

A Study of *Elpis* in Ancient Greek Literary Laments and Songs for the
Dead: Hope and the Tradition of Greek Lament

Vasiliki Kousoulini

University of Patras, Department of Philology, Sector of Classics

Teaching Fellow

vasiakous@yahoo.gr/kousoulini@upatras.gr

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Much of current scholarship aims at reconstructing ritual lamentation based on evidence from early Greek epic and lyric poetry and fifth-century tragedy. This paper, although it is an examination of a specific human emotion, *elpis*, within the corpus of early and classical Greek epic, lyric, and dramatic poetry that are thought to preserve the oral traditions of the genre, takes also into consideration the inscribed ancient Greek songs for the dead; that is archaic and classical epigrams and their later counterparts encountered, mainly, in the *Greek Anthology*. A study of *elpis*, a highly culturally dependent emotion, within these contexts will allow us to have a glimpse of the hermeneutic frames provided by each poetic genre, their performative contexts, and the expectation of the audiences, as well as of the general world-view that is shared by the poetic genres in question. In other words, a study of *elpis* in ancient Greek laments and songs for the dead will enable us to have a slightly clearer image of the evolution and the nature of this oral genre from archaic times until the Late Antiquity.