

In ancient performances of Homeric epic, speeches were a particularly effective locus for dramatic improvisation because, as Jasper Griffin has demonstrated, they are characterized by a sense of judgment and oftentimes by *pathos* that shades into self-pity (Griffin 1986). This paper suggests that Griffin's findings may help us understand the variant readings of *Iliad papyrus 12*, which includes portions of Book 21-23. Variant readings are frequently found in *Iliad papyrus 12*'s speeches and tend to increase the characteristics of judgment and *pathos* that Griffin identifies as already distinguishing Homeric speeches from narrative. Those who transmitted the Homeric corpus may have preserved or even somehow helped to create these readings because in some sense they viewed themselves as performers, and they were accustomed to observing performers of both drama and epic use speeches as an opportunity to seize the audience's attention with intense, emotional language.

In the case of the speeches connected with Patroclus' funeral, the variants also strengthen the resemblance between Patroclus' funeral and the contemporary practice of hero cult. The practices associated with hero cult were expanded in the Hellenistic period, coming to include not only Hellenistic rulers but also their subordinates. For example, the Macedonian Demetrius Poliorcetes was awarded a hero cult in Athens in 307/6 and several of his friends and associates received them in 302/1. As the trend continued, it became acceptable for a family to grant hero status to any of its members who had recently died (Mikalson 2006). The *Iliad* alludes to hero cult without actually depicting it, but nonetheless many aspects of hero cult are already present, such as lamentations, libations and offerings (Nagy 1999). The two speeches from Patroclus' funeral that are preserved in *Iliad papyrus 12* (23.156-165, 23.179-183) contain readings that tend to heighten the resemblance between the hero's funeral and the rituals of Hellenistic hero cult. Such readings would make the passages more appealing to a Hellenistic audience and may have been included in contemporary texts because of such preferences. These readings include two plus verses that make reference to the shared meal (23.162a, 23.165a), which was a part of many hero cult ceremonies (Seaford 1994). Another plus verse emphasizes the idea that the dead man has died unjustly and requires revenge, also a common element of hero cult (23.183a, Seaford 1994).

The variant readings in *Iliad papyrus 12* suggest that the transmission of Homer in this period was at times influenced by both the performative tradition of Homeric epic and contemporary cultural practices. As with Homeric performance, the readings in this text tend to increase the emotional intensity of speeches; at the same time, these variants reflect an abiding interest in contemporary practices of hero cult.