was rendered problematic by Tacitus in particular. The death of Germanicus was a key point in Tacitus' narrative of the reign. The young prince died away from Rome and under suspicious circumstances. The widowed Agrippina was bereft and the people of Rome were devastated, yet by contrast Tiberius (and his mother Livia) showed no emotion in public, their faces were not seen.[47] Tacitus draws

45 Cf. Electra's mourning which threatens those in power. See Bakogianni in this issue (60 and 62).

46 For exemplarity as used by and in the characterisation of emperors see, for example, Kraus (2005). For the use of tears in the characterisation of historical figures, see Hagen (2017) 272-335.

47 Tac. *Ann.* 2. 69-83; 3.1-6. For the theme of Tiberius' concealment of character and emotion in Tacitus see O'Gorman (2000) 79-89.

unfavourable parallels with the events and ceremonies that surrounded the death of the Elder Drusus under Augustus; for Germanicus by contrast there were no 'tears and imitations (if no more) of sorrow'.[48] For Tacitus, Tiberius was too controlled, too focused on stabilising state business, and the absence of tears was a telling sign that the emperor felt no genuine grief or remorse, even if Tiberius was said to have promoted the line that 'princes are mortal, the state immortal'.[49] Tacitus also negatively characterises Tiberius' behaviour at the death of his own son, the Younger Drusus (CE 23). Tiberius continued to attend the Senate while his son was ill, and even did so following his death, in the days before the funeral.[50] Tiberius sought consolation by keeping busy, by putting state matters first.[51] The funeral involved an impressive pageant of ancestral masks and included a eulogy delivered by the emperor-father, but for Tacitus the mourning display was clearly inadequate. Tiberius would further compound this lack of empathy, his inability to display common decency and humanity, by failing to attend his own mother's funeral and then denying the families of his victims the right to mourn.[52] Tacitus' Tiberius shed no public tears for his family, and in a tyrannical act also denied the familial public tears of others.[53]

Other surviving evidence does counter aspects of how Tacitus deployed and described Tiberius' mourning. The decree issued after the death of Germanicus and the trial of Piso, noted that the emperor had shown many proofs of his sorrow, a sorrow that should now end. The decree also praised other members of the Imperial family, including Agrippina, for the restraint and appropriate nature of their grief (*dolore moderatione*), at least in the context of the trial.[54] Tiberius and Livia are cited as positive examples that the younger generation (the sons of Germanicus) had followed, and in many

48 Tac. *Ann.* 3.5.

49 Tac. *Ann.* 3.6.

50 Tac. *Ann.* 4.8. Presumably Tiberius did not touch or see the corpse of his son, and was thus still able to attend the Senate, see note 55. For discussion of Tacitus' representation of the funeral and mourning for Germanicus see O'Gorman (2000) 66-69; Hope (2011).

51 Tac. *Ann.* 4.8; 4.13. See also Suet. *Tib.* 52.1-2.

52 Tac. *Ann.* 5.2; 6.19.

53 For tears and crying in Tacitus see de Libero (2009); Hagen (2017) 202-235.

54 *Senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre*, 445-69. See Eck, Caballos & Fernàndez (1996); Lott (2012) 153-55.

ways Tiberius was conforming to the expected traditional models for male mourning by prioritising duty to the state. Seneca the Younger also highlighted that Tiberius' mourning behaviour was respectful of tradition, and a paradigm of self-control, since Tiberius delivered the eulogy for his own son, while respecting the expectation that he, as priest, should not look upon the body, and 'Tiberius' countenance did not change while the Roman people wept'.[55] Josephus also offered a somewhat softer alternative perspective on Tiberius' paternal grief, though still one marked by the need for self-control, noting that Tiberius forbade the friends of Drusus to visit him because the sight of them grieved him by recalling the memory of his dead son.[56] Dio Cassius even defends Tiberius against criticism that he was unfeeling at his son's death by stating that this was how he always behaved at bereavements, and that he greatly loved his child.[57] Therein perhaps lay the problem, Tiberius may well have grieved deeply, but was not inclined to share this publicly; he was simply not a believer in or adept at displays (staged or not) of emotional public mourning. How Tiberius organised funerals may have followed traditional expectations, and the adaptations introduced by Augustus, but Tiberius lacked the public emotional literacy of Augustus, with his countenance (*vultus*) either being concealed or seemingly un-changed when confronted with loss. Tiberius did not share his grief

55 Sen. *ad Marc*. 15.3. Note Seneca also alludes to Germanicus' death but does not consider Tiberius' reactions to it, see Gloyn (2017) 145- 47. For Tiberius' reaction to his brother Drusus' death (pre-dating his reign) and again with a clear focus on self-control and the suppression of tears, see Sen. *ad Polyb*. 15.5. More generally for his devotion to his brother and grief at his loss, see Livy *Per*. 142; *Cons. Livia* 85-88 (and for the possible Tiberian date of the latter see note 35); Val Max. 5.5.3. For Tiberius' continuing use of his connection with Drusus see Champlin (2011).

56 Joseph. *AJ* 18.146.

57 Dio Cass. 57.22.3-4. Dio, as Seneca, notes the use of a curtain or screen at the funeral so that Tiberius could not see the body. Dio also notes the use of the same device by Augustus at the deaths of Agrippa (54.28.4) and Octavia (54.35.4-5). This may represent a particular fascination of Dio Cassius with ritual, but also reminds that for all the performative and emotive aspects of mourning, funerals had religious (and ritual pollution) elements and that emperors were present not just as family mourners, but also as holders of religious office. Note also that Augustus, just returned from campaign, was unable to attend the Forum for the Elder Drusus' funeral on religious grounds, so delivered his eulogy from the Circus Flaminius, Dio Cass. 55.2.2-3.

with the Roman people, what they witnessed was the tears of others and not the tears of their emperor.

Other emperors could also be steely-faced. Claudius, who admittedly suffered no major bereavements during his reign (parents, siblings and two children – one exposed - had died prior to his time as emperor, and his remaining children outlived him) offered limited scope for ancient comment in his capacity as emperor-mourner. The biggest personal tragedy of Claudius' reign was the treachery and execution of his wife, Messalina, and his enigmatic reaction to this, including a potential lack of empathy with his now motherless children did draw brief comment, since according to Tacitus he showed no human emotion, whether hatred, joy, anger or sadness, including when he saw his children's distress.[58] A lack of emotion, even if one had ordered the death-penalty for one's nearest and (not so) dearest, was dehumanising. After the execution of Tiberius Gemellus (grandson of Tiberius) in 37 CE, the emperor Gaius made no mention, acknowledgement or justification of this in the Senate.[59] Gaius was also alleged to have shown a lack of respect for his grandmother, Antonia (in whose death he may have played a part), by voting her no posthumous honours, and watching her pyre burning from his dining room.[60] The apparent absence of grief could also be a sign of a guilty conscience. Nero's hurried night-time funeral for Britannicus (55 CE) aroused suspicions, that the emperor had played a hand in removing a rival, with a simple and quick funeral concealing the emperor's guilt and lack of remorse from the public gaze. Nero could cite tradition in his defence, that the funerals of the young were not supposed to

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58 Tac. *Ann.* 11.38. In the play *Octavia*, the death of Messalina is a cause of grief for her daughter Octavia, 'for whom I must always weep' (11-12). Note Seneca does give Claudius voice as an adviser to the bereaved Polybius, describing how he grieved for his own brother (Germanicus), 'I neither left anything undone that ought to have been required of a loving brother, nor did anything that a prince could have been censured for doing' (Sen. *ad Polyb.* 16.3). Thus Seneca, writing from exile, praises Claudius as one who can suitably balance emotion and self-control, as per the model of Augustus. Note also how both Tiberius and Claudius benefitted by being viewed as good mourners for their popular brothers, linking their on-going reputations to the reputations of the dead.

59 Suet. *Calig.* 23.3; Dio Cass. 59.8.2. Tiberius Gemellus may, however, have been buried in the mausoleum, *CIL* VI, 892.

60 Suet. *Calig.* 23.2; Dio Cass. 59.3.6.

be grand affairs.[61] Whatever the reasons for limiting public mourning, and there may have been good or genuine reasons based on circumstance, precedent, religion or tradition, for future commentators such limits provided room for speculation about negative causation.

Not to show some aspect of the emotion of grief in public, especially to be dry-eyed, was highly problematic for an emperor. In how he managed the public mourning for his relatives, Tiberius may have followed Augustus' blueprint for disposal of the dead; processions, eulogies, burial in the mausoleum were all adhered to, and Tiberius also followed the accepted elite code that personal self-control and public duty should come first. It is possible that Tiberius' mourning behaviour was unproblematic in his own life time, with the negative characterisation of certain details being largely an invention of Tacitus.[62] However, to over-play self-control was to risk a perceived compromise in the expected acts of piety, to suggest a lack of common humanity and above all it could indicate that the emperor did not acknowledge or share the sense of public loss, thereby highlighting potential social and political discord. Furthermore, there was an inherent value to an emperor's tears. The absence of tears denoted that either the deceased was unworthy or in some way guilty, or that the emperor was not experiencing grief, either through relief at the death or knowledge that he had caused the death, or both. The true reasons for an emperor's lack of tears, may have been complex and related to individual circumstance (for example, the age of the deceased, the cause of death, the place of death) as well as the innate personality of both the deceased and the emperor, but what remained apparent was that an emperor's public mourning behaviour was open to scrutiny and readily interpreted at the hands of subsequent commentators.

5. Weeping Profusely

Only once did the grief of Augustus border onto a bad thing, and this was not at a personal bereavement, but a military loss. After the crushing Varian

61 Tac. *Ann.* 13.17. Suetonius (*Ner.* 33.3) and Dio Cassius (61.7.4) assert that Nero did poison Britannicus, with Dio stating that signs of poison were seen on the body at the funeral.

62 For counter traditions of Tiberius as a good, wise, clever and pious ruler, see Champlin (2008).

Disaster (9 CE), Augustus grieved for a bit too long, and a bit too dramatically. Augustus was said to have torn his clothes, allowed his hair and beard to grow, beat his head and lamented, 'Varus, give me back my legions!'[63] Augustus exceeded the acceptable teary eye, by displaying distress and adopting stylised expressions of grief which entailed audible and visible adaptations to accepted body norms. An emperor in this condition, expressing too openly the vulnerability of his position, and/or his emotional state, was not good for the stability of the empire. Any loss needed to be acknowledged, with appropriate sorrow and regret expressed, before being rationalised and equilibrium restored. Failure in this, to be overcome by grief, was a weakness in character.

Worse than an emperor who cried too little was an emperor who cried too much. Nero's behaviour at the death of a baby daughter (63 CE) and then at that of his wife Poppaea (65 CE), whom he may have kicked to death, was exploited as a sign of the emotional incontinence of a weak and irrational ruler. For a child of four months Nero proposed extraordinary honours including deification, showing his sorrow to be as immoderate as his former joy at the birth; for Poppaea, Nero had her body embalmed, organised a lavish funeral and then sought out her likeness in others as if unable to let her go or his grief and longing diminish.[64] Nero's reactions to his mother's death (59 CE), murdered at his orders, were also characterised as both excessive, and guilt-ridden. On the one hand Nero shed the tears expected from a son for a parent, wishing these to be witnessed; on the other Nero was anxious, wracked with guilt, haunted by his deed and thus fled to Naples where his countenance could not be so readily seen.[65] This was not, could not be, a nuanced staging of mourning as per the model of Augustus, but, as with so much of Nero's reign, it came to be presented as the misjudged and confused actions of a bad performer.[66]

Nero's behaviour at Agrippina's death demonstrated a lack of consistency, his indecision as to whether to grieve for his mother or not reflected that he did not have a firm grasp of the situation, a situation of his

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63 Suet. *Aug*. 23; Dio Cass. 56.23.1.

64 Tac. *Ann*. 15.23; 16.6; Dio Cass. 62.9.5; 62. 28.3.

65 Tac. *Ann*. 14.10; Suet. *Ner*. 34.4; Dio Cass. 62.14.4. See also Champlin 2003, 89-91; Hagen 2017, 196-197. For adeptness in how Agrippina's death may have actually been managed by the court see, Luke (2013).

66 For Nero's role as artist and performer see Champlin (2003).

own creating. Such inconsistency – especially oscillation between self-control and highly emotional displays, even if one or other was feigned, was the ultimate mark of a flawed, unstable and dangerous character. It was most apparent in how Gaius was said to have behaved at the death of his sister. Drusilla died in 38 CE and Gaius honoured her greatly, declaring her divine, and at least initially ruthlessly enforcing a *iustitium*.[67] Gaius' behaviour seemed extreme and often confused. Dio Cassius, for example, noted that Gaius censured people if they did not grieve for Drusilla, while being equally critical of those who were sorrowful since they were not rejoicing at her becoming a god.[68] Suetonius noted that Gaius was so overcome that he left for Syracuse, but then equally hurriedly returned, unshaven and with unkempt hair.[69] It is Seneca the Younger who is the most condemning. In his consolation to Polybius on the death of the latter's brother, Seneca had written of individuals, including the emperor Augustus, and future emperors Tiberius and Claudius, who took the deaths of their siblings well. Gaius is held up as the antithesis of this, a character who did not know how to control his grief and give it proper public expression. Gaius did not attend Drusilla's funeral, he did not pay his sister due tributes and he sought solace in gambling. Above all Gaius failed to be consistent and show self-restraint, one minute allowing his hair and beard to grow long, at the next shaving them close, not knowing whether he wanted his sister to be lamented or worshipped and in his anger causing suffering to others.[70] Gaius' mourning behaviour matched (or was made to match) his character as an emperor who 'was the ruin and the shame of the human race, who utterly wasted and wrecked the empire'.[71]

To be too emotional or to mourn for too long and at the expense of stable government was a failing of character, especially if those being grieved for, such as a baby and a wife of suspect character, were un-worthy. But worse than this, a sign of madness even, was mourning behaviour that was indecisive and inconsistent, since this both dishonoured the dead and highlighted real character failings. For grief to be expressed through physical

67 Suet. *Calig*. 24.2; Dio Cass. 59.12.1; Kerkeslager (2006) 380-89.

68 Dio Cass. 59.11.5-6; Sen. *ad Polyb*. 17.5.

69 Suet. *Calig*. 24.2-3.

70 Sen. *ad Polyb*. 17.4-6.

71 Sen. *ad Polyb*. 17. 3. Note also, as above, Gaius' lack of mourning for Tiberius Gemellus and his grandmother.

behaviour or acts focused on the hair, clothing and voice were common motifs in descriptions of mourning, but in extremis these motifs tokened an unstable mental character, personal self-neglect and even madness. An emperor who wept in moderation was acceptable, even esteemed, but an emperor who was (or was rumoured to be) grief-stricken, unshaven, with untidy hair, wearing tattered clothing and uttering audible laments, was inconsistent with sound government.

6. Succession Tears

An emperor's greatest mourning role was often that of mourner to his predecessor. Those emperors who usurped their position might condemn, damn the memory of and even deny burial to their immediate forerunner; mourning as such was not required. Those who inherited their position, as was the case with all the Julio-Claudian emperors, had in some way to acknowledge the death of their predecessor, and with the exception of Claudius, drew their legitimacy as ruler by having been formally adopted as heir by the now dead emperor. The rituals surrounding the death, burial and commemoration of an emperor would, with time, become part of the succession process, and for the Julio-Claudian emperors were also an exercise in diplomacy, entailing maintaining stability while balancing the needs and reputations of the old regime with the intentions of the new.[72] Whether he liked it or not, whether he had liked him or not, the new emperor was the lead mourner for the old.

Augustus had planned for his own demise extensively, including leaving detailed instructions for his funeral.[73] However, the ultimate control over the body, events and the commemoration of the new god, lay in Tiberius' hands. Decorum and control always marked Tiberius' character, including as a mourner (see above), and the rites for Augustus, the first transition of Imperial power into a successor's hands, needed to be carefully moderated, even policed.[74] The funeral was grand and opulent, and Tiberius played his part delivering one of two eulogies. Tiberius' eulogy, as penned by Dio Cassius, was a career summary, not a tear-jerker, and ended by noting that now

72 Price (1987); Arce (2010).

73 Dio Cass. 56.33.1.

74 Tac. *Ann.* 1.8

as a god Augustus should not be mourned for.[75] Tiberius was characteristically dry-eyed at Augustus' funeral, but he in no way dishonoured his predecessor. In the days between the death and the funeral Tiberius emphasised his role as dutiful son, more than successor.[76] He organised the slow progress of the corpse back to Rome, donned black clothing, stayed by the body and planned the funeral.[77] Tiberius fulfilled all the expected duties of the heir and chief male mourner. Suetonius even suggests emotion, since when the death was formally announced in the Senate, after reading a few words Tiberius 'groaned aloud, protesting that grief had robbed him of his voice'.[78] Dio Cassius and Tacitus make no mention of this tearful behaviour, Dio suggesting that Tiberius was dismissed from the Senate due to his contact with the corpse, not because he was upset.[79] In narratives of the first succession emphasis fell on Tiberius staging his reluctance to succeed, and his mourning, for an old man who was now supposedly becoming a god, was cynically viewed as just a means to an end.[80]

At the death of Tiberius, Gaius played the dutiful son too, at least for a while. He donned mourning dress, escorted the body back to Rome, held a public funeral and, according to Suetonius at least, eulogised him with tears.[81] Dio Cassius suggests the rites were more perfunctory, that the body was brought into the city at night, laid out in the morning, and that Gaius' eulogy contained little by way of praise.[82] The mob had apparently wanted to throw the corpse into the Tiber, and few honours were subsequently

75 Dio Cass. 56.35-41.

76 Augustus died on August 19, 14 CE, but the funeral may not have happened until around September 08, Levick (2014), 239.

77 Tac. *Ann.* 1.7; Dio Cass. 56.31.3.

78 Suet. *Tib.* 23.

79 Dio Cass. 56.31.3. For Dio's interest in the avoidance of direct contact between emperors and corpses, see note 55.

80 Dio Cassius suggests that real grief only hit the populace when they realised how bad Tiberius was in comparison with Augustus, Dio Cass. 56.43–56-45. Tacitus also notes that, 'a mission was sent… to console Germanicus' sorrow at the death of Augustus' (*Ann* 1.16). Such a mission may have been expected, but it also suggests that Germanicus experienced genuine sorrow, that he needed to be consoled, a suggestion that Tacitus does not make for Tiberius.

81 Suet. *Calig.* 13; 15.1.

82 Dio Cass. 59. 3.7-8.

voted to Tiberius and he was not deified.[83] Shortly after Tiberius' funeral, Gaius coordinated elaborate rites for his mother and brother, travelling to their graves, placing their remains in urns with his own hands, with the urns then ceremoniously returned to Rome, and interred in the mausoleum.[84] Gaius did due duty by Tiberius, and he may have wept the expected tears, but he then purposefully eclipsed Tiberius' funeral, and any mourning for him, by focusing attention on the earlier deaths of his own close family, victims of Tiberius, mourning for whom had previously been denied.

Gaius' assassination meant there was no public funeral and no mourning by his successor. Gaius was initially even denied full burial, and although Claudius did prevent the senate from further dishonouring his nephew, his images disappeared over night.[85] At Claudius' own death, despite rumours of murder, Nero as an adopted son, paid Claudius due respect at the funeral. Yet the eulogy Nero delivered was written by another; for Dio Cassius the grief displayed was a pretence and for Tacitus represented 'a mockery of sorrow'.[86] The skit about Claudius' deification, with a funeral procession of rejoicing rather than tears (except from some lawyers of dubious character) emphasised that Claudius' death, for all the associated pageantry, was not a genuine source of grief.[87]

Tears can be natural and spontaneous, but tears can also be demanded, performed and false. Tiberius, Gaius and Nero were said by some (if not all) to have shed tears at their predecessors' deaths, to have provided an expression of sorrow. Such an expression was both expected and acceptable, an act of *pietas*, and a duty toward a deceased relative. An emperor's tears also had the power to elevate both the deceased and the mourner, and unite the community in a shared act, but this performative aspect could also place the authenticity of the tears in doubt. For an emperor to weep openly for his predecessor was interpreted either as an endorsement of the previous regime or as hypocrisy, rarely as a sign of genuine grief. The tears might be deemed insincere since the new emperor may have been glad (maybe even the cause) of the death; and if the dead emperor, popular or otherwise, was now a god were the tears of the new emperor appropriate at all? However,

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83 Suet. *Tib* 65.1; Dio Cass. 59.3.7.

84 Suet. *Calig.* 15. 1-2; Dio Cass. 59.3.5-6.

85 Dio Cass. 60.4.6.

86 Dio Cass. 61.35.2; Tac. *Ann.* 13.4.

87 Sen. *Apocol.* 12.

to shed no tears risked equally damning interpretations of a lack of humanity and empathy, or ingratitude towards the source of power or disrespect for a new god or a sign of a guilty conscience. Why (and indeed if) tears were shed, at such a crucial transition moment, was readily interpreted by later commentators and readily fitted to narratives of good and bad rule.

7. Conclusion – Crocodile Tears?

Death comes to all, and emperors and their family members, despite their associations with divinity, were no exception.[88] What was within an emperor's power was how he reacted publicly to his bereavements. Grief, or at least the pain brought by the death of others, was part of the human condition, and emperors, for all their prestige, could not escape this pain, but emperors could make decisions about how, when and if to give public expression to that pain. The public performance of grief, especially (although not exclusively) through expected mourning behaviours displayed at the funeral, made the emperor an actor and his subjects the audience. Thus, for an emperor to fail to attend a funeral (for example, Tiberius for Livia, Gaius for Drusilla, Nero for Britannicus) or for his performance not to be fully witnessed (for example, Tiberius for Germanicus) or for the emperor to leave Rome (for example Nero at Agrippina's death) was to subvert expectations. A funeral was an opportunity for the emperor both to be seen and to communicate.

Funerals of leading politicians in the Republican era had always played with public sentiment at the passing of popular and respected individuals, with these losses staged and displayed by families and lineages, often for political advantage.[89] Under the Julio-Claudian emperors, the potential for shared grief, due to the prominence of the Imperial family, gained momentum. All eyes were now upon the emperor and how his expression of sorrow, and solidarity with others in that sorrow, would be managed. The emperor had the power to set the tone for a mass-crowd event such as a funeral, providing visible, audible and physical cues for an audience who thus became participants, encouraged to empathise, identify with and even mimic the emotions of their leader, while also evaluating the emperor's emotional

88 For the trope that emperors cannot escape death and mourning see, for example, Prop. 3.18; Sen. *ad Polyb.* 15.3; Sen *ad Marc.* 15.1; Mart. 5.64.

89 Polyb. 6.53.

sincerity. The admiration in male elite circles for controlled behaviour persisted (if somewhat softened by an increased focus on family), and thus public mourning behaviour remained scripted, but the realities of popular reactions and the presence of communities united by grief influenced the performance of mourning.[90] If members of the Imperial family were promoted (or sought self-promotion) as, for example, popular heroes, military conquerors or maternal figures, people would be affected (or feel themselves affected) at their death and expect a similar or suitable response from their ruler. This may have been particularly the case at the death of young male prospective heirs. Tacitus observed that 'the loves of the Roman nation were fleeting and unlucky', the good were often perceived as dying young, with the tragedy of such deaths further cementing the popularity of these figures.[91] Staging an appropriate public grief response especially, although not exclusively at the death of the young, increased in importance.[92] An emperor may have been experiencing genuine grief (or not) at his familial bereavements, but these bereavements were not his alone, and he needed to judge, and could also exploit, public expectations for his mourning. The extent to which individual emperors styled themselves as in-tune with popular sentiment, and allowed this to influence their mourning behaviour did vary, and misjudging the value and impact of a suitable performance came at a reputational price for some. Further the public was not the only audience, since elite commentators, both contemporary and posthumous, judged, adapted or constructed the mourning behaviour of emperors to fit their authorial agendas.

Within the confines of mourning scripts emperors were limited in how they could give public expression to grief. The body was a canvas for mourning display with a range of possible signs and alterations to announce the state of bereavement, but for elite men the traditional focus fell mainly on visible cues – a change to dark dress, remaining unshaven, a sorrowful

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90 For 'emotional communities' and how these can define groups and/or signal conflict or consensus, see Rosenwein (2006); (2010).

91 Tac. *Ann.* 2.41, who is anticipating the death of Germanicus by noting the deaths of Marcellus and the Elder Drusus. Compare also Ovid *Fasti* 1.597-8.

92 Of Augustus' reaction to the Elder Drusus' death Champlin has observed 'Whatever affection he may have felt for his stepson in life, he made a great public show of that love when the man was dead' (2011) 80. Note also how Tiberius and Claudius used their connections with popular brothers who had died young, see notes 53 and 56.

facial expression, and tears. Other stylised aspects of mourning behaviour, sounds and gestures, such as tearing clothes, cheeks and hair, or beating the chest, or wailing and lamenting were more associated with women, especially professional mourners. If delivering the eulogy, a man would also use his voice and could be judged for how well and convincingly he employed the repertoire and combination of emotive cues and oratorical skills.[93] However, it was tears which had perhaps the greatest currency in symbolising grief, and tears could be central to the eulogy or be witnessed at other points in the funeral. In descriptions of emperors as mourners aspects such as the donning of black cloth or choosing not to shave were rarely noted except when the use of these symbols exceeded or broke with expected norms, or in some way became excessive or inconsistent.[94] It was tears (and or associated sorrowful countenance) which were commented on: the presence or absence of tears being seen as a reflection of the nature of an emperor's grief and an emblem of his relationship with the deceased, which was then related to the emperor's character and thus ability to rule. These interpretations of tears were not, however, simplistic or always consistent across genres or characters: an emperor who openly wept could receive a positive write up (for example, Propertius on Augustus) or a negative one (for example, Tacitus on Nero); an emperor who controlled his tears could be praised (for example, Seneca on Claudius) or condemned (for example, Tacitus on Tiberius); and an individual emperor could be criticised or congratulated for a range of grief responses (for example, Gaius shed false tears for Tiberius, no tears for Antonia, and then too many tears for Drusilla). Tears could be good or bad, absent or immoderate, but rarely anything in-between. Whether tears were shed or not, an emperor's mourning could be used by interpreters to reveal his true character, to evidence that he was a competent and caring statesman or a flawed and hypocritical autocrat.[95]

The act of weeping was communal and empathetic, tears could be uniting and were a way for an emperor to communicate with his subjects, to

93 See Cic. *De Orat.* 3.223, noting the importance of the eyes.

94 Dio Cassius (56.31.3) notes that Tiberius and his son, Drusus, wore dark clothes, following Augustus' death, and Suetonius mentions the mourning dress of Gaius as he escorted Tiberius' body back to Rome (*Gaius* 13.1), but these are rare direct references to an emperor's mourning attire. References to clothes, hair and facial hair were more commonly associated with extreme behaviour, see above.

95 Compare, 'Ritual tears – both shed and unshed – are telling', Ebersole 2000, 246.

share emotional ground and affirm, 'common values in situations of crisis'.[96] Tears could be spontaneous, heartfelt, voluntary, but also false, feigned, acted, demanded or manipulative. Tears might be natural but they could also be strategic, and powerful, and thus were never a neutral currency in evaluating character. In the context of a funeral an emperor's tears could be viewed as largely performative – something demanded and expected, a ritual act of mourning rather than grief - so what the tears (or lack of them) truly meant was always open to interpretation.

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[96] Krasser (2009) 258.

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REVIEW

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Review of Judith Hagen, Die Tränen der Mächtigen und die Macht der Tränen. Eine emotionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung des Weinens in der kaiserzeitlichen Historiographie. (Stuttgart 2017) (= Altertumswissenschaftliches Kolloquium 25) Pp. 356.

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Die große Bedeutung von Emotionen für unser Verständnis menschlicher Handlungen und ihre somit zentrale Rolle für sämtliche Gesellschaftswissenschaften bedarf keiner besonderen Betonung. Daher ist es sehr zu begrüßen, dass besonders in den vergangenen Jahren auch im Rahmen der Altertumswissenschaften mehr und mehr entsprechende Arbeiten erschienen.[1] Judith Hagen veröffentlichte ihre im Jahr 2016 an der Universität Bayreuth eingereichte Dissertation im Mai 2017. Gewidmet ist die Untersuchung den „Tränen der Mächtigen" in der „kaiserzeitlichen Historiographie", wobei beide Begriffe sehr weit gefasst verstanden werden. Als „Mächtige" definiert die Autorin, wie bei der Lektüre schnell ersichtlich wird, die wesentlichen Akteure der betrachteten Quellen, wobei keineswegs nur die Kaiser selbst, sondern auch ihr familiärer Umkreis sowie Redner und Philosophen berücksichtigt werden. Den zeitlichen Rahmen wiederum lässt Hagen bei

1 Bspw.: D. Bormann / W. Wittchow (Hrsgg.), *Emotionalität in der Antike zwischen Diskursivität und Performativität*, Berlin 2008; T. Fögen (Hrsg.), *Tears in the Graeco-Roman World*, Berlin 2009; M. Beard, *Laughter in Ancient Rome. On Joking, Tickling, and Cracking up*, Berkeley 2014; V. M. Hope, *Roman Death. The Dying and the Dead in Ancient Rome*, London / New York 2009; D. L. Cairns / L. Fulkerson (Hrsgg.), *Emotions between Greece and Rome*, London 2015; E. Sanders / M. Johncock (Hrsgg.), *Emotion and Persuasion in Classical Antiquity*, Stuttgart 2016; D. Cairns / D. Nelis (Hrsgg.), *Emotions in the Classical World. Methods, Approaches, and Directions*, Stuttgart 2017.

Caesars *De bello Gallico* beginnen. Den chronologischen Endpunkt bildet erst die *Vita Karoli* des Einhard. Zudem bezieht die Autorin auch nicht historiographische Werke wie die Biographien des Sueton und des Plutarch sowie sogar den Lyriker Lucan in ihre Betrachtungen mit ein.

Hagens Text gliedert sich in drei Teile (I-III). Der erste Teil ist einer Betrachtung der bisherigen Forschungsgeschichte sowie der Darstellung des weiteren methodischen Vorgehens gewidmet. Bemerkenswert ist hier besonders die umfangreiche und ausführliche Behandlung der Ergebnisse verschiedenster Disziplinen,[2] welche etwa 40 Seiten (S. 14-55) umfasst und einen guten Überblick über die verschiedenen Herangehensweisen an das Oberthema „Emotionen" im Allgemeinen und das Unterthema „Tränen" im Speziellen liefert. Dennoch muss erwähnt werden, dass einige für die historische Emotionsforschung wichtige Werke der letzten Jahre, so etwa die zeitgeschichtlichen Arbeiten Juliane Brauers, unberücksichtigt bleiben. Für den Leser etwas unverständlich ist zudem die stark schwankende Ausführlichkeit, mit der die einzelnen Untersuchungen bedacht werden. Die Auseinandersetzung mit der eigenen Methodologie beschränkt sich dann auf etwa 10 Seiten (S. 55-65), von denen wiederum ein nicht geringer Teil auf eine präzise Definition dessen entfällt, was die Autorin als ihren genauen Behandlungsgegenstand betrachtet (bspw. 3.1 „Physiologie und Psychologie des Weinens" / S. 55-58). Der für die Vorgehensweise der Arbeit wohl komplexeste Punkt, jener der „Historizität und Authentizität" (3.2) der behandelten Ereignisse, welcher ein besonders klar formuliertes methodologisches Fundament benötigt hätte, umfasst lediglich drei Seiten (S. 59-61). Ebenso beschränkt sich die Darstellung des der Arbeit zugrunde liegenden Textkorpus auf kaum mehr als eine einfache Liste (S. 66), wobei mit Blick auf den bereits erwähnten, sehr weit gefassten chronologischen Rahmen etwas ausführlichere Erläuterungen durchaus wünschenswert gewesen wären. Der zweite Teil kann dann als der eigentliche Hauptteil der Arbeit gelten, da er die „Untersuchung des Weinens in der kaiserzeitlichen Historiographie" enthält. Er gliedert sich wiederum in vier Unterpunkte, welche jeweils verschiedenen Gesichtspunkten bzw. Blickwinkeln auf das Thema „Tränen" gewidmet sind: „1. Wo wird geweint?", „2. Wer weint – und vor

2 Neben der Alten Geschichte, der Klassischen Philologie und der Klassischen Archäologie berücksichtigt die Autorin auch die Gebiete der Philosophie, Patristik, Mediävistik, Psychologie und Anthropologie.

wem?", „3. Weinen Frauen anders als Männer?" und schließlich „4. Wann wird geweint – und wann nicht?". Als dritter Teil schließt sich eine Zusammenfassung der Ergebnisse an.

Die stringente, übersichtliche und generell gut nachvollziehbare Gliederung stellt dann auch die größte Stärke der Arbeit dar und macht sie ohne Frage zu einem wertvollen Werkzeug besonders für weitere mit der Performanz antiker Eliten beschäftigte Forschungen. So fällt es dem interessierten Leser leicht, sich bei Hagen, die offensichtlich ein gutes Gefühl für Sprache und einen dementsprechend flüssigen Schreibstil besitzt, bspw. über die in unseren Quellen auftretende Verwendung von Tränen vor Gericht, auf dem Forum, in der Kurie etc. zu informieren. Ebenso findet man schnell eine Antwort auf die Frage, für welche Akteure es nach Hagen in welchen Situationen angemessen erschien, Tränen zu vergießen, wobei die Unterschiede im Vergleich mit heute als angebracht empfundenem Verhalten schnell offensichtlich werden. Einen besonderen Schwerpunkt legt die Autorin bei ihren Untersuchungen in allen Fällen zurecht auf die Frage nach dem bewusst zweckbetonten performativen Einsatz von Tränen zur Erreichung eines bestimmten Ziels. So etwa stellt Hagen die große Bedeutung heraus, die Cicero Tränen bei der Performanz des Redners zumaß, und überträgt diese Vorstellungen in vielen Fällen auf die in unseren Quellen geschilderten Ereignisse, welche sich auch an gänzlich anderen Orten wie bspw. am Hof oder im Feldlager abspielten. Hierdurch gelingt es der Autorin, aufzuzeigen, wie derartige Vorstellungen einen großen Teil unserer historischen Quellen durchziehen. Aber auch das Ausbleiben von Tränen in Momenten, in denen diese eigentlich erwartet wurden, findet seinen Platz als sehr interessantes und lohnendes Negativ.

Trotz dieser deutlichen Stärken stellt sich jedoch heraus, dass die der Arbeit zugrundeliegende Methodologie insgesamt leider weder ausreichend verfeinert, noch konsequent genug umgesetzt wurde. An den Beginn der Schilderung der sich ergebenden Problematik sei ein Zitat Hagens gestellt:

> „Ob die in einem Text beschriebenen Tränen jeweils wirklich vergossen wurden, ob also das geschilderte mit dem tatsächlichen Geschehen übereinstimmt bzw. in welchen Punkten es nicht übereinstimmt, ist in den wenigsten Fällen sicher zu entscheiden. Daher besteht die Notwendigkeit, andere Aspekte aus dem Text herauszuarbeiten und ihm ohne die Klärung der Faktizität Informationen

> darüber zu entnehmen, welche Erwartungshaltung im Hinblick auf öffentliches performatives Handeln bestand." (Hagen S. 59)

Das grundsätzliche Vorhaben der Autorin besteht also darin, die behandelten Texte nicht hinsichtlich einer fragwürdigen Faktizität zu beurteilen, sondern stattdessen die Frage nach der zeitgenössischen „Erwartungshaltung öffentlichen performativen Handelns" in das Zentrum einer diskursanalytischen Betrachtung zu rücken.[3] Diese methodologische Prämisse erscheint zwar überaus zielführend, doch bleibt im Laufe der Arbeit sehr oft unklar, wessen Erwartungshaltung Hagen jeweils genau untersucht: Jene der zeitgenössischen Leserschaft oder aber jene der jeweils erzählten Epoche? Die Autorin zumindest definiert beide Fragestellungen als für sie gleichrangig:

> „Bei der Quellenanalyse ist nicht nur der historische, sondern in gleicher Weise der literarische Kontext zu berücksichtigen. Autor und Darstellungsabsicht des Werkes müssen ebenso wie gegebenenfalls das begriffliche Umfeld von 'Weinen' in die Deutung der einzelnen Episoden einbezogen werden." (Hagen S. 63)

Auch bleibt die Autorin ihrem selbst gesteckten Ziel nicht immer treu und greift des öfteren die Thematik der Historizität bzw. der Topik der behandelten Ereignisse auf.[4] Ein sehr gutes Beispiel für die Problematik wäre etwa Hagens Behandlung des Motivs des Philosophen, der sich in seinem Sterben nach dem Vorbild des Sokrates richtet. Dieses ist in unseren Quellen sehr klar zu fassen und bildet daher zumindest theoretisch einen ausgezeichneten Untersuchungsgegenstand im Rahmen der formulierten Fragestellung. Nach einer recht umfangreichen Wiedergabe mehrerer entsprechender Szenen kommt Hagen allerdings alleine zu dem wenig spezifischen Ergebnis, dass es sich um ein Muster handele, „auf das vielfach – und zwar seitens der historischen Persönlichkeiten und ebenso von antiken Schrift-

3 Es muss jedoch darauf hingewiesen werden, dass Hagen den Begriff der Diskursanalyse selbst nicht verwendet.

4 Bspw.: S. 186 f.; 191, 202, 254, 274, 318 f.

stellern – zurückgegriffen wurde und bei dessen Nachahmung eine unterschiedliche graduelle Abstufung zu beobachten ist, die an der Intensität des philosophischen Lebensstils des Betreffenden ausgerichtet ist."[5]

Ein weiteres Problem der Untersuchung ergibt sich dadurch, dass die Autorin allzu oft über Epochen- und Gattungsgrenzen hinwegsieht, anstatt sie gewinnbringend in ihre Überlegungen mit einzubeziehen. Dabei sind schon die großen Schwierigkeiten, welche sich aus einem chronologischen Rahmen ergeben, der sich von der Zeit der späten römischen Republik bis in das frühe Mittelalter erstreckt, evident. Alleine das Feld der kaiserzeitlichen Historiographie ist, als ganzes betrachtet, wenig einheitlich. Die Werke etwa des Livius, des Velleius Paterculus und des Tacitus oder gar die Historia Augusta unterscheiden sich hinsichtlich zentraler Punkte, wie etwa dem politischen Standpunkt und der Intention des Verfassers sowie literarischer Vorbilder, grundlegend.[6] Hätte Hagen sich, wie es der Titel ihrer Arbeit suggeriert, daher alleine auf historiographische Werke beschränkt, so würden die sich in der Darstellung gewisser Szenen möglicherweise ergebenden Unterschiede im Rahmen einer konsequent umgesetzten Analyse eo ipso einen interessanten und lohnenden Untersuchungsgegenstand darstellen, da für die Adressaten dieser Werke eine gewisse Konformität der Erwartungshaltungen der jeweiligen Epoche postuliert werden kann. Das Hinzuziehen weiterer Gattungen, besonders der sehr emotionsgeladenen Form der Lyrik, verböte sich bei einer solchen Behandlung selbstverständlich vollkommen. Gleichzeitig träte die Bedeutung der Chronologie der geschilderten Ereignisse deutlich hinter dem Datum der Abfassung der Texte zurück, da ja gerade nicht die Ereignisse selbst, sondern eben die Erwartungsstrukturen der zeitgenössischen Leserschaft den Untersuchungsge-

5 S. 256 f.

6 Hagen (S. 324) hingegen stellt in der Zusammenfassung ihrer Arbeit unter Berufung auf Vielberg (Untertanentopik. Zur Darstellung der Führungsschichten in der kaiserzeitlichen Geschichtsschreibung, Zetemata 95, München 1995, 21 f.) fest, dass die kaiserzeitliche Historiographie gattungsgeschichtlich von großer Einheitlichkeit geprägt sei. Vielberg selbst spricht davon, dass er die gesamte kaiserzeitliche Historiographie von ihrem Wesen her als eine *historia perpetua* begreifen möchte. Die Problematik in solchem Maße generalisierender Aussagen ist evident. Vor allem aber erstreckt sich die hier postulierte Konformität vor allem auf die „äußerlichen" Formalia der Werke.

genstand bildeten. Doch, wie oben bereits erwähnt, zieht die Autorin durchaus weitere Gattungen mit in die Untersuchung ein, für welche die besagte Konformität der Erwartungshaltung der Adressaten eben nicht vorausgesetzt werden kann. So etwa müssen z. T. stark divergierende Erwartungen der Leser von Caesars *Bellum Civile,* Lucans Epos, Plutarchs Biographien oder auch dem Werk des Cassius Dio angenommen werden, obwohl es sich in Teilen selbstverständlich um denselben historischen Behandlungsgegenstand handelt. Hagen aber stellt diese Werke in ihrer Untersuchung oft sehr unkritisch nebeneinander.[7]

Die Problematik der Quellenauswahl bzw. des Umganges der Autorin mit denselben lässt sich weiterhin sehr gut an der Behandlung bzw. Nichtbehandlung des Livius illustrieren, denn dessen Werk lässt Hagen ohne weitere Erklärung praktisch vollkommen unberücksichtigt. Es bleibt nur zu vermuten, dass die Autorin sich zu diesem Schritt entschied, da uns jene die frühe Kaiserzeit behandelnden Bücher des Livius verloren sind. Da Livius nun aber als frühkaiserzeitlicher Historiker par excellence gelten kann, verbietet sich ein solcher Schritt, wenn die Erwartungshaltungen des zeitgenössischen Publikums zumindest einen Teil der Untersuchung bilden. Denn eben jene Erwartungshaltungen der Leserschaft spiegeln sich in der livianischen Schilderung der römischen Frühgeschichte doch nicht weniger wider als in seinen verlorenen Berichten späterer Ereignisse.

Zusammenfassend lässt sich dennoch festhalten, dass es sich bei Hagens Arbeit um ein gut lesbares und umfangreiches Kompendium zum Auftreten von Tränen und den mit ihnen verbundenen Emotionen in der literarischen Behandlung der Kaiserzeit handelt, welches eine Grundlage ebenso wie ein wertvolles Arbeitsinstrument für weitere mit dem Thema beschäftigte Forschungen darstellt. Die besondere Berücksichtigung der Rolle, welche Tränen im Rahmen politischer Performanz nicht nur vor Gericht, sondern etwa auch im Heerlager beigemessen wurde, zeichnet zudem ein interessantes und umfassendes Bild von den Vorstellungen unserer jeweiligen Quellenautoren.

7 Bspw. 134, 259, 296

REVIEW

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Review of Nils Kircher, Tragik bei Homer und Vergil. Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zum Tragischen im Epos (Heidelberg 2018) (= Studien zu Literatur und Erkenntnis, Band 9), 242 pp. ISBN: 978-3-8253-6223-2, 61 € (hb).

LITERATURE is all about emotions. As a prime example the genres of ancient epic and tragedy come to mind, for they often feature dramatic episodes involving conflict, bravery, failure, death and mourning. By ascribing a tragic character to the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, the two foremost epics of Greek and Latin literature, the quasi-paradoxical title of the monograph under review plays with such widespread notions as well as with the affinity between the two genres that has been postulated since antiquity. Contrary to much current emotion studies in the field of Classics, Kircher however does not so much investigate the emotions of the fictional characters as depicted in the texts, but rather the affective responses these texts are intended to evoke from their readers.[1] His main focus lies on the history of scholarship and philosophical issues, as the author in a decidedly hermeneutic stance (cf. the subtitle) aims at reconstructing the historical horizon of expectations of ancient audiences based on a close reading of Aristotle's *Poetics*.

1 To be fair, although the present review conveniently appears in a special issue devoted to the emotions, Kircher himself does not primarily contextualize his study within literary emotion studies but has a specific focus on Aristotelian (and Stoic) philosophy, for which he refers to Michael Krewet's studies *Die Theorie der Gefühle bei Aristoteles* (Heidelberg 2011) and *Die stoische Theorie der Gefühle. Ihre Aporien. Ihre Wirkmacht* (Heidelberg 2013) as well as Teun Tieleman, *Chrysippus' On Affections. Reconstruction and Interpretation* (Leiden/Boston 2003).

After a brief introduction (chapter 1: pp. 13–18) and an extended overview of trends in scholarship on the concept of the tragic in Homer (chapter 2: pp. 19–56; on its focus and its limitations see below), the long third chapter (pp. 57–125) reviews crucial passages from Aristotle's *Poetics*. Here a general exposition of the Aristotelian theory of epic and its close connections with tragedy is followed by critical analyses of problematic key concepts such as the character of the ideal tragic hero, which is basically good but flawed because of a *hamartia* (tragic error) leading to his downfall. The audience's partial self-identification with the characters in turn produces the cognitively based emotions of *eleos* (pity) and *phobos* (fear), resulting in a *katharsis*, an epistemic goal defined as a kind of intellectual empathy or refined emotionality. According to Kircher, these Aristotelian concepts are crucial for the interpretation of Homer's *Iliad* as well, which he demonstrates in chapter 4 (pp. 127–188) by applying them to the characters and actions of Patroclus and Hector that culminate in their 'tragic' deaths – a fate not wholly determined by the gods but also caused by (avoidable, emotionally induced) wrong decisions taken by the characters themselves. In the final, much shorter fifth chapter (pp. 189–214) this Homeric method of composition is then contrasted with Vergil's radically different conception of the tragic in epic, which – again after a brief review of selected scholarship – is illustrated by a (deplorably superficial) reading of two examples from the *Aeneid*, the episodes of Nisus and Euryalus and Dido respectively (for a detailed criticism of this chapter see below). The book is rounded off with a summary (6: pp. 215–223), a brief English abstract (7: pp. 225–226), and a bibliography (8: pp. 227–242).

As stated in the preface, the book is the slightly revised version of the author's doctoral dissertation, submitted in 2012 at the Philipps University of Marburg. A few (predominantly German) studies published since have obviously been worked in.[2] Despite such minor revisions the book's origins are still visible, which in the eyes of the present reviewer constitutes its strength as well as its weakness (the latter far outweighing the former). On the one hand, the close readings of crucial passages from ancient criticism (especially Aristotle) and meticulous analyses of previous scholarship allow the reader to follow the argument step by step. On the other hand, excessively long quotations and long-winded paraphrases of scholarly literature

2 The most recent title is another Marburg dissertation: Sven Meier, *Die Ilias und ihr Anfang. Zur Handlungskomposition als Kunstform bei Homer* (Heidelberg 2018).

(in the text as well as in the footnotes) render the reading experience a bit tiresome, the more so as chapter 2 centers around the old controversy about the possibility of ascribing to Homeric characters free actions of self-conscious subjects, sparked by Bruno Snell's *Discovery of the Mind* (*Die Entdeckung des Geistes*, 4th edition, 1975 [originally 1946]). Kircher self-professedly focuses on German scholarship predominantly from the mid-twentieth century as the fundamental approach in research in this area (p. 17).[3] Although he states that Anglophone scholarship tends to be less dominated by Romantic and idealistic conceptions and can therefore be used as a corrective (pp. 50 and 215), with respect to the tragic in Homer only older studies such as James Redfield's (1978, ²1994) and Richard Rutherford's (1982) are given extended consideration (pp. 50–52, 163, 183–188). In contrast, Yoav Rinon's 2008 monograph (*Homer and the Dual Model of the Tragic* [Ann Arbor]) is reviewed only briefly as an 'intriguing' ("*spannend*"), yet 'partly convincing and partly forced' ("*teilweise überzeugend, teilweise gezwungen*") contribution (p. 55 n. 162).[4]

In general Kircher relies heavily on the approach of his *Doktorvater* Arbogast Schmitt and that of his 'school'.[5] So it does not come as a surprise that in his discussion of the psychological make-up of Homeric characters and interpretation of controversial passages from Aristotle's *Poetics* he regularly arrives at the same conclusions as Schmitt.[6] In my view, it would have been better to shorten the preliminary analysis (especially his overview of

3 Still, it reads oddly to discover on pp. 16f. as an example of the 'latest research' ("*neueste Forschung*") a reference to a 1995 study by Joachim Latacz, followed by an Albin Lesky quote from 1962. Sometimes Kircher's overview of scholarship lacks historical perspective: Hermann Gundert's essay (Charakter und Schicksal homerischer Helden, *Neue Jahrbücher für Antike und deutsche Bildung* 3 [1940] 225–237) is discussed at length (pp. 34f. and 45–48; cf. p. 152 n. 439 and p. 163 n. 449) without mentioning the journal's national socialist background.

4 Cf. now also Rana Saadi Liebert, *Tragic Pleasure from Homer to Plato* (Cambridge 2017).

5 Publications by Schmitt himself and his former students, among them Gyburg Radke-Uhlmann and Michael Krewet, make up a considerable part of the (anyway not very extensive) bibliography. Schmitt is also one of the editors of the series in which Kircher's book has appeared.

6 Cf. especially Arbogast Schmitt, *Selbständigkeit und Abhängigkeit menschlichen Handelns bei Homer. Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Psychologie Homers* (Stuttgart 1990) and his substantial commentary of Aristotle's *Poetics* (Berlin 2008, ²2011).

the history of scholarship) and to summarize the results, as is conveniently done in the concluding sections of each (sub)chapter. In this way he would have been able to devote more space to the application of theoretical perspectives to the interpretation of the actual epics. As it stands, in its analysis of Patroclus and Hector in the *Iliad*, Nisus and Euryalus, and Dido in the *Aeneid* as 'tragic' characters Kircher's book covers the same ground as many previous studies. The present reviewer would have liked to read the author's thoughts on tragic features in other, less often treated passages in order to broaden the textual sampling of the epics.

Apart from these reservations, the main problem is the striking imbalance between the amount of space devoted to Homer and Vergil respectively. The chapter on Homer (or rather the *Iliad*) amounts to 60 pages (and Homer features prominently as well in Kircher's overview of scholarship in chapter 2 and in chapter 3 on Aristotle's *Poetics*), while the Vergil chapter is a mere 25 pages long. The original title of the dissertation '*Tragisches Handeln bei Homer. Mit einem kontrastierenden Ausblick auf die Tragikkonzeption Vergils*' (cf. the preface) correctly labels the section on the *Aeneid* as an appendix, whereas the book's title '*Tragik bei Homer und Vergil*' suggests an equal treatment of both epics. Readers expecting a thorough discussion of the *Aeneid* as a 'tragic epic' will thus be disappointed, and not just for reasons of coverage.

Kircher's central methodological premise is to use Aristotle as the main point of reference for his analysis of ancient epic. He convincingly argues that although it might seem anachronistic to use a fourth-century treatise as a key to the interpretation of the Homeric epics, it is still preferable to stay within an ancient Greek frame of reference rather than to apply modern concepts of the tragic such as Schiller's or Lessing's. However, although he correctly states that for Vergil Hellenistic philosophy and literary criticism were probably more important than Aristotle (esp. p. 192), he does not consequently build on this line of argument.[7] As a result, the author adopts the very perspective that he rejected in his culture-immanent readings of Homer and Aristotle, when he makes aesthetic judgments about the *Aeneid*

7 Beyond Stoicism (cf. the qualifying remarks in n. 537 on pp. 210f.), it would have been interesting to discuss recent trends in Vergil criticism in connection with the Epicurean theory of emotions; cf., e.g., David Armstrong, Jeffrey Fish, Patricia A. Johnston, Marilyn B. Skinner (eds.), *Vergil, Philodemus, and the Augustans* (Austin 2004).

based on Aristotelian categories.[8] Of course Vergil's *Aeneid* need not be 'tragic' in the same way as the Homeric epics. According to Kircher, in Homer Aristotle's concept of the tragic in the sense of a '*Charaktertragödie*' ('tragedy of character') is already inherent. In the case of the *Aeneid*, his labels '*Wertetragödie*' ('tragedy of values', in the case of Nisus and Euryalus) and '*Leidenschaftstragödie*' ('tragedy of passions', in Dido's case, in some respects anticipating Senecan tragedy) may indeed capture some of the Roman epic's essence, but it is not necessary to denounce Vergil's characters as less sophisticated than Homer's (pp. 220f.). The most striking example of this tendency is demonstrated in the following quotation from the conclusion (p. 221), which contrasts the truly Aristotelian '*Furcht und Mitleid*' as realized in Homer's characters with Vergil's allegedly sentimentalized '*Jammer und Schauder*' (based on the interpretation of the Aristotelian terms *eleos* and *phobos* in chapter 3.2.2):[9]

> "Die Folge dieser Darstellungsweise [sc. Vergils] sind emotionale, pathetische, allgemein sentimentale Stimmungsbilder, die auf jammer- und schaudervolle Erschütterung des Rezipienten abzielen, die er mit den innerepischen Rezipienten teilt. Ganz anders gestaltet sich das konkrete und differenzierte Mitleid bei Homer […]. Dieses Mitleid ist kein undifferenzierter, sentimentalischer Jammer, der die Gründe des Scheiterns nicht hinterfragt."

Such evaluative comparisons of Homer and Vergil are themselves the product of the history of scholarship (including that of German idealism), which Kircher sets out to review critically in the rest of his book.

Moreover, in the chapter on Vergil the problems regarding the selection of scholarship, already raised, are much more worrying. Kircher relies on a small and not very up-to-date selection of Vergilian scholarship, mainly from the twentieth century.[10] Niklas Holzberg's complaint about the exponential growth of scholarship raised in his internet bibliography on the *Aeneid* (most recently updated in 2014) cannot be used as an excuse not to engage with more recent studies (cf. p. 194 with n. 506). To give but one

8 Cf. the revealing clause on p. 222: "[…] *wenn man sie [sc. die Aeneis] an den Kategorien der Aristotelischen Poetik mißt* […]."

9 Cf. the similar statements on p. 206. The short English abstract (pp. 225f.) uses more neutral terms.

10 Tellingly, the bibliography on Nisus and Euryalus in nn. 526 and 530 on pp. 200–203 does not go beyond Steven Farron's 'new' ("*neue*") review of scholarship from 1993 (cf. also p. 196 n. 518).

example, I highly recommend Vassiliki Panoussi's 2009 monograph (*Greek Tragedy in Vergil's Aeneid. Ritual, Empire, and Intertext* [Cambridge]), which adopts a different, less formalist approach in the context of the civil wars and the Augustan restoration. In contrast, in Kircher's monograph, intertextuality (with the Homeric epics, with Attic tragedy, with Hellenistic literature) plays no role at all (nor does narratology, despite some passing references to phenomena such as authorial comments or apostrophe in Homer and Vergil).

To conclude, the book under review has a clear methodological focus and raises some good points in its detailed analysis of texts, but it failed to convince the present reviewer in terms of its overall outlook. In particular, the brief and rather biased chapter on Vergil does not do justice to the complexity of the *Aeneid*'s 'tragic' vision. The high expectations raised by the title and the blurb, promising a 'detailed contrasting interpretation' of the concept of the tragic in the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* ("*in ausführlicher, kontrastierender Interpretation des Tragischen in der Ilias Homers und in der Aeneis Vergils*") and their modern reception, are not fulfilled.[11]

Publisher website: https://www.winter-verlag.de/de/detail/978-3-8253-6223-2/Kircher_Tragik_bei_Homer_und_Vergil/

11 In formal respects the book has been carefully produced; all Greek and Latin quotations are accompanied by German translations (not the author's own, but taken from Schadewaldt's for Homer [cf. p. 129 n. 408], Schmitt's for Aristotle [cf. p. 62 n. 176], and Binder's for Vergil [cf. p. 199 n. 523]). There are no indices, which is partly compensated by a detailed table of contents. I noticed only a few errors (p. 194 n. 506: Vorberemerkung; p. 199: mit Ihrem Plan), mainly in the bibliography: p. 230 (cf. p. 54 n. 156): missing year for Danek (2014); p. 231: wrong alphabetical order; two missing titles: Latacz 1995 (full reference in n. 9 on p. 16; cf. the critical review on pp. 53f.) and Schmidt 2001 (full reference in n. 509 on p. 194).