

What behavior was expected of a person who encountered a grave marker in the *Iliad*? We know what was usually *done*: nothing. But did this strike Homer's initial audience as odd, or as appropriate? In his 2008 book *Look Who's Talking* (pp. 37–38), Michael A. Tueller described the actions expected of a person who “passed by” a grave marker, but, since his analysis was rooted in inscribed epigram, he was unable to trace these actions back farther than the 6th century BC.

In my fifteen minute paper, I test various *Iliad* passages against the actions Tueller isolated. I show that nearly all of these passages contain a nod to at least one of these actions—what amounts to an ironic acknowledgement that those procedures should have been followed.

The paper thus situates the *Iliad* somewhat differently in the development of the significance of grave markers than has previously been thought. Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood (*Reading Greek Death*, 1995, pp. 108–141) described this development in terms of $\sigma\tilde{\eta}\mu\alpha$ and $\mu\nu\tilde{\eta}\mu\alpha$. The marker began as a $\sigma\tilde{\eta}\mu\alpha$, serving the purpose of marking out the space of the dead to separate them from the living; in time it became a $\mu\nu\tilde{\eta}\mu\alpha$, activating the memory of a specific deceased among the living. With the apparent (and ironic) exception of *Iliad* 7.84–91, the *Iliad* could be seen as prior to the $\mu\nu\tilde{\eta}\mu\alpha$ stage.

Homer's audience knew better: they knew that a passerby was supposed to stop, look at the marker, and lament. Homer carefully frustrates or confounds each action. Here are a few examples.

1. Sometimes *seeing* is frustrated. Usually, this is because the marker is seen, but not seen for what it is (e.g. 2.811–815). At other times, it is not seen at all: Scamander, for instance, threatens to build a $\sigma\tilde{\eta}\mu\alpha$ for Achilles that will make his bones impossible to locate—a marker that leaves no mark (21.318–323).

2. Sometimes *stopping* is frustrated. This is best illustrated by a passage from the journey of Priam to visit Achilles (24.349–351). On his way across the plain, Priam and his attendant reach the tomb of Ilus. As soon as they do so, they stop ($\sigma\tau\tilde{\eta}\sigma\alpha\nu$). But this word for stopping, unusually for forms of $\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\eta\mu\iota$, can be either transitive or intransitive. Intransitively, it is commonly found in later descriptions of stopping at a grave to lament. Here, however, as the line proceeds, we discover that it is transitive: they have stopped their horses, not themselves; they will go on, escorted by Hermes.

3. Most notably, sometimes the characters in the transaction are confused with one another. This is the strategy in *Iliad* 7, where the deceased is replaced, at the point of receiving $\kappa\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\varsigma$, with his killer. The most complex such confusion occurs at the point when Patroclus dies (17.432–439); Achilles' horses then adopt the behavior of the passerby (weeping tears), refuse to imitate passersby (by not going to the Hellespont, marked as the place of tombs), and become the grave marker (in a simile, where they are likened to a $\sigma\tau\tilde{\eta}\lambda\eta$ on a tomb).

The ironic way in which these procedures are invoked reinforces one of the key themes of the *Iliad*: as Achilles says in book 9 (and reinforces in the *Odyssey*), those who fight and those who don't receive the same honor; $\kappa\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\varsigma$ is guaranteed for no-one.