

The Inversion of Grief: An Analysis of the αἰὸν ἄχος Formula in *Il.* 19.307

This project investigates the occurrences of the αἰὸν ἄχος (“dreaded grief”) formula throughout Homer’s *Iliad* and explores its unique inversion to ἄχος αἰὸν in *Il.* 19.307: a phenomenon that no other scholar has formally considered. Αἰὸν ἄχος occurs nine times throughout the *Iliad* with the same metrical value of – uu | – in the 2nd-3rd feet. Each instance appears in a context of sorrow or frustration, such as when Achilles expresses indignation at his maltreatment by Agamemnon. The inversion of 19.307, however, occurs in a different metrical value and position, and communicates a different theme about Achilles’ ἄχος specifically, which suggests a meaningful variation on the formula.

When the inversion occurs in Book 19, Achilles grieves for Patroclus’ death and refuses to eat or drink out of intense grief. It is here where his ἄχος shifts. From the beginning of the epic, Achilles’ ἄχος is caused by Agamemnon’s display of dishonor, an ἄχος tied closely to his μῆνις, as Nagy suggests (Nagy 1979: 80). Here, though, his ἄχος moves from anger and frustration to the deepest, most painful sorrow for the loss of his comrade. The inversion places emphasis on this change by reordering the formula and making ἄχος the notable contrast from the other instances of the αἰὸν ἄχος formula. This suggests that the inversion is deliberate and meant to convey something more significant than just “dreaded grief.” The poster presents the gathered data of the αἰὸν ἄχος formula and its inversion to display its significance in marking the inversion of Achilles’ grief.

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