

CHAPTER I

*Introduction**Ann Suter*

This collection on commemorating fallen cities follows naturally in the wake of our 2008 collection on individual lament (Suter 2008). We have discovered much that is the same in the reactions to the death of a person and to the demise of a city – for example, the desire to keep some memories alive, the wish perhaps to remember and maintain the animosity towards the forces that destroyed the person or city. But more interesting has been to discover the differences. Individual lament, although occasioned by a sad event, is not an impulsive expression of personal grief so much as a carefully ritualized emotional outlet and a vehicle for managing an unexpected, but common, event. Mourning for the destruction of whole cities or populations, on the other hand, happens only infrequently, and has never developed a traditional form, but is expressed in numerous ways: epic poetry, drama, liturgical lament, folktale, to name a few covered in this volume. Nevertheless, mourning for a destroyed city, whatever its literary context, came to use common “structures, patterns and types of discourse” – including the city lament proper as a literary genre – in the course of accomplishing its unique purpose: to address “communal trauma, grief and memory, and as a memorial act” that “shapes historical memory.” “[It is] ... connected not just to memory-making, but [also to] memory sharing ..., for individuals and communities.”¹ It is the purpose and interest of this collection to examine some examples of this special kind of commemoration, and how the motifs recognized as referring to this particular modality of remembering past events were exploited and manipulated in a variety of literary and folk genres in the eastern Mediterranean from the beginning of the second millennium BCE to the beginning of the twentieth century CE.

A body of theory has developed about the role and function of memory in creating and maintaining cultural identity. This has engaged a number of

¹ The quotes are from Karanika’s chapter in this volume (Chapter 10).

scholars (Halbwachs 1950/1980, Nora 1984–1992) and the notion of collective memory has proven to be a fruitful concept in the study of archaeology (Assmann 2008, Alcock 2002) and literature (Loraux 1997/2002, Konstan and Raaflaub 2010, Grethlein 2010). City lament was one of the earliest forms of public commemoration, yet none of these scholars considers the rich Mediterranean and Near Eastern traditions of these laments in their studies of how memory operates. Halbwachs, for instance, does not consider literature of any kind, oral or written – that is, purposeful commemoration as distinguished from simply remembering – as a form or product of memory. He nonetheless offers some excellent comments that are applicable to the subject of this collection: for example, he argues for the necessity of continued group experience after the event to help remember the event (26–28). This would certainly be true of city laments, if he chose to notice them. They all, especially perhaps Alcock, Konstan and Raaflaub, and Grethlein, assume History to be the genre of memory par excellence. (The word is capitalized to denote the special field of making sense of past events to inform our understanding of the present.) They consider other genres only as they relate to History (for example, Alcock physical remains, Konstan and Raaflaub epic, Grethlein in his theoretization of memory). This is probably because they are, as we all have become, concerned with the accuracy of recorded events; in the modern west, History is distinguishable from other memory genres by its preference for, and eventually insistence on, “factuality.” Indeed, the early second-millennium Sumerian city laments analyzed in this collection (Jacobs, Bachvarova, Bachvarova and Dutsch, Chapters 2, 3, and 4) were first composed not as History in this modern sense of the word. Yet, in the contemporaneous Sumerian king lists, the fall of cities in series, with the concomitant successive transfer of world rule, had already become a formal component of a stylized world History. Scribes even composed laments for the fall of cities, for which archaeology has found no traces (Bachvarova, Chapter 3). So much for factuality! But historical factuality as we have come to understand it in modern times was not important in the context of recording these cities in the Near Eastern king lists, laments, and epic narratives. Rather, the goal was to present a justification for current kingly behavior and/or a moral message of value to the reader. And, from the perspective of the ancient Mesopotamians themselves, it was not only the king lists that made up their history, but the interlocking genres of king lists, inscriptions, epics, and city laments that created for them what they thought of as the past.

We would like to add this collection of “falls” to the study of methods of commemoration. Whether or not they originate in an actual historical

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event, these commemorations always differ from History as conceived of in modern academe chiefly in their sense of why the past must be remembered: it is to commemorate and glorify something that was thought to be gone for ever: that something might be a city, a group of people, a culture. It could commemorate a destroyed physical location (Bachvarova on Troy, Jacobs on Sumer and Ur) or a community of people (Karanika on Christian Constantinople, Holst-Warhaft on the Greeks of Smyrna). Rome provides an interesting case study, since no one ever admitted that *Roma aeterna* ever fell. Rather, its importance as a city devolved on other cities in the empire, and it became simply a symbol of past glory (Conybeare, Chapter 9), just as it coopted the past glory of Troy and Alba (Keith, Chapter 7). Here we see a model different from the Mesopotamian conception of world rule passing as an inheritance from one great city to the next upon the destruction of that city. In this volume we document the origins and development of the reactions to the destruction of cities or communities of three major groups in the ancient Mediterranean: the Near Eastern (Mesopotamian and Anatolian), the Greek (ancient, Byzantine, and modern) and the Roman (pagan and Christian). The narrative arc runs from Mesopotamia to Anatolia to Greece to Rome back to Anatolia via Byzantium and then from Smyrna to Athens. The chronological approach we have chosen thus showcases the point that motifs travel from culture to culture instead of necessarily being enclosed in their respective geographic milieux.

The commemorations we examine, whatever their generic context, offered memories inflected by diverse agendas, while other genres responded to the narrative structures and motifs in which the meaning of memory-making about fallen cities resided, and repurposed them or even denied their meaning or silenced them. The reactions to the demise of a city take various forms in a number of literary genres, but we can detect a shared set of conventions some of which are traceable back to the early second millennium BCE (e.g., the abandonment of the city by its gods – see Jacobs, Bachvarova, Bachvarova and Dutsch, Bakewell, Conybeare, Karanika), as well as a conscious effort to re-use these conventions so as to convey new meanings.

Throughout we are trying to excavate references to or reworkings of otherwise lost texts or ways of commemorating fallen cities in the extant texts. There is more emphasis than usual on the point of view of the victors, which we find a refreshing change from the usual tight focus on the losers' perspective. That is a feature shared by the studies on the Hittite and ancient Greek material as well as the Roman, and helps bridge the

opening section on the ancient Greeks and the section on the Romans, with its tight focus on close readings of well-known Latin texts, themselves engaging with their Greek predecessors, Homer and the Athenian tragedians. Quite a few of the contributions examine the repurposing of city-lament themes, or the repurposing of genres and motifs in order to commemorate a lost city, and here is where lies the value in opening up the study of the treatment of the theme of the fallen city to encompass works beyond the “city lament” proper. It is one of the unique features of this volume.

The ancient Near East has provided city laments composed for religious performance or scribal education (Bachvarova, Bachvarova and Dutsch, Jacobs). But it is a contested issue whether the ancient Greek evidence from Homer and tragedy can be construed as indicating the existence of a formal genre of city lament. Bakewell argues from the perspective of his training as a historian (Historian) and says No. Bachvarova, and Bachvarova/Dutsch, as interpreters of Homer’s *Iliad* and Aeschylus’ *Persians* respectively, think otherwise on the basis of their identification of the influence of oral traditions of liturgical city lament. Later Greek examples (Karanika and Holst-Warhaft) are similar in that the lamentation is framed in folk genres. The Roman tradition is idiosyncratic: it has little to do with the gods as cause of Rome’s fall, perhaps because Romans until the end denied that Rome fell. The tradition’s essential tenet was that Rome was destined to rule other nations and therefore could not fall.² Perhaps for this reason, Romans were interested in the fall of other cities (Keith, Jeppesen) as an opportunity to philosophize on Rome’s situation (Shelton).

The theme of abandonment by the gods shows up in different ways in Jacobs (Sumer), Bachvarova (Troy), Karanika (Constantinople), and Conybeare (Rome), and is related to a sense of guilt or human insufficiency in Jacobs (Sumer), and Conybeare (Rome). Christian reactions to the fact of a city’s fall concern Conybeare for Rome and Karanika for Constantinople.

It is time now to review each of the contributions separately.

The object of Jacobs’ Chapter 2 is to examine the earliest city laments extant in the western world, the five Sumerian laments and related texts from elsewhere in the ancient Near East. He asks questions about the

² In Livy’s famous treatment of the near-fall of Rome to the Gauls (5.39–50), the bravery of the senatorial self-sacrifice and the skill and determination of Camillus lead to the conclusion that gods’ will and Roman virtue make the city immune to attack: “At that time gods and men alike prevented the Romans from living as a ransomed people” (5.49.1).

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relationship between text and genre, and between structure and theme of the poems, about whether there is something justifiably called a city lament genre and whether it transcends the boundaries of time and space. The city laments which he examines ritually enact the death and hoped-for rebirth of the city, according to a system of house/temple-city-universe homologies, which establish a link between the form and function of the city lament and the individual lament. These city laments are historically embedded texts, designed for repeated performance at specific times and places. The five Sumerian laments are those for Ur, for Sumer and Ur, for Nippur (reasonably complete), and for Uruk and for Eridu (fragmentary). These, as well as their literary forerunners (e.g., the *Curse of Agade*) appear to conflate the genres of lament and historiography. Jacobs proposes a new set of core characteristics for these laments, which includes three levels: the storm of the god Enlil (death), the weeping goddess, patron of the city (lament proper), and prayer (rebirth). He then reviews the contents of the five laments to show their conformity to this new set. Finally, he analyzes in detail four passages from the “canonical” lament for Ur, providing evidence of the fundamental homologies. Their repetition of key formulae in these passages reflects their orality, while their manipulation of elements in the cuneiform inventory reflects their textuality. Finally Jacobs examines the image of the personified city in Sumerian laments and its later appearances in the Bible, Hellenistic Greek poetry, and Agathias’ early Byzantine laments for Troy.³

Bachvarova’s Chapter 3 studies the reception of Mesopotamian liturgical lament motifs about the fallen city, but within the larger conception of a stylized world History that framed the *longue durée* of events from the remote past to the present as a series of destructions of internationally famous cities. It explores the eternal questions of the relationship between the ruler and the gods, and the dependence of a city and its people on their ruler’s ability to know the gods’ will and maintain their regard. She begins with the *Sumerian King List*, then moves on to consider the differing points of view on the fall of Agade under Naram-Sin (which did not in fact fall during his rule) in the early second millennium *Curse of Agade* and *Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin*, and how they make use of the narrative structures of the Sumerian city laments to convey their own moral messages. She then discusses the Anatolian reception of the early second-millennium Mesopotamian scribal tradition as well as a Hurrian-mediated oral epic tradition, to see how each interacted with the Hittite genres of

³ Curiously left unmentioned by Alexiou 1974/2002.

prayer and History to reshape the motif of the famous fallen city to the particular ends of the Hittite court. Now we begin to see not only complaints to the gods about destroyed cities, but also the image of the victorious conqueror exalting over the smoldering ruins of the sacked city. The switch from discussing laments to analyzing epic is made by way of the Hurro-Hittite *Song of Release* about the fall of Ebla, which contains the patron goddess motif also found in the Mesopotamian laments, and has obvious parallels with Hector's story in the *Iliad*. She discusses the recently published archaeological evidence from the West Sanctuary at Troy, which indicates that already in the twelfth century the indigenous inhabitants, and then eventually the Greeks, treated the ruins of Bronze Age Troy as a cult site. Finally, she explains how the cult context of liturgical laments for the fallen city and the Trojan hero Hector and epic songs sung by both Anatolians and Greeks influenced the *Iliad*, picking out several narrative threads that rework key motifs also found in Mesopotamian city laments.

In Chapter 4 Bachvarova and Dutsch join forces to study Aeschylus' *Persians* and its indebtedness to lost historical tragedies by Phrynichos, the *Capture of Miletus* and the *Phoenician Women* and/or *Persians*, as a route to access otherwise lost Anatolian traditions of liturgical lament. They argue that an Athenian stereotype of Anatolian male liturgical city lament was deployed in Phrynichus' tragedy about the Persian destruction of Miletus, which Aeschylus references and intertwines with a second type of Anatolian liturgical lament, the search for and invocation of a disappeared young man, for which the Mariandynians were especially famous. They focus especially on the image of the empty city, found in the Sumerian *Lament for Nippur*, arguing there must have been a lost Anatolian oral tradition from which this motif reached Aeschylus. Aeschylus is shown to juggle masterfully several different ritual schemata to create a typically tragic trajectory of *opsimathia* (realization too late), then cathartic lamentation, and finally reincorporation of the defeated ruler into his community.

Bakewell's Chapter 5 continues the focus on Aeschylean tragedy, but challenges received opinion about the "unbroken tradition"⁴ of Greek city laments. In particular he addresses what he sees as the difficulties that "textual particulars" create for claiming this for Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*. He first reviews Alexiou's argument for the *Persians* as a city lament, pointing out that whereas the Persian army is largely destroyed, no cities fall, and that the laments in the play are for individuals. On many of the same grounds, and on metrical ones as well, he disagrees with her

⁴ Alexiou 1974/2002: 83.

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suggestion that an undated fragment comes from a city lament, while accepting her designation of an Antipater epigram as a clear example of one. Bakewell then turns to a detailed analysis of the *Seven*, basing his objections to its being a city lament on the grounds, once again, that no city falls, and that simply imagining the destruction of one's home does not count as actually experiencing it. Furthermore, there are no technical elements (e.g., the repeated question "where?," the use of the perfect tense) in the choral odes. He suggests reasons for the unlikelihood of the *Seven* containing any city lament: the historical context, coming so soon after the burning of Athens by the Persians, and the adverse Athenian reaction to Phrynichus' *Capture of Miletus*. He suggests that the audience watching the *Seven* would have preferred seeing – and would have seen – Thebes' situation as a narrow escape from destruction because of its leader's wisdom, not an occasion for lamentation. Bakewell closes by suggesting that Aeschylus avoids excessively graphic depictions of sacked cities on the part of the victors, perhaps because of the increasing military dominance of the Athenians in the Mediterranean. This theme will appear in several of the subsequent chapters also.

In Chapter 6, Jeppesen identifies and analyzes the uses of the motif of the fallen city in Plautus' plays, focusing on the *Amphytruo* and the *Bacchides*. He proposes that this motif was the common property not only of the comic stage, but of the *praetextae* and tragedy as well. Part of this commonality is the simultaneous presentation in them of themes of triumph and lament, a double-edged vision of both the glory of the conqueror and the sadness of the conquered. Analysis of these themes in these three genres of early Roman drama illustrates the interconnectedness of performance as these distinct dramatic genres were developing in Rome. Jeppesen analyzes the extant fragments of Naevius and Ennius, using Polybius and Livy to fill in their plots. He then goes through the *Amphytruo* scene by scene, comparing the fates of the Teleboans (recounted in Sosia's speech) with that of the victorious general Amphytruo when he comes home to find himself replaced by Jupiter and put into the position of the captive who has lost his city. The transgressive performances mocking the victorious general in the Roman triumph are thus deployed to new ends in the comedy. Jeppesen then moves to the *Bacchides*, using Ennius again as background and comparandum. He focuses on Chrysalus' speech (925–948), seeing it as a Plautine parody of the cooption of the myth of Trojan ancestry by Rome's political elite that equates the play's plot with the fall of Troy, and including city lament elements in it. Again, the split perspective of triumph/lament is

apparent: the Romans are descendants of the lamented lost city, but now claim to be invincible.

The treatment of city lament in Keith's Chapter 7 covers literary representations in the Roman epic of Ennius, Vergil, and Ovid. For example, she reads the Ennian description of the destruction of Alba Longa as the model for Vergil's fall of Troy, and traces the impact of this tradition on Ovid's representation of the fall and sack of Troy. She considers the representation of the fallen city as feminized, and the close – sometimes even genealogical – relationship of the fallen city to Rome, where each fall results in the incorporation of the city and/or its peoples into Rome, which will never fall. Servius is her guide in the discussion of the fall of Alba Longa in Ennius. She discusses Livy's disavowal of the comparison of its fall to that of Troy, since the inhabitants were not killed or enslaved. Even so, she finds his description very like Vergil's of the fall of Troy. She discusses their interest in the relationship of Alba Longa and Rome, with them both viewing the two as, in the end, one nation, and she suggests that they found a model for this attitude in Ennius: Alba was a kind of proto-Rome as well as an anti-Rome, destroyed as a ritual substitute for the Urbs. Keith then examines the fall of city motif in the *Aeneid*, finding again the themes of gendered lamentation and ritual substitute. She also reads Andromache's behavior at New Troy as a lament for the old Troy, as are Beroe and the Trojan women's lamentations on Sicily when they commemorate the anniversary of Anchises' death. She further suggests echoes of city lament in laments for Dido by her Carthaginian people, noting the functional equivalence of the death of the leader and the fall of his or her city. She finds echoes of city lament also in Lavinia and the Rutulians' lamentations for the fall of Latinus' city. These too, as Beroe's lament, repeat the pattern of the falling city being (eventually) incorporated into Rome. Ovid's depiction of the fall of Troy also assimilates the city to its rulers, in this case, Hecuba, using Euripides' *Trojan Women* and *Hekabe* as the models. Finally, Keith suggests that this rhythm of destruction followed by incorporation has special resonance in the period of Augustan restoration of Rome as a moral and architectural ideal.

In Chapter 8, Shelton analyzes the use of the fallen city motif in Seneca's *Troades*, where the double vision (cf. Jeppesen) of the defeated Trojans' and the victorious Greeks' responses to the event is critical to Seneca's philosophizing on the superiority of death to enslavement, actual or metaphorical. She uses the laments of the Trojan women survivors to explore the theme of death as a blessing and the possibility that it may be the survivors themselves whose fate should be lamented. At the same time

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she examines Seneca's use of the intertwined stories of victor and vanquished as exempla of the instability of human affairs. Rome's own fate may not be exempt from this changeability. Shelton goes through *Troades* 1–169 (Hecuba's lament) step by step, contrasting it (as pertinent) to the opening of Euripides' play of the same name, and outlining the imagery of destruction and plunder. Seneca philosophizes, via Hecuba, on the meaning of "fall," concluding that as long as a city is commemorated, it and its people are not altogether dead. Ironically, Shelton points out, Troy is remembered for its fall, not its flourishing. This is perhaps a chance echo of the Sumerian attitude that a city enters history only when it falls (cf. Jacobs and Bachvarova). She traces the death-as-a-blessing motif in the play, through the deaths of Astyanax and Polyxena. Seneca then shifts his focus from those "falling" (words from *cado*) to those "standing" (words from *sto*), and contrasts the attitudes of Agamemnon and Ulysses on the issue of human responsibility to act mercifully when victorious. He also considers the role of the gods in the Trojan story, creating unresolved moral tensions within the play. Finally, Shelton considers the possible political messages in the *Troades*: perhaps optimistic, in that Troy had survived in its Roman incarnation and ultimately conquered the Greeks. Or perhaps pessimistic: was Rome becoming too like the arrogant Greek victors at Troy?

In Chapter 9, Conybeare confronts head-on the psychological dilemma of a city, traditionally thought to be *Roma aeterna*, when it falls to the Gothic invasion of Alaric in 410 CE. She explores the sack through the reactions of two contemporaries: Augustine of Hippo, the famed author of the *De Civitate Dei*, and Rutilius Namatianus, a Gaul who rose in the imperial service to become *praefectus urbi* in 414. The former writes as a Christian, the latter in the pagan tradition; both firmly refuse to lament Rome. The idea of the "glowing eternal city" was apparently impossible to give up. Conybeare first considers Augustine's refusal. He offers a history of the Trojan refugees that is almost flippant, ending with the question, why should not Rome fall too? In fact, he argues, Rome has not fallen if her peoples praise (the Christian) God. The *civis* is to the city what the soul is to the body; wherever the souls are, they are *Romani*. Conybeare notes how antipathetic this attitude is to the tradition of Rome as a "sacred and immutable *place*," but Augustine argues otherwise: its people, wherever they are, are the locus of hope, not of lamentation. She then moves to Rutilius' *De Reditu Suo*, an elegiac poem narrating the author's trip up the Italian coast and home to Gaul in 417. It contains a celebration of the glorious city of old, and an illusionless portrayal of present reality. She argues that Rutilius is rethinking the meaning of "Rome": it is now

the whole world, or rather, the whole world is the *Urbs*. The *peregrini* have been embraced by Rome, a “sociality” binds them together. Rutilius offers exempla from the cities he passes by, in encomia to their citizens; in this context, the spirit of Rome survives. Conybeare concludes that both Augustine and Rutilius have displaced the notion of perpetuity onto people, away from Rome itself, a change in the terms of the conversation, which, she suggests, is a lasting lament. Once again, Rome incorporates a “fallen city” into itself – only now the definition of “Rome” has changed.

Karanika, in Chapter 10, explores the incorporation of motifs from other genres, subliterate and literary, into the poetics of Byzantine city laments by examining the tradition of lamentation surrounding the fall of another city exemplifying world rule, Constantinople, to the Ottomans in 1453. She first summarizes our sources for the fall in historical accounts, which use liturgical language, and are based in part on an account of the city’s first “fall,” to the Crusaders in 1204. These laments have their origins in both oral and written traditions, and are in both archaizing and vernacular languages. Karanika notes that the idea of “voice,” of acoustic “message,” lies at the heart of this poetic tradition, and is based on the role of the figure designated by the ancient word *angelos*. The majority of her chapter is devoted to the vernacular lament *Anakalēma tēs Konstantinopolēs*. It begins with a dialogue between two boats, one, the (*ex*)*angelos*, carries the news of Constantinople’s fall to the outside world. It carries the Emperor’s words of the city’s last days, his wish to die, and his wish to become an icon of the city. In the following section, the fall and its lament is focused on the Church of Hagia Sophia, the city’s final spiritual frontier, the *pars pro toto* of Constantinople. It ends with the image of a boy arriving and an angel departing the Church/city. Karanika interprets this ending as a *historiola*, a one-line allusion to an earlier legend about the Church’s construction. She recounts this legend and interprets how the figure of the *angelos* operated in stories of its construction and preservation. Returning to the poem, she addresses the question of why the Emperor becomes an icon, and finds analogs in the uses of the *angelos/exangelos*, the messenger figure, in ancient Athenian tragedy. The Emperor’s message is delivered by the *exangelos* boat; his head is a poetic image, an icon, which will act as a reminder for further lamentation. Karanika ends her study with a brief look at the *angelos* figure that becomes all voice in shorter folk poems. Again, the figures of the bird and the boy are present, as well as dialogue on extraordinary levels, this time between Constantinople and Venice. Again she underlines the parallels of the lamenting Byzantine *angelos* and the messenger from ancient Greek tragedy.