

## Mourning becomes Achilles: the *Über*-Chorus of *Iliad* 18.22-71

Lamentation in the *Iliad* is the great equalizer—Homer treats grief over both Greek and Trojan death with similar *pathos*. This, however, is not the case with the lament of Achilles. Rather than equate Achilles' death with those of others, book 18 of the epic commemorates his eventual death with the lamentation of three distinct groups: the band of slave women, the fleet of ships and Thetis and the Nereids. While this in and of itself is unique, it is made even more exceptional when one considers that these groups take on distinctively choral characteristics. As each group supplements another, an *über*-chorus is formed with Achilles as its center and *choregos*. Thus, the scene of lament is transformed into something more as the choral elements are merged with more traditional epic characteristics. With this in mind, it is the purpose of this paper to show how the combination of epic and choral traits make the lamentation of Achilles singular and how as each choral group highlights Achilles as its center, two things occur: on the one hand, relationships of power and kinship are asserted and emphasized; on the other hand, the unification of these Homeric choruses creates a scene of temporal and spatial fluctuation appropriate to the solitary figure of Achilles—a hero who lives to die and dies to live eternally on the lips of men.