THE FALL OF CITIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

A body of theory has developed about the role and function of memory in creating and maintaining cultural identity. Yet there has been no consideration of the rich Mediterranean and Near Eastern traditions of laments for fallen cities in commemorating or resolving communal trauma. This volume offers new insights into the trope of the fallen city in folk-song and a variety of literary genres. These commemorations can reveal memories modified by diverse agendas, and contain narrative structures and motifs that show the meaning of memory-making about fallen cities. Opening a new avenue of research into the Mediterranean genre of city lament, this book examines references to or re-workings of otherwise lost texts or ways of commemorating fallen cities in the extant texts, and with greater emphasis than usual on the point of view of the victors.

MARY R. BACHVAROVA is Professor in the Department of Classical Studies at Willamette University, Oregon. Her publications include *From Hittite to Homer: The Anatolian Background of Ancient Greek Epic* (Cambridge 2015).

DOROTA DUTSCH is Associate Professor of Classics at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her publications include *Feminine Discourse in Roman Comedy: On Echoes and Voices* (2008) and *Women in Roman Republican Drama* (co-edited, with David Konstan and Sharon James, 2015).

ANN SUTER is retired Professor Emerita of Classical Studies at the University of Rhode Island. Her publications include *The Narcissus and the Pomegranate: An Archaeology of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (2002) and *Lament: Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond* (editor, 2008).

THE FALL OF CITIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Commemoration in Literature, Folk-Song, and Liturgy

EDITED BY

MARY R. BACHVAROVA, DOROTA DUTSCH, ANN SUTER

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107031968

First published 2016

Printed in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data
The fall of cities in the Mediterranean : commemoration in literature, folk-song, and liturgy / edited by Mary R. Bachvarova, Dorota Dutsch, Ann Suter.
pages cm
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-107-03196-8 (Hardback)
1. Laments–Mediterranean Region–History and criticism. 2. Ruins in literature. 3. Cities and towns in literature. I. Bachvarova, Mary R., editor. II. Dutsch, Dorota M., editor. III. Suter, Ann, editor.
PN1389.F36 2015
809′.933582–dc23 2015024872

ISBN 978-1-107-03196-8 Hardback

optimis collegis

Contents

Contributors

Margaret Alexiou *Harvard University*

Mary R. Bachvarova *Willamette University*

Geoffrey Bakewell *Rhodes College*

Catherine Conybeare *Bryn Mawr College*

Dorota Dutsch *University of California, Santa Barbara*

Gail Holst-Warhaft *Cornell University*

John Jacobs *Montclair Kimberley Academy, Montclair, NJ*

Seth A. Jeppesen *Brigham Young University*

Andromache Karanika *University of California, Irvine*

Alison Keith *University of Toronto*

Jo-Ann Shelton *University of California, Santa Barbara*

Ann Suter *University of Rhode Island*

Foreword

ἀποχαιρέτα την, τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρεια πού φεύγει
bid her farewell, the Alexandria who is leaving

C. P. Cavafy (1911)

Aleppo, Alexandria, Athens . . . Babylon, Constantinople, Dresden, Dubrovnik, Emesa (Homs) . . . Grozny, Hiroshima, Jerusalem, Kosovo . . . Smyrna, Srebernica, Thessaloniki . . . Zion.

Names of cities, ancient, medieval, and modern, resound across the ages, evoking litanies of loss and longing: for the death of dear ones, desecration of cemeteries, monuments and sacred sites, displacement and exile; and to commemorate past glories, with hopes and dreams for reparation and reconstruction. Their stories are as old as those of the cities destroyed at the beginning of the second millennium BCE in the Near East, and continue into the present, in the same regions. As I write, I hear the sweet, high-pitched, rhythmic ululations of women – not random screams – recorded by Lyse Doucet in her report for Radio 4's *Today* from a village not far from Aleppo, in choral refrain as a grandmother mourns her grandson. Men lead, grandmother follows, τὸ δ' ἐπὶ στενάχοντο γυναῖκες (and women wailed). Three years on, as I correct final proofs, every day brings news of ever greater displacement, destruction, desecration: Palmyra also gone.

This volume is timely, because the material here presented shows how rich, versatile, and artistically inventive laments inspired by the loss of cities have proved across time and space, in mood and genre, each shaped by specific but variable historical, social, and religious contours. There is no fixed form. Ann Suter (Chapter 1) calls the earliest Sumerian laments "texts unto themselves," deemed "canonical" because of their perceived similarity to those in the Hebrew bible. Yet the Sumerian, Akkadian, and Hebrew laments were not necessarily archetypes or models for the ancient Greek, however many common features we may trace in their tool-kit of

formulae, themes, and images, such as "Gone is. . ." and "Where are. . .?" (as in Villon's "Où sont les neiges d'antan?"). Nor do ritual and religious dimensions indicate earlier or original forms. The fall of a city affects all inhabitants, rich and poor, native and other, so laments voiced will vary according to degree of loss, status of the mourner, and time of utterance, ranging from supportive yet rehearsed wailings (as of those Syrian women) to more formal laments composed for subsequent religious and commemorative occasions. To the extent that grief is shared with others in public, all such laments are performative and political, and therefore "represented," whether the context is hieratic, biblical, epic, or dramatic. I maintain my position as stated forty-one years ago in my *Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*: city laments are historical and literary forms within the broader category of lamentation as a whole (1974/2002: 83).

It follows that there are few, if any, rules or norms for gender and genre. Women still wail material and family losses arising from total disruption, but the means by which city laments have come down to us are literary, and therefore until recently predominantly male, however much inspired and "represented" by the female voice. There is no "Ur-form," only a range of cultural responses, by women and men, to commemorate and replace the destruction of civic life as hitherto experienced (as distinct from personal grief for family), including the creation of monuments and art, music and drama, poetry and prose, woven and embroidered goods. These broader perspectives should be kept in mind, even though this volume has to be limited in scope.

To turn to the Greek material. Homer's *Iliad* contains the earliest hints of literary representation, where Troy's fall is anticipated at the end of the last book by the three leading female mourners, Andromache, Hekabe, and Helen – wife, mother, sister-in-law of Trojan Hektor slain by Greek Achilles to avenge the slaughter of Patroklos. As Mary Bachvarova suggests (Chapter 3), Homer's viewpoint is double. Victim and victor share more than they know, while we, the audience, hear both points of view, tragic because what befell Greek victors on their homecoming proved far from bloodless for families, cities, and peoples. Greek literature invites us from its epic beginnings to explore antiphonal voices in the face of loss. In tragedy, the examples we have are brief, fragmentary, and for "other" cities, not Greek. Geoffrey Bakewell (Chapter 5) cites Herodotos' account of Phrynichos' tragedy *Capture of Miletos*, which was withdrawn on the grounds of distress caused to the Greek audience. Tenderness for the sensitivities of Greek theater-goers, suggesting discontinuation of the practice? Hardly; laments were subversive and incendiary, hence

proscribed, as I have argued was the case with the funerary legislation of the sixth century and after. War casualties were often Greek-on-Greek, nor did their gods help: from Homer to Lucian (and beyond, in Byzantine secular literature), they were capricious, liable to plot and laugh at the internecine civic misfortunes of us wretched mortals. The Delphic Oracle, a powerful voice in deciding the fate of cities, Greek and other, was neither transparent nor impartial. Small wonder that the fall of ancient cities is represented in epic, drama, epigram, and history rather than in religious forms. The paucity of Greek city laments masks the distinctive qualities of antiphonal and dramatic modes.

The Greek tradition has lived on through medieval into modern times, thanks to its diverse literary and religious heritage. I am fascinated by its varying qualities, enriched in diaspora. Byzantine writers were trained in the art of rhetoric, which taught by means of *progymnasmata* ("preparatory exercises") the craft of *ethopoiea* ("character sketch"), exploring any topic from an unexpected perspective, such as what Europa said when she was turning into a cow; what a latrine in Smyrna told two squatters about their deposits, scolding one for his gluttony and commending the other for his healthy lifestyle; or how *x* might have lamented *y*. Chroniclers and historians from the sixth to the fifteenth centuries described recent catastrophes in terms of prestigious classical antecedents, so that a tradition was established, ready for use when need arose. As a theme, the fall of the citadel is treated with wit, skepticism, and sexual humour, as in Eustathios Makrembolites' twelfth-century prose novel, where Hysminias, aroused by a "wet dream" occasioned by Hysmine's teenage sexuality, tells us how he tried to take her at their next bed-time tryst: he got as far as the turrets, but could not make it to the acropolis, which she defended intact until the end.

On laments for the fall of Constantinople, much remains to be explored, especially in the *Greek Anthology*, rhetoric, and chronicles, such as Michael "Akominatos" Choniates' lament for Athens (eleventh century). In my *Ritual Lament*, I paid insufficient attention to the learned and historical tradition, and the extent to which earlier texts were a constant source of inspiration and commemoration. As for modern vernacular songs, Andromache Karanika (Chapter 10) highlights their antiphonal, dramatic, yet detached viewpoint, as boats and birds, bemused like the ancient gods by mutual human destruction, are left to ask, what happened? It no longer seems to matter which city has fallen.

To close with the modern period. Gail Holst-Warhaft (Chapter 11), the only contributor to address the importance of music, focuses on the

evacuation of Greeks from Smyrna (1922). No city fell, but 1.4 million people labelled "Greek" were displaced from homelands inhabited by Hellenophones since times immemorial, were forced by international agreements to change places with some 450,000 "Turks" in what was then defined as "Greece" – another case of ethnic cleansing. The sense of loss engendered by the "Great Catastrophe" was immense, and lives on in the memories of its last survivors. It has also proved inspirational for writers, musicians, and artists: Cavafy, Seferis, Elytis in poetry; Kazantzakis, Myrivelis, Kosmas Politis in prose.

Let me end with verses to demonstrate the iterability of wit and wisdom, elegy and satire, recorded between 1920 and 1923. A couplet jotted down by a Cretan soldier mobilized during World War I:

> *A curse upon you Germans, ten times an hour! / Why did you drag us into your country?*

Best left to the imagination how such a couplet is varied today. . .

As an echo to Antony's farewell to Alexandria, a few lines from Smyrna, recorded from Berlin (*c.* 1920):

> *On Smyrna's shore . . . Like a sweetlit coastline you shine in my heart, comfort in grief, hope for joy.*[1]

From New York (1923):

> *Smyrna, sun's caress, you'll awaken, golden once again, but for us in foreign darkness, you will shine, the only sun.*

May this volume promote greater understanding of life and art from cities with other points of view.

Margaret Alexiou

REFERENCES

Alexiou, Margaret. 1974/2002. *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*, 2nd edn. Lanham, MD.

1 My thanks to Christos Alexiou for the reference to the last two songs from Asia Minor.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the contributors for their engaging essays and patience during the editing and publishing process. Many thanks go to Andrew Young for producing original art for the cover, inspired by the book's topic, and to Nicholas Coulombe, who answered innumerable computer program questions, always cheerfully. We are also most grateful to Michael Sharp for his expert guidance and support and to Fleur Jones, Elizabeth Hanlon, and Christofere Nzalankazi for their help in transforming the manuscript into a book. Last but not least, we would like to acknowledge that editing this book has been an exceptionally stimulating and collegial experience for us.

MB, DD, and AS

Map of the Mediterranean region