

Reading the Laments of Iliad 24

INTRODUCTION: Ritual/ Poetics /Ideology

Many recent studies of lament both by classicists as well as by anthropologists (ethnographers?) have established that women's lament has the potential to be subversive of the dominant (male) value system, whether in Homeric epic or even as still practiced in remoter areas of contemporary Greece.¹ This observation has particular and provocative interest for readers of both Homeric and later heroic epic poetry, because women's laments mourn heroes' deaths instead of, in some sense, celebrating them. Therefore, laments in epic can seem to be inconsistent with or even subversive of the genre's defining purpose of memorializing heroic deeds. As Derderian has recently put it, in both "formulaic and thematic senses," lament functions as an "anti-epic within the epic poems."² Murnaghan's nuanced reading of laments in Homer develops the reading that laments are a constitutive element of epic, a crucial if prefatory element in the hero's glory. In this reading, the oppositional potential of lament is subsumed by epic's larger ideological thrust, its "central claims."³ It is this reading of women's grief which Hektor assumes in his famous homilia with Andromache in Iliad 6:

"And some day seeing you shedding tears a man will say of you:
 'This is the wife of Hektor, who was ever the bravest fighter
 Of the Trojans, breakers of horses, in the days when they fought about Ilion.'
 So will one speak of you; and for you it will be yet a fresh grief,
 To be widowed of such a man who could fight off the day of your slavery."

6.459-63⁴

In Hektor's reading, Andromache's enduring grief at his death in battle will be interpreted as a memorial to his own imperishable glory (kleos apthiton). In so thinking Hektor exemplifies what I will term in this paper the "heroic code," that "logical chain which links death, glory, art, and immortality. Death is inescapable...yet certain acts...can achieve the glory that outlives finite life, so long as they are perpetuated in art" (i.e., the tradition of heroic poetry).⁵

Yet as readers/ audience of the Iliad, we may not all read Hektor's actions as he himself anticipates. Instead we may see a more complicated picture of Hektor emerge, particularly through the laments of Iliad 24 that figure so significantly in the poem's closure. A remarkable feature of these laments, as Gail Holst-Warhaft crucially observed, is that they do not praise Hektor's glory.⁶ Other studies of these laments have noted the bitterness of Andromache in her explicit regret/ ambivalence about Hektor's fatal pursuit of heroic glory.⁷ In this paper, therefore, I pursue these provocative observations about the Iliad 24 laments as they comment implicitly and explicitly on Hektor's pursuit of epic fame through glorious death. It is a feature of great texts that they challenge generic conventions in some degree. As Silk argues, this is true of the Iliad: "The greatest literature is wont to subvert the dominant ideological categories that it purports to, and does indeed also, embody." He adds that "thanks to Achilles, the Iliad surely does just this."⁸ Although Silk does not include the laments in his discussion of the Iliad's questioning of heroic ideology, I propose that the laments, too, function to put heroic ideology into question and thus participate in the pattern of genre subversion that Silk describes. Because the laments of Iliad 24 figure so importantly in the poem's closure they have interpretive significance— greater than they would have elsewhere in the poem. Their presence alone in this emphatic position—a crucial fact of poetics-- invites interpretation from the perspective of poetics and therefore should not be "underread."⁹

I would briefly distinguish between lament as a tool in the poet's armamentarium, as a poetic device, and lament as a cultural performance enacted by real women and susceptible to anthropologists' study and documentation. What we have learned about the continuity of the lament tradition in Greece and about the function of lament generally from comparative anthropology aids our attempts to appreciate the functions of laments in Homeric poetry. Additionally, as Murnaghan has so well observed, part of the fascination of lament for scholars is the possibility of accessing the authentic voices of women, laments being female-authored texts outside the mainstream of Western culture.¹⁰ Derderian, among others, has isolated and catalogued various components and themes of laments as they appear in the Homeric poems in order to try to establish what may be considered traditional or conventional in lament. Tsagalis, too, has

described the typology of Homeric gōoi--their formulas and motifs, also with a goal of discovering an ur-form of lament, to the degree that this can be inferred from the Homeric texts.¹¹ To the extent that the findings of these and other scholars correlate with later laments available to us, we may infer what constitutes tradition in the Iliad, as well as what might plausibly be seen to constitute deviation from tradition and thereby function poetically to express characterization of the poem's individual speakers. In this way both anthropology [lament studies? ethnography?] and poetics enrich our interpretation of laments in the Iliad. When scholars such as Monsacré read the laments in the Iliad, they observe rightly that the women in the poem are represented as “infantilized,” that their grief seems without power to affect action, unlike that of male characters whose grief is actualized in vengeance on enemies.¹² For the male society represented in the poem, the internal audience, the laments, since spoken by women, are legitimately read as powerless.¹³ On the other hand, it is also the case that what is true for characters in the society represented in the poem is not necessarily true of the poet who composes a poem about that society. In seeking to appreciate meaning in the Iliad we do well to remember that meaning in a narrative comes from locating “a sensibility behind the narrative that accounts for how it is constructed.”¹⁴ Indeed, there is no principle of narratology more crucial than this for interpretation. Similarly, James Redfield proposed that “we abandon the point of view of the characters and take our stand with the poet” in order to appreciate the meaning of the Iliad as a poetic structure.¹⁵ When we do this, we may become persuaded that the poet of the Iliad, from the perspective of his “more sublime thought-world,”¹⁶ honors the women and their values more than the characters in the poem do.

I propose, therefore, a reading of the laments of Iliad 24 primarily from the perspective of poetics. Without addressing the challenges of the “Homeric question,” I assume that the Iliad is a purposeful artistic composition, structured throughout by a master poet in order to achieve a particular effect on the external audience/ readers.¹⁷ If, as Redfield proposes, we “take our stand with poet” instead of with the characters, if we study the poem's strategies and structure from the poet's perspective, we aid ourselves in appreciating the Iliad's meaning(s). In particular we should consider the character of the

poem's closure –whether strong or weak, open or closed, resolved or unresolved--and the function of the laments as significant elements within it for creating and complicating closure.¹⁸ To this end, even as we note that laments proliferate towards the end of the poem,¹⁹ we note also that the laments in Book 24 are exceptional, since they are the only laments in the poem that may be termed ritual laments, i.e., that participate in a shared public ceremony.²⁰ (In sequence and combined length, of course, they are exceptional as well.²¹) Through their laments for Hektor in the course of his funeral ceremony, Andromache, Hekabe, and Helen comment implicitly—in variously pertinent, tangential, and discontinuous ways-- on Hektor's dedication to the pursuit of heroic glory.

This last issue, the “heroic code,” and its importance in the Iliad, has been provocatively reconsidered in some recent scholarship. Several studies have, in fact, read the Iliad as a questioning of traditional heroic value (e.g., Silk, Lynn-George, Martin, Rose, Zanker). The authors of these non-traditional readings locate their arguments primarily in Achilles' critical examination of and departures from the heroic code, ultimately in his pity for Priam that makes possible his return of Hektor's body for burial and emerges as the true heroic act and high moral value of the poem. Therefore the reading that the poet puts traditional epic values into question has support among contemporary Homeric scholars. On my reading, we can interpret the laments of Iliad 24 as well as another one of the strategies by which the poet puts the traditional values of heroic epic into question. In their specificity these laments, especially when taken as a composition, go well beyond catalogued topoi of grief to respond to the life choices of Hektor in particular.²² We will see how these laments at Hektor's funeral engage, variously and pointedly, the fundamental assumptions of heroic ideology as they are exemplified by Hektor and therefore to some extent more generally as well.

READING THE LAMENTS

There is no character in the poem more committed to pursuit of heroic glory than Hektor.²³ I cite here two passages that, in addition to the one cited above, express unambiguously Hektor's understanding of the dynamics of heroic memory. In Iliad 7.89-91 he announces to the assembled warriors that, if he kills Ajax in their duel, a future passerby will say:

“This is the mound of a man who died long ago in battle,
 Who was one of the bravest, and glorious Hektor killed him.’
 So he will speak some day, and my glory will not be forgotten.”

In Iliad 22. 305-08, facing Achilles at last, he says:

“But now my death is upon me.
 Let me at least not die without a struggle, inglorious,
 But do some big thing first, that men to come may know of it.”

Nevertheless, the three laments that close the poem—and thus constitute for the external audience the final memory of Hektor— ignore his overriding wish for kleos in that they are silent about his glory.²⁴ In their silence (or even bitterness) about Hektor’s glory, the women speak in ironic indifference to Hektor’s own aspirations--the reading of his pursuit of glory that he himself proposes.

The laments at Hektor’s funeral are the only laments in the poem that form part of a formal ceremony and therefore may be termed ritual laments. Thus they function to some degree differently from the informal, private expressions of grief that occur elsewhere.²⁵ The ritual aspect of these laments, as they are integrated into a formal ceremony and come at the poem’s conclusion, renders them strongly closural. In narrative, as has been clarified in recent studies, the end is the significant moment, from which vantage point the narrative assumes structure and therefore meaning.²⁶ In the same way, by imposing structure--and therefore meaning-- on life, ceremony gives coherence to the experience of individual lives. Deborah Roberts has shown how ceremony gives strong closure not only to individual lives through funeral rituals, but to literary texts as well. Shared mourning, both in life and in literary texts, may be seen to give strong closure and to affirm the value both of the individual as well as of the community, in the face of death that would seem otherwise to dissolve life and community.²⁷ This affirmative character of the Iliad’s closure, however, is complicated by attention to the specific content of the laments, to which I now turn.

ANDROMACHE

Andromache, as Hektor's wife, has the place of honor in the ceremony and therefore speaks the first, and by far the longest, lament of the three.²⁸

Ἄνερ. ἀπ' αἰῶνος νέος λεο. κὰδ δέ με χήρην
 λείπεις ἐν μεγάροισι· πάϊς δ' ἔτι νήπιος αὐτῶς.
 ὄν τέκομεν σύ τ' ἐγὼ τε δυσάμμοροι. οὐδέ μιν οἴω
 ἦβην ἴξεσθαι· πρὶν γὰρ πόλις ἦδε κατ' ἄκρης
 πέρσεται· ἦ γὰρ ὄλωλας ἐπίσκοπος. ὅς τέ μιν αὐτὴν
 ῥύσκει. ἔχες δ' ἀλόχους κεδνὰς καὶ νήπια τέκνα.
 αἰ δὴ τοι τάχα νηυσὶν ὀχήσονται γλαφυρῆσι.
 καὶ μὲν ἐγὼ μετὰ τῆσι· σὺ δ' αὖ. τέκος. ἦ ἐμοὶ αὐτῇ
 ἔψαι. ἔνθα κεν ἔργα ἀεικέα ἐργάζοιο.
 ἀθλεύων πρὸ ἄνακτος ἀμειλίχου. ἦ τις Ἀχαιῶν
 ῥίψει χειρὸς ἐλών ἀπὸ πύργου. λυγρὸν ὄλεθρον.
 χῳόμενος, ᾧ δὴ που ἀδελφεὸν ἔκτανεν Ἐκτωρ
 ἢ πατέρ'. ἠὲ καὶ υἷόν. ἐπεὶ μάλα πολλοὶ Ἀχαιῶν
 Ἐκτορος ἐν παλάμησιν ὀδᾶξ ἔλον ἄσπετον οὐδας·
 οὐ γὰρ μείλιχος ἔσκε πατήρ τεὸς ἐν δαί λυγρῇ.
 Τῷ καὶ μιν λαοὶ μὲν ὀδύρονται κατὰ ἄστυ.
 ἀρητὸν δὲ τοκεῦσι γόον καὶ πένθος ἔθηκας.
 Ἐκτορ· ἐμοὶ δὲ μάλιστα λελείπεται ἄλγεα λυγρά·
 οὐ γὰρ μοι θνήσκων λεχέων ἐκ χειρᾶς ὄρεξας.
 οὐδέ τί μοι εἶπες πυκινὸν ἔπος. οὐ γὰρ κεν αἰεὶ
 μεμνήμην νύκτας τε καὶ ἡμέρας δάκρυ χέουσα.

(24.725-745)

“My husband, you were lost young from life, and have left me
 a widow in your house, and the boy is only a baby
 who was born to you and me, the unhappy. I think he will never
 come of age, for before then head to heel this city
 will be sacked, for you, its defender, are gone, you who guarded
 the city, and the grave wives, and the innocent children,

wives who before long must go away in the hollow ships,
 and among them I shall also go, and you, my child, follow
 where I go, and there do much hard work that is unworthy
 of you, drudgery for a hard master; or else some Achaian
 will take you by hand and hurl you from the tower into horrible
 death, in anger because Hektor once killed his brother,
 or his father, or his son; there were so many Achaians
 whose teeth bit the vast earth, beaten down by the hands of Hektor.
 Your father was no merciful man in the horror of battle.
 Therefore your people are grieving for you all through their city,
 Hektor, and you left for your parents mourning and sorrow
 beyond words, but for me passing all others is left the bitterness
 and the pain, for you did not die in bed, and stretch your arms to me,
 nor tell me some last intimate word that I could remember
 always, all the nights and days of my weeping for you.”

(24.725-745)

That Andromache expresses bitterness toward Hektor in this lament, although perhaps unexpected by most readers, is now not a new observation.²⁹ Andromache’s passionate love for Hektor has been established earlier in the poem, thus intensifying for the reader her bitterness in this lament. She makes three general complaints: because Hektor has died, she and their child are unprotected from slavery or death; Hektor’s ferocious fighting on the battlefield will be avenged precisely by the murder of their own child; and, finally, in dying Hektor spoke no final word to her for her to remember all the days and nights of her weeping.

Andromache begins starkly, addressing Hektor simply as “husband.” This address stands in austere contrast to the poem’s other laments, which begin characteristically with what I call the “superlative expression of affection.” Thus Briseis begins her lament for Patroklos: “Patroklos, far most pleasing to my heart in its sorrows” (19.287); in the two laments following Andromache’s, we find Hekabe saying “Hektor, of all my sons the dearest by far to my spirit” (24.748); and Helen, “Hektor, of all my

lord's brothers dearest by far to my spirit" (24.762). Thus we may read Andromache's opening "husband, you were lost young from life..." as unelaborated, i.e., as omitting an expected expression of affection. Instead, Andromache moves immediately to the fearful consequences of Hektor's death: destruction of the city, enslavement of the women and children, the murder of their son. This last consequence she conceives as vengeance for Hektor's ferocity in battle (735-39), which for her now has become an outright "liability."³⁰ Her interpretation of the murder of Astyanax as vengeance for Hektor's mode of battle rather than as, for example, political calculation (which is another, perhaps more plausible, motivation (see Trojan Women 723, 1160-61)) is born of her grief and sense of victimization. If Astyanax is killed for vengeance against Hektor, then Hektor may be perceived, in this sense, as responsible for his son's death.

The first part of Andromache's lament recalls for the reader or listener the famous homilia with Hektor in Iliad 6 (cited above, p.1), wherein she makes the point that Hektor's audacity in battle risks his life ("Dearest, your own great strength will be your death" (6.406-07)). Their exchange, one of the two most thematically crucial for interpretation of the poem as a whole,³¹ concerns precisely the ideology of the heroic code, which locates life's highest value in heroic achievement: specifically in achievement on the battlefield, to be memorialized (in Hektor's imagining) in the person of his grieving wife or in the tomb of his slain antagonist. In Iliad 6 Andromache implicitly argues for an alternative ideology of life's purpose, one located in the value of life itself: she recalls to Hektor how she has lost everyone—mother, father, brothers (the males all killed by Achilles), so that now Hektor embodies all life and connectedness and belonging for her. For this reason she urges that he not risk his life recklessly, but instead guard a weak point in the wall, i.e., fight defensively. The thematic importance of this proposal for the poem cannot be overestimated; for in urging a defensive strategy Andromache reveals that for her the purpose of the war is not glory, but survival. In asking Hektor to fight for survival, to forego personal honor in exchange for life (6.431-34), she makes the poem's strongest argument for the value of life itself, "unvalidated," over glory.³² Therefore, in its way, Andromache's objection to the pursuit of heroic glory as an end in itself is as emphatic as Achilles' in Iliad 9.

"Please take pity upon me then, stay here on the rampart,

That you may not leave your child an orphan, your wife a widow,
 But draw your people up by the fig tree, there where the city
 is openest to attack, and where the wall may be mounted.” (6.431-34)

This is a request that Hektor’s sense of shame does not allow him to grant:

“Then tall Hektor of the shining helm answered her: ‘All these
 Things are in my mind also, lady; yet I would feel deep shame
 Before the Trojans, and the Trojan women with the trailing garments,
 If like a coward I were to shrink aside from the fighting;
 And the spirit will not let me, since I have learned to be valiant
 And to fight always among the foremost ranks of the Trojans,
 Winning for my own self great glory and for my father.
 For I know this thing well in my heart, and my mind knows it;
 There will come a day when sacred Ilion shall perish,
 And Priam, and the people of Priam of the strong ash spear.’”

6.440-49

The reader will note Hektor’s recurrent themes: fear of shame, pursuit of heroic glory, both conjoined with a sure premonition of the futility of his heroism as far as the city and his family are concerned. Similarly, in *Iliad* 22 when Hektor faces Achilles alone outside the walls of Troy and reflects on his options in this dire strait, his need for honor continues to determine his actions. He concludes that it is better to risk death than to risk shame in the eyes of the Trojans, thereby confirming that, for Hektor, the purpose of the war above all has not been survival—either of himself or of the city-- but personal glory. The poet movingly dramatizes this conflict of values between these two most sympathetic characters.

“Now since by my own recklessness I have ruined my people,
 I feel shame before the Trojans and the Trojan women with trailing
 Robes, that someone who is less of a man than I will say of me:
 ‘Hektor believed in his own strength and ruined his people.’
 Thus they will speak; and as for me, it would be much better

At that time, to go against Achilleus, and slay him, and come back,
Or else be killed by him in glory in front of the city.” (22.104-10)

In Iliad 6. 450-56 Hektor had accurately foreseen Andromache’s future pain:

“But it is not so much the pain to come of the Trojans
That troubles me, not even of Priam the king or Hekabe...
As troubles me the thought of you, when some bronze-armoured
Achaian leads you off, taking away your day of liberty,
In tears...” (6.450-56)

But, though troubled, he does not question his goals and strategy:

“But may I be dead and the piled earth hide me under before I
Hear you crying and know by this that they drag you captive.”
(6.464-65)

Hektor is explicit about his motives for pursuing his fighting “in the foremost,” although to some modern readers his dedication to personal glory verges on the irresponsible.³³ His wish that he might, by dying, avoid witnessing Andromache’s enslavement is an implicit acknowledgment of the ethical weakness of his position.

Hektor’s unquestioning commitment to the heroic code, as the poet represents it, is at one pole of a range of attitudes towards the pursuit of heroic glory in battle, from rejection to uncritical endorsement, that is expressed by the various speakers in the Iliad. Despite his physical fear of death (as expressed in 7.214-18 when he fears the duel with Ajax or in 22.136ff. when he runs from Achilles), Hektor has wholly internalized—or, as he says, “learned”—the values of the code, i.e., to risk his life battling in the forefront in order to achieve lasting fame. As a consequence of this commitment, we see that even greater than his fear of death is his fear of shame, which determines his actions. The exchange between Hektor and Andromache allows the poet to put the heroic code vividly into question, as he illuminates sharply the competing goals of survival vs. achievement that depends on risking life.³⁴ This thematically crucial conflict between Hektor and Andromache is left unresolved in Iliad 6, with neither speaker being endorsed by the

poet. For a time Hektor and Andromache have shared goals, as Hektor's pursuit of glory coincides with the city's interest in survival. At the last, however, in *Iliad* 22, as Hektor stands alone outside the city walls, deaf to his parents' entreaties to withdraw to safety, the division between him, on the one hand, and the interests of Andromache, his parents, and the city, on the other, is unambiguous.

In the second half of her lament, Andromache expresses her "bitterness and pain" at Hektor's failure to say a last word to her, which she might remember "all the nights and days of <her> weeping" for him. Scholars have inferred that the term pukinon epos connotes urgency, importance, something that might change the outcome of events.³⁵ Yet, it seems clear, in this context, that the final significant word that Andromache longs for is a word of love, as would be consistent with Hektor's "reaching out his arms to" her to utter it. From Andromache's perspective, it would be a deeply painful irony to know that Hektor, in the last moments of his life, as the poet constructs them, gave no thought to her, but only to his own shame.³⁶ Sadly, the relationship between these two most sympathetic characters is marked by haunting failure on both sides, as Andromache had consistently failed to understand Hektor's need for heroic validation, and he failed ultimately to protect her. In thus deftly sketching the moral and emotional disappointments of this touchingly rendered, thematically crucial relationship, the poet allows the contradictions of the heroic code as exemplified by Hektor to become starkly painful for the reader.

In summary, Andromache omits the conventional superlative expression of love for Hektor at the opening of her lament. In her grief, justifiably or not, she blames Hektor's particular mode of fighting for leaving her undefended, vulnerable to slavery or death. Thus she implies that Hektor was the virtual cause of his own death³⁷ and that his ferocity in battle will bring on his own child's murder. Her final reproach, that he left her no pukinon epos, speaks to her felt abandonment and to a perceived failure of love on Hektor's part. It is to be noted that Andromache is not here portrayed as hysterical (this is not tragic pathos), but reflective. She expresses her pain with fluid eloquence and coherence.³⁸ Thus the poet allows Andromache, in her final speech in the poem, to speak with a dignity and moral authority greater than in her earlier speeches.

HEKABE

Hekabe, Hektor's mother, speaks next.

Ἐκτορ. ἐμῶ θυμῶ πάντων πολὺ φίλτατε παίδων.
 ἦ μὲν μοι ζωὸς περ ἐὼν φίλος ἦσθα θεοῖσιν·
 οἱ δ' ἄρα σεῦ κήδοντο καὶ ἐν θανάτιό περ αἴση.
 Ἄλλους μὲν γὰρ παῖδας ἐμοὺς πόδας ὠκύς Ἀχιλλεὺς
 πέρνασχε, ὅν τιν' ἔλεσκε, πέρην ἄλός ἀτρυγέτοιο.
 ἔς Σάμον ἔς τ' Ἴμβρον καὶ Λῆμον ἀμιχθαλόεσσαν·
 σεῦ δ' ἐπεὶ ἐξέλετο ψυχὴν ταναήκεϊ χαλκῶ.
 πολλὰ ῥυστάζεσκεν ἐοῦ περὶ σῆμ' ἐτάροιο.
 Πατρόκλου, τὸν ἔπεφνες· ἀνέστησεν δέ μιν οὐδ' ὦς.
 Νῦν δέ μοι ἐρσήεις καὶ πρόσφατος ἐν μεγάροισι
 κεῖσαι, τῶ ἴκελος ὅν τ' ἀργυρότοξος Ἀπόλλων
 οἷς ἀγανοῖσι βέλεσσιν ἐποιχόμενος κατέπεφνεν.

(24.747-760)

"Hektor, of all my sons the dearest by far to my spirit;
 while you still lived for me you were dear to the gods, and even
 in the stage of death they cared about you still. There were others
 of my sons whom at times swift-footed Achilles captured,
 and he would sell them as slaves far across the unresting salt water
 into Samos, and Imbros, and Lemnos in the gloom of the mists. You,
 when he had taken your life with the thin edge of the bronze sword,
 he dragged again and again around his beloved companion's
 tomb, Patroklos', whom you killed, but even so did not
 bring him back to life. Now you lie in the palace, handsome
 and fresh with dew, in the likeness of one whom he of the silver
 bow, Apollo, has attacked and killed with his gentle arrows."

As Richardson (ad 718-76) points out, the laments of Hekabe and Helen resemble each other more than either resembles Andromache's. Thus, both open with a superlative of affection; both set off Hector from others, either from the other sons or from the rest of the family; both are unambiguously warm in their love of Hector; both speak of the past, while Andromache's looks to the dread future.³⁹ We observe again the thematic continuity of these laments with the earlier speeches that the poet gives to these characters.⁴⁰ Thus, concern with Hector's physical wellbeing is a continuing motif in Hekabe's speeches to and about Hector. Her lament in *Iliad* 24 focuses on Hector's divinely restored physical perfection, as her first speech to him was concerned with his physical exhaustion, for which she offered the remedy of wine (6.253-62). Her second speech to Hector (22.79-89) implores him to retreat within the city walls instead of facing Achilles alone. In her appeal she pleads that he honor her bared breast, from which he nursed. Significantly, in this fearful moment she, too, like Andromache, shows her greater care for Hector's very life than for his future glory.

Hekabe's lament, as noted above, begins with the familiar superlative of affection, "most loved of my sons." This is not a mere topos, as Hekabe continues to develop the motif of Hector's singularity. Others of her sons, she says, Achilles had been willing to ransom; Hector he killed and defiled--an ironic mark of singularity. Consistent with her earlier concern for his physical wellbeing, she remarks on Hector's perfect physical beauty despite his defilement by Achilles and other Greeks (e.g., 22.371, 375; 24.12-18). She interprets Hector's undefiled, perfect body as a gift of the gods, a miracle. This interpretation is correct, as readers know that Aphrodite and Apollo had indeed intervened to preserve Hector's body from Achilles' depredations and from decay (23.184-191). Zeus acceded willingly to this plan because of Hector's sacrifices to him (24.66-69). Subsequently Apollo and Zeus intervene to bring about Hector's burial because they remember his piety, to which multiple references are made (22.169-172, Zeus speaking; 24.33-38, Apollo). Hermes describes to Priam this miracle of the gods' care:

"You yourself can see when you go there
How fresh with dew he lies, and the blood is all washed from him,
Nor is there any corruption, and all the wounds have been closed up

Where he was struck, since many drove the bronze in his body.
 So it is that the immortals care for your son, though
 He is nothing but a dead man; because in their hearts they loved him.”

(24. 418-23)

As Hekabe divines, it is true even for the gods (as well as for herself and her co-lamenters), that glory is not the defining attribute of Hektor's life. Instead it is Hektor's piety that draws the miracle, that outlasts his death, protects his body from decay, and restores his physical beauty. In this sense, as the poet reveals to readers/ audience, the gods have brought it about that Achilles' victory over Hektor has been only limited and transient.

Piety is a high value in the poem and an element of Hektor's large humanity. It is not, however, the driving goal or transcendent value for Hektor. Thus, in terms of his own values, the perhaps undesirable result of this divine intervention is that Hektor looks as if he had died a gentle, natural death.⁴¹ In death Hektor does not look like a warrior. His restored perfection is a reflection of the gods' favor and therefore redounds unambiguously to his credit. Yet this manifestation of divine care has the curious effect of erasing all physical signs of the struggle for heroic glory that Hektor himself valued above life. Thus, the burden of Hekabe's lament is to praise Hektor's piety, and the effect of the gods' intervention is to erase his heroic struggle. Hektor's miraculously restored physical beauty is an ironic honor much like the laments themselves--a gift of love, yet curiously at odds with Hektor's own values.

It is likely pertinent to recall here that the heroic ideal of the "beautiful death" does not mean looking beautiful at death. An earlier speech of Priam illuminates this truth, as he explicates the difference between the esthetics of dying young in battle and dying old.

“For a young man all is decorous

When he is cut down in battle and torn with the sharp bronze, and lies there
 Dead, and though dead still all that shows about him is beautiful;
 But when an old man is dead and down, and the dogs mutilate
 The grey head and the parts that are secret,

This, for all sad mortality, is the sight most pitiful.”

(22.761-76)

Vernant reiterates the same concept: "The blood, the wounds, and the grime on the corpse of a young hero recall his courage and enhance his beauty with masculine strength, but on an old man...their ugliness becomes almost obscene."⁴² Hekabe's lament, as it memorializes Hektor's peaceful and perfect appearance in death, ignores this sort of reasoning.

In sum Hekabe's lament--like Andromache's, silent about heroic glory—focuses on the fact that Hektor's body bears no signs of heroic struggle, testament to his piety and to the gods' love. In collocation with the preceding lament of Andromache, Hekabe's lament contributes to a final memory of Hektor for readers that celebrates values tangential to those that he, in life, most esteemed.

HELEN

Last to speak is Helen, the "sister-in-law" (or stranger, depending on one's view).

Ἐκτορ. ἐμῶ θυμῶ δαέρων πολὺ φίλτατε πάντων,
 ἦ μὲν μοι πόσις ἐστὶν Ἀλέξανδρος θεοειδής.
 ὅς μ' ἄγαγε Τροίηνδ'· ὡς πρὶν φελλον ὀλέσθαι.
 Ἴδῃ γὰρ νῦν μοι τόδ' ἔεικοστὸν ἔτος ἐστὶν
 ἐξ οὗ κεῖθεν ἔβην καὶ ἐμῆς ἀπελήλυθα πάτρης·
 ἀλλ' οὐ πῶ σεῦ ἄκουσα κακὸν ἔπος οὐδ' ἀσύφηλον·
 ἀλλ' εἴ τίς με καὶ ἄλλος ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἐνίπτοι
 δαέρων ἢ γαλόων ἢ εἰνατέρων εὐπέπλων,
 ἦ ἐκυρή — ἐκυρὸς δὲ πατήρ ὡς ἦπιος αἰεὶ —
 ἀλλὰ σὺ τὸν γ' ἐπέεσσι παραιφάμενος κατέρυκες,
 σῆ τ' ἀγανοφροσύνη καὶ σοῖς ἀγανοῖς ἐπέεσσι.
 Τῷ σέ θ' ἅμα κλαίω καὶ ἐμ' ἄμμορον ἀχνυμένη κῆρ
 οὐ γὰρ τίς μοι ἔτ' ἄλλος ἐνὶ Τροίῃ εὐρείῃ
 ἦπιος οὐδὲ φίλος, πάντες δέ με πεφρίκασιν.

(24.761-76)

manly honor and courage. By contrast, she scolds Paris for avoiding the fighting and acting shamefully. Therefore, as she implies, she would rather be the wife of Hektor than the wife of Paris (*Iliad* 6.344-51). Hektor's rejection of Helen's invitation to sit by her ennobles him in the readers' eyes, for it confirms Hektor's dedication to his marriage with Andromache. None of this, of course, finds a place in Helen's lament in *Iliad* 24. Her theme in praise of Hektor is that he protected her from his family's harsh words and from the perceived revulsion of all the Trojans generally. Now she must mourn for herself since she lacks a protector from such hurts. (Helen's self-absorption here perhaps gives insight into the self-indulgent passion with which she and Paris carelessly sparked the war to begin with.) Ironically, then, while Andromache feels herself to have been left defenseless by Hektor, Helen remembers and praises Hektor's defense of her.⁴⁴ For Helen, the protection in question is not, as with Andromache, a matter of life or freedom, but only of social slights, so that, compared with the troubles of Andromache, those of Helen are inconsequential. Nevertheless, the opposition between the two is quite precise and painfully ironic: Helen remembers Hektor as her protector, while Andromache grieves that Hektor has failed to protect her. The opposition between Andromache and Helen is one index of the deep hostilities between Helen, cause of the war, and the women in Hektor's family—not to mention the Trojans more generally. The possibility is raised by a comparison of the themes of these two laments that Hektor has in some sense ultimately protected the wrong woman.⁴⁵ Such tensions as these may be seen to contribute to the complexity of the *Iliad*'s closure.

Commentators note the anomalous inclusion of Helen as a lamenter at Hektor's funeral, since from one perspective she is not a member of Hektor's family at all.⁴⁶ Indeed, her ambiguous kinship relation to Hektor is the very cause of the war and hence the fundamental subject of the poem. The several and exactingly precise kinship terms that occur in Helen's lament bring this trouble explicitly to the fore. Thus she alludes with precise terminology to her husband's brothers, her husband's sisters, her husband's brothers' wives, her mother-in-law, and her father-in-law. In her lament for Hektor she refers to him as her brother-in-law, *daer*. However, in her first speech in the poem, to Priam in *Iliad* 3.180, it is Agamemnon whom she calls her brother-in-law, *daer*.⁴⁷ Whose sister-in-law, that is, whose wife, Helen is and will be is precisely the fatal question. As

Helen says, all the Trojans, when they see her, shudder. Pephrikasin is the last word of her lament, in response to which the whole people, the poet says, join in (24.776). Richardson observes, in my view persuasively, that the ending of Helen's lament leaves a bitter taste, with its portrayal of her self-pity and the Trojan people's implied fear or revulsion.

I have noted above the anomalous presence of Helen as lamenter at Hektor's funeral. This anomaly is rendered more emphatic by Helen's speaking in last position.⁴⁸ While Andromache, as wife, speaks first and thus has the place of honor in the funeral ceremony (as we learn from the previously cited ethnographic studies of lament), it is Helen, speaking last, who has the emphatic place, the place of honor, in the poem (a fact of poetics). That the last place is the place of honor poetically speaking can be demonstrated by a comparison of the order of the laments with the order of Hektor's interviews with these same three women in Iliad 6. There the order is Hekabe, Helen, and Andromache, where the poet builds up to Andromache, exploiting the folktale motif of the "ascending scale of affection."⁴⁹ When Hektor looks for Andromache at home, he does not find her and leaves again for the battlefield. Just as he is about to exit through the city gate, his impassioned wife comes running to meet him. Thus, in the earlier passage, the poet delays even the last place entrance of Andromache in order to intensify the suspense and render her appearance more moving. In Book 24 this climactic place is Helen's. For the reader, this changed order brings about a formal closure, since Helen is both the first as well as the last female speaker in the poem. Emotionally, however, this order likely dissatisfies/ feels off-center to many readers, given that it does not conclude with the voice of the woman closest to Hektor and most sympathetic to the reader/ audience. Thus the laments conclude with a tension between formal closure, on the one hand, and emotional (even indeed moral) disjunction on the other.

DISCUSSION: Lamentation and "Moral Meaning" in Epic Poetry

We are surely justified in supposing that the poet's choices in constructing closure reveal much about his thematic purposes. The laments of Iliad 24 achieve emphasis, thus moral authority, in the first instance and above all through their closural position. This

placement is an unambiguous fact of poetics. The authority of the laments is further confirmed by their ritual, public character as well as by the sheer number of verses which the poet gives to them. Additionally, all three lamenters are important characters in the poem in their own right, so that readers may follow in their laments a development of theme, characterization, and value. As we have seen, the three laments embody a range of perspectives on Hektor and how he lived his life. Thus, Hektor, who dies in pursuit of heroic glory:

“Let me at least not die without a struggle, inglorious,
But do some big thing first, that men to come shall know of it.” 22.304-05

is memorialized in the Iliad's final scene as pious by his mother, gentle by his “sister-in-law,” and with deep (or “faint” [Alexiou, see n.7 above]) disappointment by his wife. Through silence or explicit utterance, all have implications for Hektor's dedication to heroic glory. The contradiction between Hektor's aspirations, on the one hand, and the readers'/ audience's final memory of him in the poem, on the other, must invite interpretation. Through their concerns with love, piety, gentleness, and compassion the laments contribute importantly to the debate in the Iliad over what constitutes the high value of life—a debate that has pervaded the poem, from the homilia between Andromache and Hektor in Book 6, to Achilles' rejection of the code of heroic glory in Book 9 (“not worth the value of my life...”), to Hektor's decisive choice of hoped-for glory over dreaded shame in Book 22. The laments thus express moral values that, like Achilles' pity for Priam, compete with heroic glory for the reader's allegiance. By allotting to the laments emphatic placement, sequence, length, and moral substance, the poet of the Iliad allows them to speak for values alternative to heroic glory and thereby to share importantly in embodying the “moral meaning” of the Iliad.⁵⁰

CONCLUSION: Complications of Reading Lament and a Concluding Thought on the (Debated) Function of Lament in Epic Poetry

The ritual character of the Iliad's closure has led many critics to see affirmation and communion in the close of the Iliad--an integration of desolating grief into communal reflections on the large conditions of human life. Therefore, as the laments are ritual, and as they adhere to forms traditional through centuries, they are affirmative for both internal and external audiences. As they are contrary to Hektor's imaginings and desires--as they give voice to values alternative to those of Hektor in particular, and to those of most male characters in the poem generally--they are disruptive of closure and subversive of epic's "central claims." The contradictory tensions of this closure go far to explain the range of readings one finds in the critical literature. As I read this closure, it is more subversive of heroic ideology than has been proposed by other scholars. Admittedly, this emphasis is a matter of degree and of individual response among readers. The question is important, though, for it determines to a significant degree our reading of the "moral meaning" of the Iliad as a whole.

Finally, this is not, of course, to propose that laments in all epic poems function in opposition to the text's dominant ideology.⁵¹ For example, Alison Keith in this volume shows how laments in the Pharsalia, both women's laments and men's funeral orations, serve the purpose, in conjunction with the poet's bias, of arousing opposition to Caesar. Here Cornelia's laments do not question or regret war (or the poem's ideological thrust) but instead encourage it. Analogously, in Beowulf the closing laments, spoken by men, explicitly and comprehensively affirm the values exemplified by Beowulf as man, warrior, and king. Beowulf is praised both as the "gentlest of men" and as the "keenest for fame." (For text, see note.)⁵² In this closure, we find no haunting questions unresolved, no implied wishes of how it might have been otherwise. Instead we find congruence of all values held by poet, lamenters, and heroic deceased. Admittedly I am adducing a mixed bag of texts, oral and written, centuries apart in time. Yet it leads me to conclude, at least provisionally, that the function of laments in epic poetry is best understood as a poetic choice. Laments carry the ideological weight that the poet constructs for them in the course of the text as a whole.

¹ The works of, e.g., Helene Foley (1992), Gail Holst-Warhaft (1992), and Nadia Seremetakis (1991) have observed the recurrent opposition between women's laments for

the dead and the political or military ideology of the male/ ruling class. Solon's legislation to restrict women's laments and death rituals (Plut. Sol.21.5) confirms the perceived disruptive power of lament in antiquity. As Foley comments on lament in tragedy (44): "By concentrating on the negative effects that death and war itself have on survivors, lamentation can offer a muted reproach of the dead and of the ambitions of the dead for immortal fame celebrated in the funeral oration." Serematakis' study of lament in contemporary rural Greece traces the power of women's lament as a voice of resistance from antiquity to the present, suggesting that laments are "strategies of resistance that emerge and subsist on the margins" (1). It is to be noted as well, however, that lament may also function to reinforce male ideology, as in Inner Mani, it is the prelude to murderous vengeance (Seremetakis, *passim*). Lament is not wholly uniform, therefore, in its relationship to male authority.

See Perkell (1997) 278-80 for a summary discussion of the oppositional potential of lament, with bibliography. ADD DUE HERE?

² Derderian 2001.10.

³ Murnaghan (1999) argues that lament is both necessary to epic, since it functions to promote praise of the deceased (e.g. 213), as well as subversive of epic's "central claims" (217). See Sultan (1991) for a comparable reading of more contemporary material: women's interests are opposed to male heroic action and yet women's voices are essential to process of making heroic glory immortal.

⁴ All translations are from Richmond Lattimore (trans.) The Iliad of Homer (Chicago 1951).

⁵ Silk 1987.70.

⁶ Holst-Warhaft (1992) anticipates my reading in two key respects. Most crucially, she notes (113) that "Not one of the women praises Hector as a hero in battle." She notes

also the heightened significance of the laments, given their placement at the end of the poem (110): “”The position of the laments in the narrative suggests that they fulfil an artistic purpose of greater importance than the dramatic representation of female mourning....[the women’s] laments are a vehicle for summarizing the artistic and philosophical themes of the narrative.” My further contribution is to do a close reading of the three laments as a composition, maximally significant by virtue of their closural placement and their contents, specific to Hektor and, above all, in pointedly ironic contrast with his wishes for glory. In this way the laments comment implicitly and explicitly upon Hektor’s particular relationship to the heroic code and thus are subversive of closure as much as they are summarizing of themes.

⁷ Alexiou 2002.183: “Andromache opens and closes with a faint note of reproach.” Warhaft, more emphatically (112): “Andromache...is full of reproach and bitterness for the perilous situation in which he has left her and her son.” (Note the difference in degree in the readings of Alexiou and Holst-Warhaft.) Foley (1991.44) observes the subversive quality of Andromache’s lament, but does not read it as problematizing the poem’s overall meaning: “In the Iliad the themes expressed in lamentation also subtly counter the dominant ideology of the poem (see especially the lamentations of Andromache), which celebrates the immortal kleos acquired by the warrior in battle. But the poet does not problematize this tension in a comparable way” (i.e., to tragedy).

⁸ Silk’s key formulation (1987.96): “The Iliad presents a coherent heroic ideology, which presupposes war. That ideology is celebrated and affirmed in the poem, in that it is what the heroes in general live by, and the poem unquestionably celebrates them. At the same time the supreme hero is Achilles, and it is clear that Achilles is an uncomfortable and even a destructive presence within the heroic world...the poem is so structured as to reveal the negative implications of heroic values along with their obvious splendour...the greatest literature is wont to subvert the dominant ideological categories that it purports to, and does indeed also, embody: and thanks to Achilles, the Iliad surely does just this.” (Italics Silk’s)

⁹ Martin (1989.197): “beginnings and endings carry a significance far disproportionate to that of the midportion of any temporal artistic composition.” Famously, Kermode (45): “we use fictions to enable the end to confer organization and form on the temporal structure.” See also Culler (1997.83-94) on narrative. On “underreading”— the neglect of material signified within the text, thus the exclusion of possible meanings, see Abbott 79-82, 194.

¹⁰ Murnaghan 1999.204.

¹¹ The gestures of the lamenting women on the Bronze Age vases described by Brendan Burke (this volume) have no obvious analog in the laments in *Iliad* 24. Burke, therefore, questions if the lament tradition is in fact as continuous as has been proposed.

¹² Monsacré’s 1984 study, which hypothesizes the “radical impotence” (201) and private nature of women’s laments (166) and the perceived difference between women’s laments and men’s (read as heroic grief, a display of force and vitality [201]), has significantly shaped more recent readings of lament.

¹³ Speakers in the *Iliad* vary in their evaluations of women. As Zanker (1994.68) observes, “like a woman” expresses the honor-driven warrior’s contempt for the affective appeal. MacCary’s psychological study discusses the anxieties underlying men’s valuations of women (1982.99-108, 149-51, 152-62). On the other hand, Achilles, who has no anxiety about his heroic status, compares himself to a woman twice in similes (9.323-27, 16.6-12).

¹⁴ Abbott (77).

¹⁵ Redfield 1975.23: “The characters in a poem are as the poet made them, and he made them as he would have them for the needs of his work. When we think of the poem as a

made thing, a construct, we abandon the point of view of the characters and take our stand with the poet. We ask what sort of meaning the poet is conveying and how he seeks to convey it; we shall find this meaning conveyed, not in the represented experience of any single character, but in the poem as a whole. We thus shift our interest from character to plot, taking “plot” in a very broad sense as the implicit conceptual unity which has given the work its actual form.”

¹⁶ Zanker 1994.45.

¹⁷ Alden 2000.1-2: “The Iliad and the Odyssey are both highly integrated and carefully composed poems which can only be explained as the work of a brilliant and insightful poet carefully shaping and polishing his work over many years.” Similarly Latacz. This view is not, of course, universally held among Homer scholars. Casey Dué (2002) exemplifies a different kind of reading of the Homeric texts. She rejects the concept of a master-poet and reads seeming innovations as a means of adapting the tradition. Cf. Nagy 1979. 94-117, esp. 116-7, “Lamentation and the Hero.”

¹⁸ See Roberts (1993) for discussion of types or gradations of closure: closure may be read as strong or weak, open or closed, reductive or problematic, as resolving the conflicts of the text or extending them, or, by ignoring them, as perhaps implying their unresolvability. (For another discussion, see Abbott 51-61.)

What we might see as, in fact, even triple closure-- of lamentation, funeral, and a shared meal--concludes the poem. The funeral ceremony of Hector is described in detail, from the nine days of mourning in the palace and gathering wood, to the burning of the body on the funeral pyre on the tenth, the extinguishing of the fire with wine poured over it on the eleventh, the gathering the bones into a golden casket, wrapped with soft (purple) robes, to the burying of the casket under piled-up stones and a grave mound, all concluded by the funeral feast (24.656-667, 719-22, 782-804).

¹⁹ See Tsigalis 2004.112 Table 2.

²⁰ Funeral ritual, with its shared formal mourning, brings consolation, as Roberts (1993) several times observes. She notes further (586) that ritual, even when marred, evokes order and regularity. Similarly Redfield 1975.182: "In the funeral the community acts on its own behalf to reassert its own continuity in spite of the disorderly forces which assail it. By the funeral the community purifies itself" (i.e., constructs meaning for itself through form)....(185):"By its treatment of the body the community enacts its determination that even qua organism a man belongs to the order of culture and not to the realm of nature."

²¹ Beck 2005.247 and 247n30: "...these laments are longer and more elaborate than the laments in other funerals described in the Homeric epics." For her discussion of the Iliad 24 laments and death of Hektor, see 246-57.

²² Derderian (2001) and Tsigalis (2004) both offer discussion and cataloguing of topics and forms of laments, establishing thereby a typology of lament, isolating what appear to be its conventional features. Tsigalis (27-52 and 75-108) includes among topoi of lament: distance, separation, premature death, praise of deceased, comparison of deceased to others, common fate with deceased, death wish of lamenter, contrast between past and present. The listing of topoi does not, of course, exhaust the possible meanings of laments, especially if they include highly specific, even idiosyncratic detail. See Tsigalis 38-39. For an earlier listing see Alexiou 1974.

²³ It is important to realize that several different attitudes towards the heroic code are represented in the Iliad. On the Greek side Diomedes is the exemplary warrior, consistently behaving in accordance with the code, as shown by Marilyn Arthur (1981). Sarpedon's nuanced justification for the pursuit of heroic glory (12.310-28) is "in a way

metaphysical," as Vernant (1991.57) observes. Achilles, on the other hand, speaks the most pointed critique of the code: "For not/ worth the value of my life are all the possessions they fable/ were won for Ilion, that strong-founded citadel, in the old days/ when there was peace" (Il.9.400-03; Il.9.307-420 throughout). Cf. Silk 1987.96, n. 8 above.

²⁴ See n. 5 above.

²⁵ The laments of Iliad 24 are the only ritual laments in the poem because of the public context and the presence of professionals. Richardson (1993 ad 720-22) notes that the terms aidos, threnos, threnein, and exarchos occur only here in the poem, and that threnoi do not occur in connection with Patroklos. Iliad 24.719-22 suggests the distinction between threnoi and gooi, the latter being the personal and less polished grieving of kinswomen. Tsigalos 2004.3: "Threnos involves two groups of mourners, the professionals and kinswomen. The lament begins with a musical threnos sung by professionals and answered by the chorus' (of kinswomen) wailing, and is then continued by the next of kin, each uttering a goos-speech capped by a refrain of cries from the chorus." Further definitions from Tsigalos: exarchoi: singers of the threnos who lead the lament; aoide/ aidous refer explicitly to the character of the threnoi and the professionals who utter them.

²⁶ On the importance of closure in making meaning, see note 9 above.

²⁷ This power of shared mourning to affirm human value pervades the deeply felt readings of Iliad 24 by Charles Segal (1993.64) and W. R. Johnson (1976.121).

²⁸ Alexiou established what scholars generally consider to be traditional in laments, namely a tri-partite structure, which she termed ABA: address to the dead, narrative section, return to direct address (1974.133). The narrative section, as preserved in subsequent texts and summarized by Alexiou, has conventional, comprehensive themes,

such as the speaker's memories of the past or images of the future, the desolation of those left behind, or a wish to have died with or instead of the dead one (177-78). (Also see n. 21 above.) For the antiphonal element in lament, which she also described, see 1974.n. 26 above.

²⁹ See n.7 above.

³⁰ J.M. Foley (1991.173) "liability." See 168-74 for his treatment of the laments.

³¹ The other, of course, is that between Achilles and Priam in Iliad 24 that establishes pity as the high value of the poem.

³² See M. Arthur (1981) for this crucial observation. These verses were athetized by Aristarchus on the grounds of being inappropriate content for a female speaker. (See Kirk ad 6.433-39 for discussion.) However, the thrust of Andromache's position is manifest even without them. See Alden (2000) on Hektor's repeated rejections of others' entreaties as a moral failure (n. 2 in Appendix E 3, pp. 311-18 "The Motivation Ascribed to Wives Entreating Husbands"). For her comprehensive discussion of Hektor, see 262-90.

³³ Contrast the wholly positive picture in, e.g., Andromache's speech about Hektor in the Trojan Women (e.g., 742-44).

³⁴ For Schadewaldt (1959), there is no such ambiguity as I propose. Hektor's needs for glory exemplify all admirable male strivings for achievement; Andromache is the hysterical, fearful wife, who fails to appreciate men's needs for greatness that transcend their love for family and render them immune to affective appeal. For another reading of this scene, along with a provocative and moving collocation of related texts, see James Tatum (2003), especially 96-115.

³⁵ The phrase pukinon epos, translated here as “intimate word,” occurs also at 7.375, 11.788, 24.75. For Martin (1989.35) it “implies dense with meaning and filled with urgency.” For another discussion, see J.H. Foley 1991.154-56 and Richardson 1993 ad loc.

³⁶ Hektor’s parents urge him to withdraw into the city to save himself, thus the inverse of the Meleager paradigm, in which the true hero, the acknowledged greatest fighter, is urged by those close to him not to remain in the city, but, on the contrary, to emerge from it in order to defend them against the enemy (9. 573-96). This is not the only suggestion in the poem that Hektor is not the idealized heroic warrior that he wishes to be. See Alden’s discussion, n.34 above.

³⁷ It is a topos in later laments for the wife or mother to express a sense of abandonment or betrayal at the death of spouse or child, but in these cases the death is not attributed to the deceased own agency. See Alexiou (2002) index, sv “Reproach of mourner to dead” and p. 106 for the following example:

“Ammia, wise daughter, how is it you died so soon?
 Why did you hasten to die, or which of the fates overtook you?
 Before we decked you for the bridal garland in the marriage chamber
 You left your home and grieving parents.
 Your father and all the country and your mother lamented
 Your most untimely and unwedded youth.” [Kotiaion 4th cen. CE]

³⁸ Richardson’s (1993 ad loc.) stylistic appreciation of Andromache’s eloquence (fluidity, enjambment, tricolon abundans) establishes that she is not represented as hysterical.

³⁹ Petersmann 1973.12: Andromache refers to the future, the other two to the past.

⁴⁰ E.g., Murnaghan 1999.209. My focus on poetics includes such considerations as who speaks the laments, where they occur in the poem, and if there is progression in the

utterances of a particular speaker. (Tsigalis terms these relationships “intertextuality” 109-65.) Note that Richardson (1993 ad 762-75), for example, calls Andromache’s lament “a masterpiece of characterization.” Similarly, G. Petersmann (1973, esp. 13) suggests the poet was freely creative in composing the laments to express the individuality and humanity of the figures: “Der Dichter der Ilias hat neben dem Traueritual, das noch immer machtvoll in der Dichtung aufscheint, jenen Raum geschaffen, den er brauchte, um Trauer und Leid seiner Gestalten in individuell verschiedener Weise zu gestalten.”

⁴¹ To die by the gentle arrows [aganoisi belessin] of Apollo or Artemis denotes a swift, easy death (e.g., Richardson 1993, Macleod 1982 ad loc.).

⁴² Vernant 1991.64.

⁴³ For other readings of Helen, see Martin (this volume), N. Worman 2001, M. Ebbott 1999, M. Pantelia 2001, M. Suzuki (1989, esp. 54-56 on the Iliad 24 lament).

⁴⁴ See Zanker (1994.40) on Hektor’s motives for protection of Helen. In the first instance, he suggests the “noble treatment that the honor-constraint in the heroic code expected the warrior to extend to his dependents,” adding that affection may also have played a part.

⁴⁵ E.g., Zanker (1994.42): “The heroic code has an internal ambiguity, when claims of honor override those of affection, justice, prudence, and appropriateness.”

⁴⁶ Alexiou 1974.11-14 establishes that relatives or close friends are the conventional laments. There is scholarly discussion of Helen’s speaking in last place. Monsacré 1984,159: “On peut se demander pourquoi c’est Hélène, et non une soeur—Cassandre par exemple--, qui termine la lamentation des femmes autour d’Hector et fait gémir l’ensemble du peuple réuni.” Monsacré attributes Helen’s presence as lamenter to her exceptional status as a woman in the poem, thus first and last to speak, and to affinity

with the poet (119) himself (e.g., she is weaving an account of the war). This is the reading of Pantelia (2002) as well. Martin in this volume argues that through diction and rhetoric, even outside of formal lament, Helen is characterized in the *Iliad* as a “keening figure”, i.e., identified with the lament genre generally.

⁴⁷ Richardson (1993 ad 762-75) points to the kinship terms and the trouble signified by the use of [daer] for both Agamemnon at 3.180 and Hektor at 6.344, 355.

⁴⁸ Others read this lament differently. (See n.43 above.) For example, Holst-Warhaft (1992.113) suggests that it is because women’s laments can encompass more than a single life, touching on mortal losses more generally, “that they occupy this position in the narrative, and that Helen, who has been the ostensible cause of all the suffering, should be the last to lament seems appropriate artistic license.” Pantelia (2002.158-59) develops this universalizing reading of Helen’s lament, followed also by Dué (2002.81): Helen’s lament turns the personal into the paradigmatic, an effect or function of lament. Readers obviously have to come to their own understandings of the laments; but for me, the thesis that there is something universalizing in Helen’s lament, that she weeps for the human condition goes well beyond the text. Richardson (1993) ad loc. seems more on point in observing the pettiness and self-absorption of Helen’s closing

The chapter in Alexiou (2000) on historical laments for the fall of cities brings to our attention the fact that public themes are not addressed in the laments in *Iliad* 24, although in fact a city is falling.

⁴⁹ We see the same ascending scale of affection in the Meleager story. Meleager is supplicated first by the city elders, then his father, his mother, his sisters, and his closest friends, all of whom he refuses in turn. He responds only, at last, to the appeal of his wife [9.573-596].) See J. Th. Kakridis (1949) 43-64 on Hektor and 11-42 and 127-48 on Meleager; Nagy (1979.104-06).

⁵⁰ Abbott (2002.102): “To tell a story is to try to understand it.” Cf. Hayden White (1987.21): “The demand for closure in the historical story is a demand...for moral meaning, a demand that sequences of real events be assessed as to their significance as elements of a moral drama.” On such questions, all readers do not read the same way. As Murnaghan (1999. 206-07) points out, different responses to hearing epic song are modeled by the poet in the Odyssey, where, for example, Odysseus cries upon hearing Demodokos’ song, whereas the Phaiakians take pleasure in it. Odysseus’ own closeness to the song causes his grief. We infer that personal context is one variable in a listener’s/reader’s construction of a text.

⁵¹ Laments do not necessarily have uniform ideological function in society either. Lament may subvert the dominant male ideology or reinforce it, as in Inner Mani, where lament is the prelude to murderous vengeance (Seremetakis 1991, *passim*). Cited in n.1 above.

⁵² Richardson (1993.350) ad 24.718-76, citing the ending of Beowulf, comments: “So, too, Beowulf ends in mourning and praise for the hero.” He cites the following from the end of the poem:

Then the warriors rode around the barrow,
 twelve of them in all, athelings' sons.
 They recited a dirge to declare their grief,
 spoke of the man, mourned their king.
 They praised his manhood and the prowess of his hands,
 they raised his name; it is right a man
 should be lavish in honouring his lord and friend,
 should love him in his heart when the leading-forth
 from the house of flesh befalls him at last.
 This was the manner of the mourning of the men of the
 Geats,
 sharers in the feast, at the fall of their lord:

they said that he was of all the world's kings
the gentlest of men, and the most gracious,
the kindest to his people, the keenest for fame.

(Beowulf 3169-82, trans. M. Alexander)

This lament is performed by men, not women. On female mourners in Beowulf, see Helen Bennett(1992) and Susan Signe Morrison (2000).