

HOMERIC EYES IN A RITUAL CONTEXT

In a 'typical battle scene' in the *Iliad* Peisandros and Menelaos are involved in a fierce combat described in detail and recurring along the same pattern but with different combatants elsewhere in the poem. Peisandros is struck on the face and killed while his eyes are knocked out and fall on the dusty ground, bloody, before his feet. For Menelaos with his sword had hit him on the forehead, above the nose and smashed the bones there (*Il.* 13. 601-8, esp. 615-7: ... ὁ δὲ προσιόντα μέτωπον / ῥινὸς ὕπερ πνύματις· λάκε δ' ὀστέα, τῶ δέ οἱ ὄσσε· / παρ ποσὶν αἱματόεντα χαμαὶ πέσον ἐν κονίησιν). The closest parallel to this scene, when this typical pattern is repeated with varying features, according to B. C. Fenik's¹ pattern classification, is *Iliad* 16.335-41. However, in this case Peneleos' sword sank into Lukon's neck 'but only the skin held fast, and the head hung to one side, and his limbs were loosed' (340-1). At *Iliad* 16.731-43, in a similar way of death, Kebriones' eyes are knocked out of his head and fall on the ground before his feet while he himself fell like a diver from his chariot and his spirit was leaving his bones. An obviously unreal slaying and death as the details, like the falling eyes, reflect lack of exactitude while the description of the disintegration of the human body by its separation of some of its organs, the eyes for example, and of the spirit—in general its abandonment of life—is paralleled to that of the falling figure of the warrior from his chariot, like a diver. Thus a number of parallels can be observed here, in this scene: the falling eyes to the falling figure, the disconnection/dissociation of the body to the disintegration of life, and the falling-diving

1. *Typical Battle Scenes in the Iliad. Studies in the narrative techniques of Homeric battle description*, (*Hermes Einzelschriften* 21, Wiesbaden 1968), 197, according to the pattern: '1. A throws at B and misses 2. B throws at A and misses 3. A kills B'. See also *ibid.*, 1, on M. Parry's and W. Arend's contribution to the understanding of Homeric 'typical scenes' which belong to the same compositional technique as that of the verse making, in Fenik's words: 'Verse making and scene-making would therefore seem to be two related aspects of a single and pervasive principle of composition: namely, the repetition of standard units—individual phrase formulae at one level, typical situations related in essentially the same basic language at another.'



body is drawing a parallel to the falling life down to Hades, itself like a diver.¹

Let us concentrate—and complete this pattern—on another passage/scene, *Iliad* 14.496-505. Here Peneleos kills Ilioneus in a most outrageous and horrible way: his spear hits the eye right at its base, while his sword cuts off Ilioneus' head; the head with the helmet is thrown down but the spear is still in the eye. Peneleos holds it up like a poppy (the poppy-simile here apparently reflects the real image of a damaged blooded eye-ball) and by showing the head to the Trojans (a ghastly sight indeed!) he boasts that the hero's parents should start mourning their dead son; because Promachos' wife will also grieve as she is not going to see her husband back to their homeland, when the *κοῦροι Ἀχαιῶν* will return with their ships leaving Troy.² The savagery displayed here by the mutilation of the human body is not unique but is found elsewhere in the *Iliad*, in acts as well as in words, like Hektor's threat that he would behead Patroklos and impale his head (18.176 f.; cf. 17.126-7), while Achilles gives a similar promise that he would burn Hektor's head together with his armour in the pyre of Patroklos (18.334-5). An evaluation of the meaning that such acts assume in connection with the reality of war and the Homeric moral values is beyond the scope of the present study. However, it could be argued that any criticism about cruelty and lack of moral sensitivity on behalf of the epic heroes—and Homer himself—should be expressed within the limits and the conventions of oral epic composition as well as in comparison with acts revealing polar human situations of which the *Iliad* has a remarkable number to present, especially in book 24.

The fierceness with which eyes are treated in the above ways of killing and death, where repeated situations and details belong to formulaic language and typical composition, appears as a contradicting feature to those scenes where eyes are set within a social and religious ritual framework, related either to death or life. For eyes knocked out and fallen on the ground will not be attributed the ritual custom which is proper to the dead warrior by his close rela-

1. *Il.* 16.740-3: ἀμφοτέρας δ' ὀφρῦς σύνελεν λίθος, οὐδέ οἱ ἔσχεν / ὀστέον, ὀφθαλμοὶ δὲ χαμαὶ πέσον ἐν κονίησιν / αὐτοῦ πρόσθε ποδῶν· ὁ δ' ἄρ' ἀρνευτήρι εἰοικῶς / κάπτισσ' ἀπ' ἐνεργέος δίφρου, λίπε δ' ὀστέα θυμός. Fenik, *op. cit.*, 197, 215.

2. See R. Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, vol. IV: books 13-16, Cambridge 1992, 221-2 (on 14. 489-505). C. Segal, *The Theme of the Mutilation of the Corpse in the Iliad*, Leiden 1971, 20, 23.



tives, that is the closing of his eyes: «ἄ δειλ', οὐ μὲν σοί γε πατήρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ / ὅσσε καθαιρήσουσι θανόντι περ, ἀλλ' οἰωνοὶ / ὠμησται ἐρύουσι, περὶ πτερὰ πικνὰ βαλόντες. / αὐτὰρ ἔμ', εἴ κε θάνω, κτεριοῦσί γε δῖοι Ἀχαιοί» (*Il.* 11.452-5): 'Ah, poor wretch, your father and queenly mother shall not close your eyes in death, but the birds that eat raw flesh shall rend you, beating their wings thick and fast around you; whereas to me, if I die, the goodly Achaeans shall give burial' (Loeb transl.). Thus Odysseus boasts as he sees the Trojan hero Sokos falling by his spear which was fixed in his back and penetrated through his breast.

Therefore, the corpses of the warriors must be recovered from the battle field, they should be released for decent burial. The dead should be bewailed, mothers, wives and fathers must weep over them, it is they (mainly the deceaseds' wives) that should close their eyes; this is the due of the dead (ὡς ἐπέωκει).¹ Agamemnon's dreadful

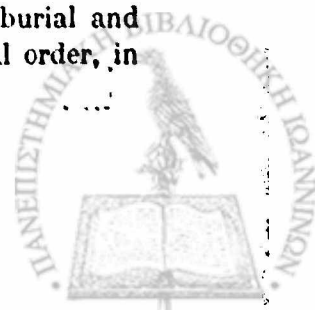
1. See *Od.* 24. 295-6: κώκυς' ἐν λεχέεσσιν ἐὼν πόσιν, ὡς ἐπέωκει, / ὀφθαλμοὺς καθελούσα· τὸ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ θανόντων; cf. *Il.* 16. 674-5. The theme of corpses exposed to mutilation appears in the very beginning of the *Iliad*, 1. 4-5: ... ἡρώων, / αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεύχε κύνεσσιν / οἰωνοῖσί τε πᾶσι: Segal, *op. cit.*, 9. Therefore, by arguing that 'no one is ever fed to the dogs in the *Iliad*', J.M. Redfield (*Nature and culture in the Iliad: The Tragedy of Hector*, Chicago 1975, p. 169), is only partly right as far as the named heroes are concerned whereas the above verses of the *Iliad* (1.4-5) clearly state that some corpses, probably of anonymous heroes, really had such a fate. See B. Hainsworth, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, vol. III: books 9-12, Cambridge 1993, 273 (on 11. 450-5): 'These verses explain why it was so important to recover the corpses of the slain. After the chivalrous proposals of Hektor that the victor take the armour but release the body of the slain for decent burial (7.76-91), Odysseus' boast sounds a mean, unpleasant note. Dogs and vultures are the fate of the common soldiers ... but this is the first time in the *Iliad* that a named victim is threatened with them.' Hektor, however, is contemplating giving Patroklos' corpse to the dogs of Troy at *Iliad* 17.127, a threat that is transferred to Achilles by Hera's messenger, Iris, at *Iliad* 18.178-80, that Hektor's intended savagery to the corpse of Patroklos would be a shame for Achilles (180: σοὶ λώβη, αἶ κέν τι νέκυς ἤσχυμμένος ἔλθῃ). On the theme of the maltreatment of the corpse in the *Iliad* see mainly C. Segal's (*op. cit. passim*) very interesting work and particularly on Iris' message and warning pp. 24-5. Segal argues that it is with Achilles' honour himself and the values of a Homeric «shame culture» that Iris' appeal is associated but we are rather inclined to agree with J.T. Hooker ('Homeric society: A shame-culture?', *GR* 34 (1987), 125), that it is '«religious awe» ... much more than shame before one's equals or inferiors, that acts as a constant and powerful constraint upon the heroes.' But see also R. Parker, *Miasma. Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion*, Oxford 1983, 70, for the view that while Homeric language emphasizes the cause of divine anger and not pollution for corpses that are mutilated or denied funerary rites, it seems that the appeal to divine intervention acts as a support to the human rule.



death was even more shameful for Clytaemestra, who seeing him dying, turned her back and she did not stay neither to close his eyes with her fingers nor his mouth.¹ Lamentation and burial are what Elpenor's soul asks from Odysseus on his visit to the Underworld, otherwise he threatens that he would bring the wrath of the gods upon him (*Od.* 11.72-3: μή μ' ἄκλαντον ἄθαρτον ἰὼν ὄπιθεν καταλείπειν, / νοσφισθείς, μή τοί τι θεῶν μήνιμα γένωμαι). And Patroklos' soul/spirit appears to Achilles in full self, i.e. his dream-image resembled the one he had when alive in all features (23.66-7: πάντ' αὐτῷ μέγεθός τε καὶ ὄμματα κάλ' εἰκνῖα, / καὶ φωνήν, ...) and reproaches him for having neglected the due funeral rites asking him to bury him quickly so that he could enter the gates of Hades (*Il.* 23.69-74).

Death rituals are mainly performed by women in the Homeric society. They are usually the leaders of lamentation to whom speech/words are attributed by the poet, as for instance to Andromache, Hecuba and Helen in *Iliad* 24, who are accompanied by the 'answering

1. *Od.* 11. 424-6: ... ἡ δὲ κνωῶπις / νοσφίσαι, οὐδέ μοι ἔτλη ἰόντι περ εἰς 'Αἴδαι / χερσὶ κατ' ὀφθαλμοῦς ἐλέειν σὺν τε στόμ' ἐρείσαι: «My bitch of a wife would not even close my eyes or fix my jaws», complained murdered Agamemnon in the underworld (xi. 425), a refusal of family duty which was a clear measure of her distaste for him. The pleasant presentation of the body was partly prompted by feelings that it might appear in the underworld as it had left the upper world, a matter quite separate from the theory of the psyche': E.T. Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in early Greek art and poetry*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1979, 14. See also R. Garland, *The Greek way of death*, London 1985, 138: 'It was believed that the psychē could take one of three exit routes from the body, viz. mouth, nostrils or eyes'; *ibid.*, 23: 'Upon a person's decease, the eyes and mouth were first closed, a practice known to Homer which was most appropriately discharged by the next-of-kin. The custom may originally have fulfilled a purely cosmetic function, but by the historical period at the latest it had acquired an eschatological significance as well. An inscription found at Smyrna possibly to be dated to the third century B.C. suggests that the closing of the eyes was believed to secure the release of the psychē from the body.' On Homeric attitudes towards death see also Chr. Sourvinou-Inwood, 'To Die and Enter the House of Hades: Homer, Before and After' in J. Whaley, ed., *Mirrors of Mortality. Studies in the Social History of Death*, London 1981, 15-39, esp. 25 ff. for death-ritual behaviour and the system of values that this is based on, a system 'expressed through axes of binary oppositions' like 'Disorder-Order (a concept of fundamental importance in ancient Greek mentality), Female-Male, Pollution-Purity, Nature-Society/Culture, Death-Life, Separation-Integration'. See also I. Morris, *Burial and ancient society. The rise of the Greek city-state*, Cambridge 1987, 29-54 on the complex relationships between burial and society, the function of funerary rituals in the affirmation of the social order, in general on 'the social dimensions of early Greek burial'.

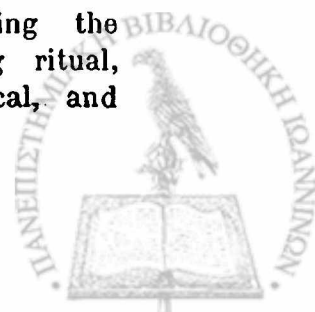


groans from the women of Troy' (*ἐπι δὲ στενάχοντο γυναῖκες*: 24.722) and that of 'the great multitude of the people ...' (*ἐπι δ' ἔστενε δῆμος ἀπείρων*: 24.776), all parts of the death ritual (see also 22.405-515 and 23.8 ff.).¹ Ritual gestures are, however, concentrated on the head and the face of the dead like the holding of his head during the *prothesis* or the funeral by his nearest kin or main kinswoman. The touching (or the holding) of Hektor's head by his mother and wife (712: *ἀπτόμεναι κεφαλῆς*, 723-4: *ἦρχε γόοιο* / "Ἐκτορος ἀνδροφόνοιο κάρη μετὰ χερσὶν ἔχουσα), accompanied by lament in book 24 of the *Iliad*, is not 'a casual gesture but ... an established custom', according to J.Th. Kakridis.² In a similar way Achilles holds Patroklos' head during his *ekphora* thus substituting in a way the female rôle in performing this ritual.³ In both cases, however, certain elements in the description

1. P. Easterling, 'Men's κλέος and Women's γόος: Female Voices in the *Iliad*', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 9 (1991), 149: 'The capacity of women in the *Iliad* to suffer and lament foreshadows that displayed by tragic heroines like Tecmessa in *Ajax* or Hecuba in the *Trojan Women* and by many tragic choruses. In expressing grief—their own and the community's—the women give strong emotional and ritual coloring to the events narrated, but their mourning goes beyond cries and groans: they also offer comment, articulating the issues at stake.'

2. *Homeric Researches*, Lund 1949, 67. See *Il.* 24.710: *πρῶται τόν γ' ἄλοχός τε φίλη καὶ πότνια μήτηρ* / *τιλλέσθην, ἐπ' ἄμαξαν ἐστροχὸν ἀΐξασαι*, / *ἀπτόμεναι κεφαλῆς ...*; cf. 24.722 ff.: *οἱ μὲν ἄρ' ἐθρήνεον, ἐπι δὲ στενάχοντο γυναῖκες*. / *τῆσιν δ' Ἀνδρομάχη λευκώλενος ἦρχε γόοιο*, / "Ἐκτορος ἀνδροφόνοιο κάρη μετὰ χερσὶν ἔχουσα. The lament for Hektor follows the standard/formal pattern, structured within known Homeric conventions of expressing deep feelings 'but no strident or stilted pathos' as in tragedy; along standard elements, however, the three women's lament in the last book of the *Iliad* recalls major themes of the poem as well as it foreshadows future events but also presents things that the poet left in suspense in previous books look definite now: see C.W. Macleod, *Homer, Iliad Book XXIV*, Cambridge 1982, 148-9. On the view that in the Homeric poems 'the scale of funerary rites was considered a very overt statement about the social status of the deceased' see I. Morris, *Burial and ancient society*, 44-8. J. M. Redfield, *Nature and culture in the Iliad*, 170-1, argues that 'the Homeric funeral is exclusively a ceremony' dealing with the dead as 'an organic being', 'a social being' whose relation with the living is stated and beyond the grave. See also J.-P. Vernant, 'Corps obscur, corps éclatant' in *Corps des dieux (Le temps de la réflexion, VII)*, Paris 1986, 34-5, on how the Homeric hero is commemorated after his corpse is consumed by fire.

3. See *Il.* 23.136-7: *... ὄπιθεν δὲ κάρη ἔχε δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς* / *ἀχνύμενος ἔταρον γὰρ ἀμύμονα πέμπ' Ἀϊδόσδε*; Kakridis, *op. cit.*, 67: 'We can easily understand why in Ψ it is Achilles who holds Patroclus' head, when we consider that this task could not be fulfilled by any female relation of his outside the walls of Troy.' As far as this ritual's association with pollution is concerned see R. Parker, *Miasma. Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion*, 39: '«Touching the corpse» might, of course, have formed a part of the mourning ritual, but this would be merely a translation of social contact into physical, and



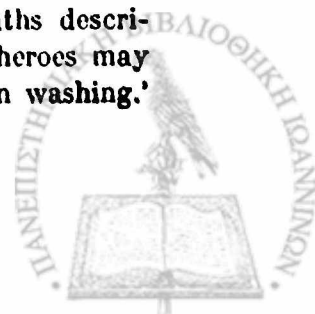
of the death ritual, like the closing of the dead person's eyes and mouth by the closest relative, are omitted, and this is because both heroes' death took place in the battle.

The same gesture, the holding of the head by the closest kin, recurs along similar language at *Iliad* 18.70-2, but this time it concerns a living person, Achilles (τῷ δὲ βαρὺ στενάχοντι παρίστατο πότνια μήτηρ, | ὄξυ δὲ κωκύσασα κάρη λάβε παιδὸς ἑοῖο, καὶ ὃ' ὀλοφυρομένη ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα): in this scene Thetis with a shrill cry is clasping her son's head. The gesture could be interpreted 'as an expression of motherly affection, when she finds her son grieved, although I know of no corresponding scenes to mention', Kakridis¹ remarks. The exact position and movements of Thetis and Achilles are not clearly described here by the poet—which is unusual for Homer; moreover, the verb παρίσταται creates some confusion since it means that Thetis is standing by Achilles while she should be sitting on the ground holding her son's head from behind. However, the meaning of this scene does not seem 'totally different', Kakridis² argues, from that of those examined above. The holding of Achilles' head alludes to the same ritual described above and confirmed by other details presented in the preceding lines and the beginning of the same book (book 18). The context of lines 18.24-70 as well as that of the following ones (73 ff.) is that of grief and mourning, i.e. of death or, to be more accurate, of a foreshadowing death, that of Achilles. This will be examined in detail below.

would not prove the real primacy of the physical ... In many societies, death-pollution is spread by relationship as well as contact: the dead man's kin are contaminated from the moment of death, even if they are a hundred miles away when it occurs'; see also note 27: 'The women who prepared the corpse of course touched it. Two Homeric mourning gestures, touching the dead man's chest and cradling his head, involved physical contact; the latter at least survived as a woman's gesture in classical times, but in Homer they are performed only by the dead man's closest associates, and the typical male gesture at the classical *prothesis* seems to have been a greeting from a distance with outstretched arm ...'. On pollution beliefs in the Homeric world in general see *ibid.*, 66-70.

1. *Op. cit.*, 67.

2. *Ibid.* See R. Garland, *The Greek way of death*, 43: 'It is interesting to note, as we have already seen, that touching and fondling the body were essential features of the ritual lament—a clear indication that the corpse was not held in complete abhorrence'; R. Parker, *Miasma*, 66: 'In the Homeric world, it has often been argued, attitudes were very different. Despite the countless deaths described in Homer, there is no hint of *miasma* affecting the living. The heroes may return to their normal pursuits after a funeral without apparently even washing.'



On the first stage Achilles enacts as a mourner, a rôle that gives the impression that this scene concerns not only Patroklos' but alludes, refers to his own death too. 18.22-7: 'with both his hands he covers his head and face with grimy dust and black ashes fell on his tunic and himself lay in the dust and tore his hair with his own hands'.¹ 18.28-31: 'and their *δμῳαί*, Achilles' and Patroklos' maidservants acquired as booty, shouted out of anguish and gathered around Achilles beating their breasts with their hands and each one's knees were loosed. And *ἐτέρωθεν* Antilochos was weeping holding the hands of Achilles—for he feared that he would cut his throat with his knife—(32-3), who let out a terrible groan (*σμεροδαλέον δ' ὤμωξεν*) heard by his mother down in the depths of the sea. Thetis let a shrill cry (*κώκυσεν*) and the sea-goddesses, the Nereids, thronged about her and all beat their breasts and began lamenting with Thetis as their leader'.² Her sorrowful speech about her son's unjust fate and forthcoming death made their grief stronger and their weeping made the sea waves around them cleave (65-7). And thus they came to Troy and stepped out of the sea on the shore, one after the other, there where Achilles was surrounded by the ships of the Myrmidons (67-9).

1. See Priam's reaction for his son's death (*Il.* 22.408-9: *ὤμωξεν δ' ἔλεεινὰ πατρὸς φίλος, ἀμφὶ δὲ λαοὶ / κωκυτῶ τ' εἶχοντο καὶ οἰμωγῇ κατὰ ἄστυ*; line 414: ... *κυλινδόμενος κατὰ κόπρον*). In *Iliad* 23.24-6, Hektor's body is laid down to Patroklos' funeral bed, his face downward in the dust. Hektor's head was mingled in the dust as he was dragged by Achilles' horses (chariot), that head which was so beautiful before (*Il.* 22.402-3: ... *κάρη δ' ἅπαν ἐν κονίησι / κεῖτο πάρος χαρίεν*; cf. 405: "Ὡς τοῦ μὲν κεκόνιτο κάρη ἅπαν). A mourning ritual or a mode for the expression of grief, namely laying in the dust, merges into a way of death in battle, i. e. laying in and mingled with the dust (probably his face downward and his mouth and eyes in the dust), an insult for a warrior (see *Il.* 3.54-5: *οὐκ ἄν τοι χραίσμη κίθαρις τὰ τε δῶρ' Ἀφροδίτης, / ἧ τε κόμη τό τε εἶδος, ὅτ' ἐν κονίησι μιν γέλης*). See M.W. Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, vol. V: books 17-20, Cambridge 1991, 144 (on 18.22-31): '... The language of mourning is mingled with that of death, for defiling the head with dust is the sign not only of extreme grief but also of death on the battlefield. The presence of the lamenting women also suggests that Akhilleus is lying not in grief, but in death, and the way is prepared for the even stronger adumbration of this in Thetis' lament ...'. See also R. Parker, *Miasma*, 68 who argues that Achilles' self-pollution was 'if not fixed rules of mourning, at least traditional modes for the expression of grief'.

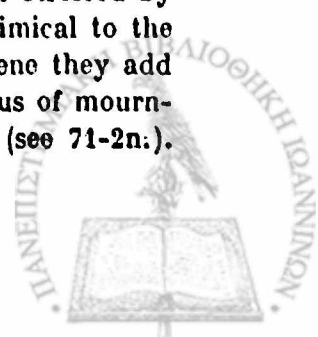
2. See Vermeule, *Aspects of Death*, 14: 'As in modern wakes, the dead are instinctively felt capable of hearing the funeral lament, and perhaps even of noting the ceremonial funeral gestures of striking the head, tearing out the hair, beating the breast, and scratching the cheeks till the blood runs.'



The chorus-like move of the sea-nymphs as they are crossing the sea-borders and step upon 'the deep-soiled land of Troy', one after the other, creates an image of a chorus of dancers. Homer does not tell us that they are thronged round about Achilles, but we are immediately invited to make the link/comparison between them and the ships of the Myrmidons; it is to the latter that Homer refers to instead of saying that the Nymphs are gathered in close lines round about Achilles. A comparison of the Nereids with the ships would have its perfect place here, so I suggest that this is what is exactly alluded to by the poet, in an unclearly defined and incomplete simile. This scene is naturally recalled by the reader of lines 55-9 of book 24 of the *Odyssey*. In the description of Achilles' *prothesis* by the shade of Agamemnon, Thetis and the immortal sea-nymphs came from the sea and standing around Achilles' body, wailing, they clothed it with immortal garments (*Od.* 24.58-9: ἀμφὶ δέ σ' ἔστησαν κοῦραι ἄλιόιο γέροντος / οἴκτρ' ὀλοφνυρόμεναι, περὶ δ' ἄμβροτα εἶματα ἔσσαν).

Step-by-step, by succeeding choruses of mourners and their leaders (18.51: Θέτις δ' ἐξῆρχε γόοιο) the theme of Achilles' forthcoming death and mourning has been constructed in words and acts in the beginning of book 18. The visual perception of this forthcoming event is remarkable in its details as the poet alludes even to ritual gestures related to death: the motherly affection of Thetis, holding her son's head, cannot but remind us of the actual rite performed in other scenes of the *Iliad* mentioned above.¹ This scene is thus conceived within a death and mourning context; a death that is clearly foreshadowed in the following lines by Achilles himself (18.88 ff.) and Thetis (18.95-6: «ἀκύμορος δὴ μοι, τέκος, ἔσσει, οἷ' ἀγορεύεις / αὐτίκα γὰρ τοι ἔπειτα μεθ' Ἔκτορα πότμος ἐτοῖμος»; cf. preceding lines, 59-60: ... τὸν δ' οὐχ' ὑποδέξομαι αἴτις / οἴκαδε νοστήσαντα δόμον Πηλῆϊον

1. This ceremonial funeral gesture is well documented in art representations showing women lamenting round the funeral bed: one of the women-mourners touches the head of the dead or holds it between her palms, the others are weeping striking their heads or tearing out their hair: see Vermeule, *Aspects of Death*, 14-6 and esp. figs 8A, 9; 150 fig. 3: here it is Sleep and not a woman mourner that is holding the head of the dead Sarpedon. See also M.W. Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 152 (on 65-9): 'Much is made here of the fact all the Nereids accompany Thetis, and their dismissal at the end of the scene (139-45) is further stressed by her direct speech to them. Their presence should not be thought inimical to the intimate talk of mother and son; on the contrary, throughout the scene they add to the looming shadow of the funeral rites of Akhilleus, forming a chorus of mourning women around Thetis as she holds her son's head in her arms (see 71-2n.).



εἶσω).¹ And it is again to Achilles' own death that is rather alluded by Thetis' γόος during Patroklos' *prothesis* at *Iliad* 23.14: *μετὰ δέ σφι Θέτις γόον ἴμερον ὤρσε.*

The above poetic representations of death ritual gestures also depicted in contemporary and much later art as 'the tradition of the lament scarcely changed between the Bronze Age and the Hellenistic period',² concentrate on the head and the face, particularly on the eyes. The eyes are sources of light which is succeeded by darkness

They anticipate the lamenting women of Troy whom Akhilleus describes a little later (122-4) ...'; 153 (on 71-2): 'Taking Akhilleus' head in her hands is a gesture of mourning, as when Akhilleus holds Patroklos' head (23.136) and Andromakhe Hektor's (24.724; cf. also 24.712). She kneels or sits beside Akhilleus who is still lying prostrate at 178. For other parallels and representations in art see 23.136n. and Macleod, *Iliad XXIV* 147. Here the gesture strengthens the foreshadowing of Akhilleus' approaching death; behind the picture of Akhilleus grieving for his dead friend the poet shades in a tableau of the mourning for Akhilleus' own death, which will come as a direct result of his grief and vengeance ...'. C.W. Macleod, *Iliad book XXIV*, 147, on the other hand sees in Thetis' gesture an expression 'of protective or motherly love', while he accepts that 'ἀπτόμεναι κεφαλῆς', at *Il.* 24.712, is a gesture 'customary for the nearest and dearest at funerals'.

1. See Vermeule, *Aspects of Death*, 14: 'These are family responsibilities of the women in the household who loved the dead dearest and miss him most. The dead are helpless, and need comfort or mothering like infants, from mother or wife, to close the eyes, straighten the limbs, fix the jaw shut.' See also M.W. Edwards' excellent article, 'The conventions of a Homeric funeral' in J.H. Betts, J.T. Hooker and J.R. Green, eds, *Studies in honour of T.B.L. Webster*, vol. I, Bristol (1986), 84-92, for the allusions to funeral rites made by the poet in certain points of the poem when no real funeral takes place, or elements of the rites which seem to be omitted but in fact are transferred elsewhere, rites for a certain funeral merge into those for some other, or even some rites are foreshadowed in speeches or 'pictures of death and funeral rites' and are used by the poet to foreshadow a forthcoming death as this is the case in the beginning of *Iliad* book 18: see esp. *ibid.*, 86: 'When the news of the death is brought by Antilochus, Achilles lies in the dust like a dead man; the captive women wail and beat their breasts; and they are joined by the nymphs of the sea, as Thetis leads the antiphonal dirge among them just as Andromache leads it for Hector at the end of the poem. But her words mourn not for Patroclus but for Achilles himself, and it is Achilles' head which the goddess holds in her hands, as Andromache will hold the dead Hector's.'

2. Vermeule, *Aspects of Death*, 15; M. Alexiou, *The ritual lament in Greek tradition*, Cambridge 1974, 4-23. On the debate as to whether the funerary scenes of Geometric art depict contemporary events or heroic ones, or 'that they can only be understood in the literary context furnished by the Homeric poems' see Morris, *Burial and ancient society*, 50 ff. and J. Whitley, *Style and Society in Dark Age Greece: the changing face of a pre-literate society, 1100-700 B.C.*, Cambridge 1991, 48-53.



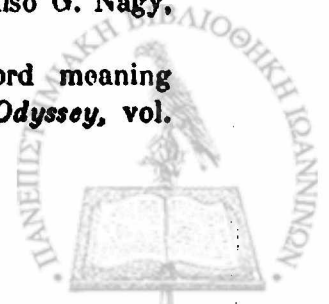
when death comes. They are also sources of information which comes through them to the mind and thus the media where intelligence is reflected as brightness: like Helios' intelligence, or rather wide knowledge, is owed to the fact that he is the greatest eye and could see everything (*Il.* 3.277) so the mind's information through light and vision leads to intelligence.¹ However, it is with *noos*' collaboration/function that what is taken in by vision, by visual perception, is further recognized and consciously perceived (or responsively understood). There are obviously many examples in the epics showing that visual acts are associated with 'perceiving and knowing'. Homeric verbs like *noein*, *gignōskein* and *eidenai* connect seeing and knowing although 'there are significant differences in the concepts of noticing, recognizing, coming to know, and knowing'. This connection between knowledge and vision is 'deeply embedded' in the Greek language —as well as in other Indo-European languages. For Homer the much-travelled and thus much-seeing man is he who knows a lot (e.g. Odysseus *πολύτροπος*: *Od.* 1. 1-3); and two of Zeus' significant epithets are *εὐρύοπα*, 'far-seeing' rather than 'far-sounding', and *μητίετα*, he is pre-eminently the god of wisdom, of *mētis*.² Light and sight, sight and understanding are thus interrelated notions in Homer in some sense identified with the notion of life itself. To this relation of life and vision expressed in a ritual form the present work refers next.

Eyes recur in a different ritual context related to life in three passages of the *Odyssey* that I am examining now. In all three cases, and only here, another word is employed in 'eyes terminology'. This is *φάεα*³ associated with arrivals and welcome greetings. The newly arri-

1. See Vermeule, *Aspects of Death*, 25 ff.: in exceptional cases non ordinary deceased retain an internal light and wits that are not extinguished but that can be sparked again. Such a conception however, is not found in the Homeric poems but 'wit as internal light' may be suggested by Hermes' rôle 'as the god who guided men between life and death, who could use his magic wand both to enchant the eyes of men into darkened quiescence, *δμματα θέλγει* (XXIV. 343, xxiv. 2) or to waken the sleeping mind, was not accidentally made the wittiest of the Hellenic gods.'

2. See Redfield, *Nature and culture in the Iliad*, 176 and J.H. Leshner's stimulating article, 'Perceiving and Knowing in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*', *Phronesis* 26 (1981), 2-24, esp .8 ff. mainly on Homer's 'knowledge' terminology and the various views on his perception about the achievement of knowledge. See also G. Nagy, 'Sōma and nódsis: some illustrations', *Arethusa* 16 (1983), 35-55.

3. With a probable etymological connection with the Vedic word meaning 'light': see A. Heubeck - A. Höekstra, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, vol.



ved accepts the kisses of the person who welcomes him, on the head, the eyes and the hands. This is obviously a ritual gesture in a greeting type-scene here introduced with elements that are not found elsewhere in this category of type-scenes.¹ In the first scene in his return from Pylos Telemachos arrives at the hut of Eumaeus, the swineherd, and he is welcomed as follows (*Od.* 16.14 ff.): ... ὁ δ' ἀντίος ἦλθεν ἄνακτος, | κύσσε δέ μιν κεφαλὴν τε καὶ ἄμφω φάεα καλὰ | χεῖράς τ' ἀμφοτέρως· θαλερόν δέ οἱ ἔκπεσε δάκρυ: 'And he went to meet his lord, and kissed his head and both his beautiful eyes and his two hands, and a big tear fell from him' (Loeb transl.). A parallel scene is recalled in *Od.* 17.38 ff. where Penelope this time welcomes her son with similar gestures:

ἀμφὶ δὲ παιδὶ φίλω βάλε πῆχεε δακρύσασσα,
κύσσε δέ μιν κεφαλὴν τε καὶ ἄμφω φάεα καλά,
καὶ ῥ' ὀλοφυρομένη ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα

'and bursting into tears she flung her arms about her dear son, and kissed his head and both his beautiful eyes; and with wailing she spoke to him winged words' (Loeb transl.). In a different ritual context

II: books ix-xvi, Oxford 1989, 266 (on 16.15). On φάεα and the φαεινώ, the 'shining', eyes of Zeus see also R. Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 148 (on 13.837).

1. The pioneering work in this field is W. Arend's, *Die typischen Scenen bei Homer (Problemata 7)*, Berlin 1933; but see also M.M. Willcock's criticism ('Nervous hesitation in the *Iliad*' in *Homer 1987. Papers of the Third Greenbank Colloquium*, Liverpool 1992, 65): 'But Arend only deals with the simplest and most basic examples of «themes»—actual repeated situations like arrivals, arming, setting out on a journey, baths. I see thematic composition as something much more, the pervasive methods of the poet in the presentation of his story, as the formula shows his method in the construction of his lines. «Theme» for me includes even style, narrative and characterisation, as well as the more or less exactly repeated incidents.' See also M.W. Edwards, 'Type-scenes and Homeric hospitality', *TAPA* 105 (1975), 51-72, for the various definitions of the type-scene and a survey on the history of its study and the major contributions made by various scholars, among them A. Lord, G.E. Dimock Jr., D.K. Fry, J.B. Hainsworth and others. Arend's 'highly original and excellently done', according to M.W. Edwards, contribution to Homeric studies is often acknowledged by him by page-references to his work (*Die typischen Scenen bei Homer*) related to the scenes under discussion: see for example 61 ff. for the category called 'the arrival type-scene' and 'the visit type-scene' which in some parts is an elaboration of the 'arrival type-scene'. A number of standard elements of these two categories of type-scenes recorded by Edwards ('Type-scenes and Homeric hospitality', 62 ff.), like '1. the visitor stands in the doorway 2. someone sees him 3. he gets up and hurries to the visitor 4.



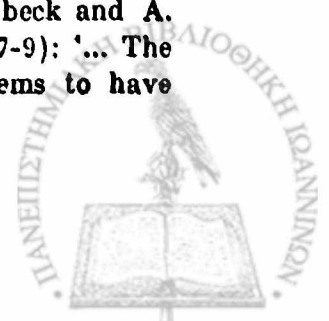
but along similar highly emotional language and gestures the divine mother of the *Iliad*, Thetis, meets her son in the scene we have discussed above (*Il.* 18.71-2: ὄξυ δὲ κωκύσασα κάρη λάβε παιδὸς ἑοῖο, / καὶ ῥ' ὀλοφυρομένη ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα). Obviously in the two scenes formulaic greeting occurs in a significant ritual context and the variation of the standard/set elements is employed not only for different emotional effects but also for distinguishing the two rituals according to the different circumstances: the arrival on the one hand, the allusion to a forthcoming death on the other.

But the first to see Telemachos a bit earlier was Eurykleia; she, too, burst into tears as she faced him and 'she came straight toward him, and round about them gathered the other maids of Odysseus of the steadfast heart, and they kissed his head and shoulders in loving welcome' (Loeb transl.): δακρύσασα δ' ἔπειτ' ἰθὺς κίεν ἄμφι δ' ἄρ' ἄλλαι / δμῳαὶ Ὀδυσσῆος ταλασίφρονος ἠγερέθοντο, / καὶ κύνεον ἀγαπαζόμεναι κεφαλὴν τε καὶ ὤμους (*Od.* 17.33-5).¹ The kissing of the eyes is not included in this welcome greeting but tears accompany (as in the previous cases) the gestures performed in this scene by the maid-servants. Both Eumaeus' and Penelope's speech express their fear and anxiety about Telemachos' safe return home; they say they thought that they would never see him again: «ἦλθες, Τηλέμαχε, γλυκερὸν φάος· οὐ σ' ἔτ' ἐγὼ γε / ὄψεσθαι ἐφάμην, ἐπεὶ οἴχεο νηὶ Πύλονδε»: 'You have come, Telemachos, sweet light of my eyes. I thought I should never see you more after you had gone in your ship to Pylos', Eumaeus says (*Od.* 16. 23-4). And Penelope repeats: «ἦλθες, Τηλέμαχε, γλυκερὸν φάος. οὐ σ' ἔτ' ἐγὼ γε / ὄψεσθαι ἐφάμην, ἐπεὶ οἴχεο νηὶ Πύλονδε / λάθρη, ἐμεῦ ἀέκητι ...» (*Od.* 17. 41-2).

In the above persons' reaction in facing Telemachos again elements conveying an emotional depth must not be considered as

leads him in 5. he then gives the visitor a seat 6. offers him hospitality', concerning the reception of a newcomer or a guest, occur not in all but at least in two of the Odyssean scenes examined here, which follow in the main points the structure of the normal 'type-scene' (16.14 ff. and 19.416 ff.). See also M.W. Edwards, *Homer: Poet of the Iliad*, Baltimore and London 1987, 71-7; *idem*, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 11-5.

1. Here ἀγαπαζόμεναι (l. 35: καὶ κύνεον ἀγαπαζόμεναι κεφαλὴν τε καὶ ὤμους) as in *Odyssey* 16.17 (ἀγαπάζη) refers to signs of affection that accompany the ritual gestures associated with 'return' and 'welcome'. See also A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, vol. II, 266 (on 16. 17-9): '... The etym. of ἀγαπάω, ἀγαπάζω is unknown, but their original sense seems to have been «to welcome with affection» ...'.



occasional or applied to a conventional description of a type-scene but as important features in a particular context. Some of them bust into tears, others are wailing, of joy rather than sorrow although with an underlying element suggesting also a lament context.¹ Penelope shows affection and parental devotion. An equal to parental affection is shown by Eumaeus clearly expressed by what is said in lines 17 ff. (book 16): 'he welcomed Telemachos like a father would welcome his only son who came from abroad after ten years' of absence': *ὡς δὲ πατὴρ ἐν παῖδα φίλα φρονέων ἀγαπάζη | ἐλθόντ' ἐξ ἀπίης γαίης δεκάτω ἐνιαυτῶ, ... πάντα κύσεν περιφύς, ὡς ἐκ θανάτοιο φυγόντα*. It seems like a privilege that Eumaeus has been ascribed, that is the kissing of the eyes of his master (16.15), that only his close relatives had the right to do; we saw shortly before that the maids and even Eurykleia, did not kiss Telemachos' eyes when attributing the welcome gestures.² Odysseus is greeted in like manner by Eumaeus and the

1. *Od.* 16.16: *θαλερόν δὲ οἱ ἔκπεσε δάκρυ*; 16.21-2: *πάντα κύσεν περιφύς, ὡς ἐκ θανάτοιο φυγόντα | καὶ ῥ' ὄλοφυρόμενος ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα*; 17.38: *δακρῦσσα*; 17.40: *καὶ ῥ' ὄλοφυρομένη ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα*. It seems that there is no clear distinction in Homer between expressions denoting weeping of mere sorrow and those referring to lamentation. In lament phrases applied to a real or a foreshadowed death belong the following: *ἤρχε γόοιο* (*Il.* 24.723), *ἐξῆρχε γόοιο* (*Il.* 18.51, 24.761), *ἀδινῶ ἐξῆρχε γόοιο* (*Il.* 22.430, 23.17, 24.747), *γόνον ἴμερον ὤρσε* (*Il.* 23.14), *τοῖσι δὲ πᾶσιν ὑφ' ἴμερον ὤρσε γόοιο* (23.108, 23.153), *δδύρετο δάκρυα λείβων* (*Il.* 18.32), *καὶ ῥ' ὄλοφυρομένη ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα* (18.72), *κώκυσεν δὲ μάλα μέγα παῖδ' ἐσιδοῦσα* (22.407), *ᾠμῶξεν δ' ἐλεεινὰ πατὴρ φίλος* (22.408; cf. 23.12), *κωκυτῶ τ' εἶχοντο καὶ οἰμωγῇ κατὰ ἄστυ* (22.409; cf. 22.447, 24.703), *γοόωσα* (22.476), *δδύρομένοισιν* (23.154), *οἱ δ' ἐς ἄστυ ἔλων οἰμωγῇ τε στοναχῇ τε* (24.696), *Ἐκτορα δάκρυ χέοντες δδύροντο πρὸ πυλάων* (24.714), *οἱ μὲν ἄρ' ἐθρήνεον* (24.722), *γόνον δ' ἀλίσστον ὄρωε* (24.760), as well as expressions like *κλαίουσ(α)* (19.301, 22.437, 22.515, 24.760, 24.776), *κλαίων* (19.338, 22.429, 24.712), *ἄσεσθε κλαυθμοῖο* (24.717) as well as *δάκρυ χέοντες* (24.714), *κατὰ δάκρυ χέουσα* (18.94), *δακρυόεσσαι* (18.66), *δδύρετο δάκρυ χέουσα* (22.79). It is only between *thrēnos* and *gōos* that there is some differentiation in Homer, the former is performed by professional mourners (hence its artistic development to a lyric song) while *gōos*, the most frequent Homeric term for lament, is performed by close relatives (kinswomen or kinsmen) or friends (see M. Alexiou, *The ritual lament in Greek tradition*, 10-4). Especially *Iliad* books 18, 22, 23 and 24 refer so often to a mourning context so that the reader of the *Iliad* ends up with the impression and a deep feeling that above all he has to do with a 'Poem of lament'.

2. We know that Eumaeus and Eurykleia are not ordinary slaves in the *Odyssey* and their rôle to mnesterophony and the re-establishment of Odysseus in his *oikos* is very important. For their status in the Odyssean / Homeric society see M.I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus* (first published 1954, revised edn 1956), 62 ff., 76 f. See also A.G. Geddes, 'Who's who in 'Homeric' society?', *CQ* 34(i)



herdsman when he reveals his identity to them; they flung their arms about him and kissed his head and shoulders and weeping accompanied their gestures (*Od.* 21.224-5).

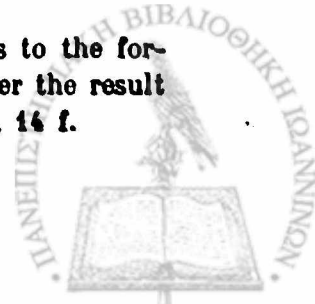
Let us proceed to the third example where *φάεα* occurs. Odysseus is welcomed and greeted by his grandmother during his visit for claiming the gifts his grandfather Autolycus had promised him as a newborn child. His grandmother Amphithea embraces him and kisses his head and 'both beautiful eyes' (19. 416-7: *μήτηρ δ' Ἀμφιθέη μητρὸς περιφῶσ' Ὀδυσῆϊ | κύσσ' ἄρα μιν κεφαλὴν τε καὶ ἄμφω φάεα καλά*), while his grandfather and his sons, i.e. Odysseus' uncles, greeted him by kissing his hands and by sweet words (l. 415: *χερσὶν τ' ἠσπάζοντο ἔπεσσι τε μειλιχίοισι*). Here, too, the main elements constructing this scene follow the same order enriched with some varying details.

It is obvious, then, that all three occurrences of *φάεα* relate to arrival scenes and welcome greetings. In all of them the kissing of the eyes is the central gesture among other, like the kissing of the head and the hands, attributed to the newcomer. The formulaic character of the above verses is apparent. However, apart from structuring highly emotional scenes they present elements of a social ritual¹ related to concepts of life, the same concepts that are expressed in polarity in the scenes examined in the first part of this work which are associated with death and mourning.

In examining the above Homeric scenes emphasis has been given on eyes functioning as objects of affection but mainly as ritual objects associated with the notion of life. Penelope's and Eumaeus' wailing reaffirms Telemachos' survival (for which both were very anxious), the kissing of his eyes applies to his potentiality of seeing and, therefore, live. This is what is exactly expressed by the address formula (*ἦλθες, Τηλέμαχε, γλυκερὸν φάος: Od.* 16.23, 17.41),

(1984), 23 ff.; M.M. Austin - P. Vidal-Naquet, *Economic and Social History of Ancient Greece: An Introduction*, London 1977, 44-7; *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* (J. Russo, M. Fernández-Galiano, A. Heubeck), vol. III: books XVII-XXIV, Oxford 1992 (*passim*). On the display and meaning of affection in types of relationship in the Homeric world see G. Herman's admirable work, *Ritualised friendship and the Greek city*, Cambridge 1987, esp. 16 ff.

1. On the question of the correspondence of such ritual practices to the formalities of actual life of the heroic or Homer's time, or they are rather the result of oral composition technique see Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 14 f.



where light imagery is associated with Telemachos' physical appearance and the light of his life which scattered the darkness of anxiety. Through their eyes and vision they are able to ascertain that life exists in the light (the *φάος*) of the eyes (*φάεα*) of their beloved person they are welcoming. The scenes we have dealt with show a use of analogy and contrast, a basic feature of the poet's art, when eyes are objects symbolizing light and life or on the contrary darkness and death.¹ And Homeric language emphasizes this contrast between life, light and vision, to death, darkness and loss of sight, an everlasting contrast between life and death.

1. On the 'use of parallel and contrast, analogy and polarity' in the Homeric poems see Segal, *op. cit.*, 5-8. See J.M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad: The Tragedy of Hector*, 175 f., 254 note 31. See also M. Alexiou, *The ritual lament in Greek tradition*, 187.

