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Gender, emotion, and poeticity in Georgian mourning rituals

Helga Kotthoff

Introduction

This article deals with the relationship between gender, emotion, and culture in Georgian mourning rituals, especially in lamentations. In many parts of the world laments are performed by women, as well as in Georgia. The emotion of grief is thereby indexically feminized. My article focuses on the poetic performance of grief and pain, consisting of various conversational involvement strategies, and the social meaning of this affective genre as gendered activity. In the role of lamenters women enjoy high respect. However, this social role contains tension for them. On the one hand, wailing reconstructs the feminine gender ascription of being vulnerable and over-emotional, on the other hand, it permits women to act as oral artists, and their talents are admired by the whole community. Instead of regarding ritual wailing as a form of losing control of oneself the high standard of verbal art clearly indicates that wailers must be in good control of their affects. The aestheticized speech demands bodily control of the mourners during the performance of “being beside oneself.” They are admired as well as artists of pain and as persons having deep feelings. By involving others with their moving words the loss is symbolically shared and the wailers reaffirm the social network. Pointing out good deeds of the deceased and his/her dan allows them to communicate their moral standards and their views on what good social relationships look like. They also take the chance to praise each other in their laments. Another positive aspect of wailing for the women consists in allowing them to play a public part in practicing religion. Since within the official Orthodox church women have only low positions, they enjoy their important role as mediators between the living and the dead put on stage in the folk religious wailings. Lamentation is believed to intensify relations to the deceased in the hereafter.
Laments also represent an accepted form of complaint about all forms of sorrow and pain in the lamenters own life. Women use the genre to publicize their sorrows.

Lamenting is interwoven in the Georgian system of gaining and paying respect and honor (Kotthoff 1999). The lament represents her clan in honoring the deceased (and thereby his or her clan).

In recent years it has been becoming more and more evident in cultural studies that emotion politics is central in the construction of a gendered world and has a lot to do with the organization of social hierarchies and solidarities. In taking a close look at gender and emotion politics in ritual wailing we hope to get a differentiated picture of the arrangements between the sexes in one culture (the Georgian).

I present transcripts from a lamentation and analyze the form and function of the genre drawing on concepts of emotion work and involvement strategies, thereby linking gender with body politics, power, and social structure. The article focuses on specific strategies of indexing commmunalization of the living and the dead, on interrelated affective dimensions, and on the tension the genre contains for women’s social position.

1. Xmit natirlebi

The region this article deals with is the eastern part of the former Soviet Republic of Georgia, nowadays an independent country in the Caucasus. Lament performances still play an important role as part of death rituals in rural Georgia. When someone dies in a Georgian rural area, the “motirelebi” assemble to bewail the deceased loudly in an improvised and partly formulaic lament which is rhythmically and tonally structured in lines. The “motirelebi” are usually close female relatives and neighbors. Men and women display different ways of emotion management and performance from the very beginning of the death event, thereby reproducing cultural gender norms. Laments constitute a body of women’s expressive genres, and a socially acknowledged female way of reaffirming social bonds and moral standards. In the eastern parts of Georgia only women are lamenters. Interestingly, men play the most important role in ending the mourning phase and managing the ritual transition back to everyday life. At the mourning meal, “kelexi,” they formulate a series of toasts, first to the deceased person, then to other dead persons and finally to the living.

Grieving is a public act in Georgia. For an entire year a picture of the deceased is hung before that person’s house. The transparency of village life entails that lamenters will be well-informed about the life of the deceased. They are able to intersperse their dirges with many anecdotes from the deceased’s and his/her clan’s life.

There is a certain order in who bewails whom and how much. For example, on the occasion of a child’s death, its mother will be the principal wailer. Should she lack the requisite skills, however, another woman will assume this role. In every case the women take turns in lamenting, since they grieve all day during daylight hours for three to five consecutive days. Usually several women alternate in lamenting. The family of the deceased is not left alone with its grief. The loss is borne by all, thus affirming the social network of the entire grieving community. The women continue to lament at the cemetery until the coffin is lowered into the grave. On the seventh and fortieth days after death, and once more a year later, they lament again.

The dominant form of ritual wailing is called “xmit natirlebi.” “Xmit natirlebi” means “crying loudly with one’s voice.” Also called “motkiniti tirili” (spoken weeping or wailing with the voice), this genre belongs to a special form of ritual communication. Sometimes, a woman laments and others humming the melody with weeping sounds, a stylized background wailing called “zari.” The lament performer orients herself to the deceased, to other deceased, and to various present and absent addresses or the audience in general. There are many formulaic phrases which appear again and again. Every lament, however, is created individually for the deceased person and present persons, and large parts of each lament normally consist of improvisations. An “aesthetics of pain” (Caraveli 1986) is placed on stage.

I became acquainted with women’s laments only after having lived in Georgia for many months. The “xmit natirlebi” are still widespread in rural areas, and in many regions (particularly in the Eastern mountain regions of Piavi, Mtianeti, Xevsuresia and Tuetsia) only women lament. In Svanetia and Samegelo, West Georgian areas, men also practice special parts in ritual wailing (Bolle-Zemp 1997). In the mountain villages the dirges are sung and are accompanied by forms of self-aggression like pulling one’s hair out. Grief styles differ regionally within Georgia. In the valley they are today often performed without a song melody; the lament has completely died out only among the Tbilissians in the capital of Tbilisi (not among3 immigrants). However, even among Tbilissians the deceased is mourned for three to five days by a circle of women who gather daily around the coffin. In contrast to Northern or Western
Young men watched the young wailers in order to choose a wife. To have a
good wailer as a wife meant to have someone who would involve herself into
making his transition into the hereafter easier. It is considered a terrible
maleficaria for a man to insinuate that no woman will bewail him. Those who
are seen as criminals are not (necessarily) granted the honor of a lament. In the
village of Muxrani, near Mxeta, people told us of a man who allegedly did not
work, who drank and beat his wife and children. When he died, neither his
family nor his (female) neighbors wanted to “soften the earth” for him, which
indicates the religious function that is ascribed to laments in Georgia. Shortly
before burial, an old woman staged a lament in which she set forth that she did
not want to have a bad conscience before the mother of the deceased in heaven
because she had not softened the earth with tears of grief for her son. A lament
is never only dedicated to the actual deceased but to her/his whole clan as well.

The length of mourning, the frequency of commemorative celebrations, the
abundance of the funeral meal, the beauty and intensity of the lamentations, the
number of guests and many other details indicate what place the deceased and
his or her family is assigned in the social hierarchy of the community.

There are many oral rituals in Georgia which also embody the secrets of
social order.11 Most of these genres,12 such as drinking toasts and forms of
verbal duelling, are gender-related activities. They help people to exercise
control over affective processes in a gendered way. Men, for example, must
display self-control during the performance of drinking toasts, which are
usually offered under the strong influence of alcohol (Kotthoff 1995b). Women,
by contrast, tend to give expression to suffering in performing dirges, but they
must at the same time conform the expression of their feelings to demanding
conventionalized forms (as will be shown). The gender difference is not that
men control their emotions and women let them take their course, but that
both sexes practice emotion work in a specific way.

Men are largely obligated to maintain silence in the situation of death. As a
visual display of grief, they are allowed to tear scraps of cloth from their shirts
and to beat themselves on the chest.13 In addition, the men of a village will often
refrain from shaving for many months following their loss. Bearded men were
once assumed to have lost a loved one, usually their wife. Symbols of “letting
oneself go” as a sign of mourning have been found in many societies.

In this context expressive sadness is not only permitted for women, but is
considered their duty. Women assume this role in the emotional division of
labor in many societies (Finnegan 1970, Caraveli-Chaves 1980, Stubbe 1985,
Seremetakis 1991).14 By commenting on the life of the deceased and those who

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Lamentation at the cemetery of Muxrani. 1995, photo taken by Helga Kotthoff.

European cultures, this activity indicates that grieving in Georgia is a very
expressive and time consuming undertaking. The lamenting women demonstra-
tively put their grief and attachment on stage, falling on their knees before
the dead, crying, kissing and hugging him/her.

In Eastern Georgia, only women are present in the room where the
deceased lies, while the men stand silently in the doorway or in the yard. Women
address their sorrow to other women, but men acknowledge it as well.

A few regional elements of the mourning ritual are exclusively performed
for men, which expresses the patriarchal orientation of the culture. In the
Eastern Georgian mountain regions widows cut off their hair and place it in the
grave with their husband as a symbol that they continue to be their wives. It is
regarded as morally bad if a widow remarries, since she still belongs at least in
part to her deceased husband. A husband, in contrast, belongs to his deceased
wife only for a short period of time; then he normally begins a new life with
another woman.

The intensity and duration of a lamentation signifies the social value the
deceased is ascribed. Various Georgian informants have explained to me that “a
man who had provided greater benefits to the village would be grieved longer and
in many more forms than an insignificant person”. Likewise, people who die at
an early age are more profusely lamented than very old people. In former times
a woman’s wailing talent was seen as an important criterion for a good wife.

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11 Kotthoff 1995c.
12 Kotthoff 1995a.
13 Kotthoff 1995e.
14 Kotthoff 1995f.
are present they also serve important functions for the production and reproduction of societal morality. This is one reason why lamentation is not just a discourse of powerlessness. In any case, laments symbolize a kind of final summing up for a member of society. Cultural gender politics is carried out in that respective feelings are devolved on women as the principal mourners; they must be expressed during the rite of transition. As lamenters women gain high respect.

In addition, as an institutionalized form of expressive speech activity, lamentations offer a framework for expressions of many sorts of overpowering grief and pain in the lamenters’ own lives which can also be channeled in this fashion.

In the countryside women play only a minor role in the community life outside the home. Only in a state of grief do women become public figures who are allowed to speak for the community. Private space then becomes public space.

Lamentation thus also plays an important role as a form of folk religious ritual. Religious practice is not limited to churches (Luckmann 1991); the genre of lamentation is extremely important for the constitution and manifestation of folk religion in everyday life. One reason for the survival of the genre could be that it fulfilled functions of cultural resistance in Soviet times. Through mourning the Georgian local communities recreated their own values against those of the dominant Soviet (Russian) regime. Ritual mourning allowed people to show each other that their religious (and thereby national Georgian) identity was still alive.

Another reason is, of course, that oral genres of morality and religion require a close-knit society because they depend on social knowledge; the Georgian villages fulfill these survival conditions even today.

In the post-Soviet era the Orthodox Church has regained power. Women play only minor roles within the official Georgian Orthodox Church. A significant aspect of the lament still is its religious dimension, because it constitutes metaphysical communication outside the official church. Within the unofficial religious life of their villages women still act as mediators between the realm of the living and that of the dead. In Georgian folk religion attachment to the deceased is extraordinarily marked. One assumes that the deceased can influence life on earth and that one must remain in continual contact with them in order to positively influence them. Throughout Georgia, even today people are still strongly convinced that the soul of the deceased person continues to live on for a while after death. We see in the transcripts that the deceased person is directly addressed and appealed to, for example, as the addressee of stories. One reason for the extensive mourning and memorial work lies in the conviction that the deceased person should feel good in the afterlife, and that it will be better for those left behind if the deceased are content. The fictionalization of life in the hereafter is parallelized to life in this world. The mourning meal following the burial must, for example, be very abundant so that the deceased will be greeted with an equally generous meal in the hereafter. The lamentations which we have collected are full of messages for other deceased persons. For example, in the form: “Tell my mother that we have finally moved into our new house. But please do not tell her that we have lost our house in Abasia.” The deceased must be kept in good spirits.

Women also reproduce emotional womanhood in this genre. Deeply felt grief is regarded as a sign of being a good woman. The mourners display behavior that is considered feminine by society. The general ascription of emotional expressiveness, especially suffering, constitutes femininity in many cultures (Grima 1991, Mills 1991). Conventions of feeling demand that women’s grief and sadness be especially deep and long-lasting. In Georgia the ability to express grief is definitely part of female body politics. In contrast to Western body politics, whose essence nowadays consists in making the traces of experienced life, of fear, suffering, aging and despair as invisible as possible (women attempt to continuously display the same flawless freshness and youthfulness), in Georgia the chief concern is, to the contrary, to iconically embody suffering and to portray expressive forms of suffering and grief through the body. Wailers sit bent over, with stooped shoulders, arms and head. They sob and often rest their heads in their hands. Movements become heavy and slow. Older women in general move more ponderously in Georgia than in the West. But we can observe changes nowadays. Young women have started orienting themselves to Western values. They also refrain from wailing. Further research must answer the question of how contact with Western ways of living influences grief rituals and gender politics.

Grief rituals represent special ties among women. Women not only lament the loss of the deceased, but also praise and support each other in their dirges. Their joint suffering and support constitute a social tie among them.

In principle, every woman can lament; however, some women are seen as outstanding because they have developed special skills. We were often told that only women who have experienced social tragedies are able to lament beautifully and move others. These lamenters are well-known and venerated throughout their village. When someone passes away, the lamenters hurry to the house in
which the deceased lived. They honor the dead and her/his family by lamenting for her/him. The family announces the death of a person by crying loudly.

As lamenters, women fulfill important anthropological functions which interpenetrate one another, including the thematization of a basic human experience, the communilization of that experience, aestheticization and handing down memory to the next generation.

The intensity of the presented and aroused empathy is the primary evaluative criterion for the lament’s performance. The lament performer should transfer her pain to others. The value of formal beauty consists in its ability to create and support strong feelings of empathy in the audience. Laments represent a mixed form between formulaic and improvised texts, as is typical for most oral ritual performances (Finnegan 1970, Edwards/Sienkiewicz 1990).

1.1 Women praise each other

As I already said, the wailers also use the genre to praise other women present. I present a short segment taken from a lament for the 86 year old woman Mariam performed in the village of Muxrani in 1994 (40 km from Tbilisi) on "panasvidi" — the last day before the burial. The full text is presented in the appendix.

Methodologically I prefer a data-centered ethnography. That means to take a close look at textual details of the wailing. I do not, however, claim that the text itself tells us everything; I do believe, though, that we ought to take people’s actual modes of behavior and dialogues as the starting point for theories of their social organization and relevance structures. We, Elza Gabsadava and me, also talked about ritual wailing with many practicing lamenters in Georgia and will integrate their views on that practice into our discussion.

When the sequence presented below took place, visitors one by one entered the room where the deceased, the 86 year old Mariam, lied. The female relatives and neighbors are seated around the coffin. The chief lamenters are the daughters, Eiziko (L) and Ciaa (C). By the head of the deceased stands a small table, on which candles and photos of persons who had died previously are arranged. Tamara (T), a neighbor and cousin, enters. I did not transcribe all the soft background wailing of the onlookers. She then becomes the addressee of praise for her care.

We will pay attention to the content that is communicated here and to an interesting formal feature of Georgian dirges: the constant crossing and shifting of address. I see it as an index of social unification.

**Sequence 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Lamented</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Tamara</td>
<td>roger gamzadebul kar, maro deida, genavale</td>
<td>roger gamzadebul kar, maro deida, genavale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Ciaa</td>
<td>verara, tamara deida, arar ici rara ka kalo, no, Aunt Tamari, you don’t know what you are doing, woman,</td>
<td>verara, tamara deida, arar ici rara ka kalo, no, Aunt Tamari, you don’t know what you are doing, woman,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>andeni parivisima, afar vici ra vkaat, tamara deida, urne,</td>
<td>andeni parivisima, afar vici ra vkaat, tamara deida, urne,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 T:</td>
<td>still</td>
<td>still</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 C:</td>
<td>you come from a large clan</td>
<td>you come from a large clan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 T:</td>
<td>you know what pleasure I could give you, genavale,</td>
<td>you know what pleasure I could give you, genavale,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 C:</td>
<td>didi gvaris xaxi xari</td>
<td>didi gvaris xaxi xari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 T:</td>
<td>you come from a large clan</td>
<td>you come from a large clan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>there you will meet our cousins, all the good are there.</td>
<td>there you will meet our cousins, all the good are there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>genavale, feri de dac desomgebeba, ici ra ketdi kaiko genavale, you will also meet my mother there, you know how good natured she was</td>
<td>genavale, feri de dac desomgebeba, ici ra ketdi kaiko genavale, you will also meet my mother there, you know how good natured she was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>but my heart aches that you are leaving your dear children</td>
<td>but my heart aches that you are leaving your dear children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>you are leaving them and going away from them</td>
<td>you are leaving them and going away from them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>it means so much to look at them,</td>
<td>it means so much to look at them,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>aman djeri cisi c, nama</td>
<td>aman djeri cisi c, nama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 C:</td>
<td>you should have joy, you,</td>
<td>you should have joy, you,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 T:</td>
<td>you, however, have left not only your eyes, but also your heart with your children</td>
<td>you, however, have left not only your eyes, but also your heart with your children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
or the end of a line. "Genacvale" expresses the process of immersing oneself in a person's sorrow and can be translated as "I take your place". "Genacvalos deda" accordingly means "I take mother's place". Boeder (1988) writes that in a certain contextual position one can as well translate the formula as "I die for you". "Genacvale" is one of the special sympathy formulae which describe a strong religious wish for self-sacrifice.

Formulæ which communicate the wish to take over another person's burden or even death play a major role in Georgian everyday life, not only in dirges. These formulæ presuppose a possibility of transcendence which leave the realm of realism, imagining supernatural and magic powers.

First, there are the abundant, often-repeated formulæ whose fundamental semantic pattern states, at least etymologically, the following: the speaker wishes to shoulder the burden of pain (the illness, misfortune...) which the person addressed suffers. The addressee's misfortune should be conveyed to the speaker; the lamenters wants to symbolically shoulder the suffering person's pain. (Boeder 1988:12; translated by H.K.)

In line 17 we find the formula "seni čirime" ("your pain over me" or "let me bear your suffering") which even more strongly expresses that the speaker would like to assume the addressee's misfortune, suffering, travail and even death. Despite its high level of conventionalization, the formula "seni čirime" has a strong claim to authenticity. As well the lines 18 (into what water should I throw myself) and 21 (God give you joy) are highly conventionalized. The repetition of formulæ communicates iconically: we will be united in our suffering.

The unification in suffering is also indicated by continuous address shifting. Cila directs her words in line 2 to Aunt Tamara and thanks her for having done so much for her mother. Tamara directs her words to the deceased Mariam. Sudden address shifts are typical in Georgian lamentation. Line 2 means that Tamara is always trying to find things she could do for her neighbors. In line 3 we find the word "pativiscema" (deference, honor), a central concept in Georgian everyday life, not only in the ritual of wailing. Many activities are integrated into a system of giving and receiving respect and honor (Kothoff 1999).

Cila underlines Tamara's involvement (5) in a three-part list. Hyperbole in praising and thanking is among the characteristics of the lament-performance. In line 6 Aunt Tamara addresses the deceased again. The metaphor of travelling is important in representing death and highly frequent in dirges (not only in Georgia). In line 7 Cila refers again to how she could return the honor and support she received from Tamara. Tamara, who is also Mariam's cousin,

Tamara directly addresses the deceased Aunt Maro (a diminutive of Mariam) with a compliment on her way of dressing. She pretends that Maro had dressed herself to be ready for the journey into the hereafter. To portray the deceased as active is typical in dirges. The line ends with the formula "genacvale". Laments are permeated with this formula which often marks the beginning
imagines that grandmother Mariam will meet members of her clan in the hereafter; they are said to be good. Typically, in dirges the deceased are imagined as being better than the living. Among others, Mariam will meet her mother, to whom good nature is attributed (10). She again directly addresses Mariam. In line 11 she suggests to Mariam to bring the flowers to those in the hereafter. A religious conception holds sway that the deceased, at least as long she has not yet been buried, takes note of all the messages presented to her and upon arriving in the hereafter passes them on to the relevant persons. In most lamentations those deceased persons are named with whom the deceased will later be reunited in the kingdom of the dead.

In lines 12ff. Tamara recalls the children with kind words. In telling Mariam that it means much to look at her children, she indirectly compliments the present children. I call this strategy address-crossing. The deceased often becomes the official addressee, others present the unofficial ones. She is told praise stories about those present, who can be the praise objects or just the listeners. In any case, good deeds and characteristics are made public that way. In line 13 Tamara repeats that Mariam is leaving her good children now. This is of course an indirect way of complimenting Ciaia and Liziko, the main wailers. Ciaia returns the indirect compliments in line 15. Tamara addresses the deceased again in line 16. In line 17 we find the formula “sini ciri” (your suffering should be mine) we already discussed. In other segments presented in the article we will discover many formulae which communicate that a person wants to carry all the sorrow and suffering for another person. These formulae show a high degree of involvement and sympathy. The phrases in 18 and 19 are also formulaic. In line 20, Ciaia takes the turn again and appeals to God to assist Tamara and her family. From line 22 on Ciaia again tells her mother how much Aunt Tamara had done for all of them, another case of address-crossing. She talks to the deceased Mariam as though she were alive. This is one of the feature that characterize the discourse as religious. The wailing women tell her every thing that present and absent people (mostly women) have done for each other. Thereby they indirectly praise and thank each other. They celebrate the readiness to help, their friendship, and their support. By constantly changing addressees, a community which still includes the deceased is indexically associated. In very concrete scenes Ciaia continues showing everybody how helpful Tamara was. She presents herself unwilling to accept so much help and as not knowing how to pay back such a great support. We will return to these strategies of community formation later. It is evident that lamentations represent a genre of women’s care for the bond of friendship.

1.2 Women form family relationships

Lamentations also (re)construct images of good relationships within the family, for example, between wife, wife’s mother and husband:

The topic was already shifted to other deceased family members some lines before. Now Ciaia’s deceased husband is brought into the center of attention. Starting in line 58 she asks her mother a rhetorical question of whether her husband gave her too little respect (pači). This is only the start of praising him for paying so much attention to her mother’s well-being, thereby staging him as a man of high morals. In lines 60 and 61 she constructs a dialogue with her husband. He is presented as urging her to please her mother. In line 61 she quotes her own words. In line 62 she again cites her husband’s words and then talks about him and her mother in the third person. The cited formulation “pači cci” — (pay her respect/do something good for her) runs through the lines now. It is not easy to translate “pači” because it designates the Georgian concept of interactional honor (Kotthoff 1999). From line 65 on, she again speaks with her mother and tells her all the things her husband would have done for her. She also reminds her mother in line 67 how much she had pitied her when her husband died. The mother now becomes the addressee of her griefing for her lost husband. Indecisively, Ciaia also creates ties among the deceased. She refers to her own long state of grief (wearing black costume for the past twelve years), which in Georgia symbolizes good womanhood.

In line 70 she tells her mother, thereby including all the others present, that people think she should finally put aside the mourning dress. She lets everyone know that she is still unhappy about her husband’s death, thereby overfulfilling all cultural mourning norms for wives. In line 73 the focus is again shifted to the death of her mother. Now she has a new reason for mourning.

We do not know much about the truthfulness of Ciaia’s narrative. At least we do not know how representative the narrated dialogue is for her husband’s behavior. But it is evident that this is the behavior she favors and portrays as ideal. Lamenting women form social relationships (and especially the ideals of those relationships) in praising certain ways of acting. Lamenting thereby becomes a form of public discourse that sets moral standards in the interest of women. Women in this genre tell their social world what they like and what they don’t like, what kind of behavior impresses them and what not.
1.3 Reported dialogue as indexing communality

Durkheim (1915), Van Gennep (1924), Radcliffe-Brown (1964), Feld (1982) and many other anthropologists argued that the function of ritual weeping by those left behind is to affirm the existence of social bonds between the living. In the case where the social issue is threatened by the departure of a person, the social structure is knit together again by sharing emotion and common culture. The Georgians "xmit natirlileb" also simultaneously combine several purposes. They allow people to overtly express feelings of sadness on the occasion of death, they reaffirm strong expressions of sorrow as a woman's activity — and they bind the community together by sharing grief and reaffirming its moral values. They do not only claim social bonding but stage it as a drama of different voices in interaction with one another. A community of the living and the dead is animated in lamentation (to use Goffman's term 1981). Let's again have a look at some lines which show animated dialogue in sequence 1.

Tamar's speech is quoted by Ciala in line 25. In lines 27 and 28 Ciala directly quotes her own speech. Directly reported dialogue is an involvement strategy (Tannen 1989). To be exact, we should say "constructed dialogue" or "animated dialogue"; there is no claim and no evidence that real dialogues are being accurately reported. Constructing dialogues is an effective strategy for animating the imagined speakers in a specific way.

The voicing used in lamentation performances can be understood in terms of Soviet cultural semiotics (Bakhtin 1981, Voloshinov 1978), which analyzed the functions of direct and indirect quotation in fiction. Voloshinov (1978:153) distinguished two types of reported speech in fiction. The type which works with indirect quotation is said to be concerned with the stylistic homogeneity of a text. The other type individualizes the language of characters and also the language of the teller. He refers to this as relativistic individualism and finds examples in the works of Fedor Dostoevski and Andrej Beli. Characters are identified through their own quoted speech, through direct citation. Direct citation permits ellipses, omissions and a variety of other emotive tendencies
which would be lost in indirect quotation. He demonstrates this, among other
examples, by the exclamation, “What an achievement”, which in indirect
quotation one would have to transform into the clumsy phrase, “She said
that it was a real achievement…”. Direct quotation evokes “manner of speech”, not
only individually, but also typologically, it is “speech about speech, utterance
about utterance” (Voloshinov 1973:115).

Tannen (1989), Brünner (1991), Günther (1997, 1999) and CouperKuhlen (1999) have shown that reported dialogue can contain verbal and
intentional characterizations through which — on the basis of stereotypes —
images of persons, social groups, etc. are transmitted. By the ‘polyphonic
layering of voices’ (Bakhtin 1981) protagonists are implicitly stylized and
evaluated. The speaker anchors the voices in a storyworld and animates them in
way that corresponds to her current intention.

As a specificity, laments contain quotations of deceased persons as we
saw in sequence 2. For example, in lines 60, 62, 63 Gia animates her husband’s
voice in a dialogue with herself. This way, lamenters dramatize again and again
aspects of their life with the deceased. In a sense they dramatize their memory.
Throughout the text the voices of the deceased are intertwined with those of the
living. Thereby a community of the living with the dead is indexicalized.
The existence of this community is one of the basic religious convictions of most
Georgians. It is conversationally (re)created.

The lamentation sequences discussed so far show how much community
members mutually reinforce one another in lamentation dialogues. The death
of a person is taken as an occasion to praise each other, to remind each other of
good times spent together, to strengthen the common bonds. Ritual wrailing
imports collective reassurance of the group into the disrupted domestic sphere.
This function, which is frequently conjured up by anthropologists like van
Gennep and many others, is activated by concrete performance strategies.
Repertoire, reported dialogue and imagery are among the most important
involvement strategies of lamentation.

2. Communicating emotions

The language and communication of emotions have seldom been focused on in
modern linguistics. They have been declared a psychological question about
which we linguists have little to say. Only recently has the dogma that emotions
are internal, irrational and spontaneous been exposed and questioned (e.g.,
of linguistics’ most stellar figures, Jakobson (1960) and Sapir (1921, 1927),
thought otherwise: Affect, or emotion, according to them, was a fundamental
dimension of human life and a factor cross-cutting all levels of linguistic
organization (1990:126). Anthropological linguists, such as Irvine (1982, 1990),
Ochs and Schieffelin (1989), Besnier (1990), Fehler (1990), Caffi and Janney
(1994) and the contributors to Niemeyer and Dirven (1997), have begun trying
to find a new place for emotional discourse within linguistics. They consider
themselves well-placed in a solid linguistic tradition. For Sapir, an important
question was how much the communication of emotions is culturally
constructed and culturally variable. He thought that the communication of
personality and emotional states is culturally organized in a speech community.

By studying the emotion work carried out in mourning rituals we obtain
a perspective from which to view the individual (female-male), interaction,
societal norms, and social structure. It allows us to inspect the relation among
emotive experience, emotion management, feeling rules, actual behavior and
ideology (Hochschild 1979:551). Such an interactive perspective on emotion
work and emotion performance in Georgian mourning rituals also provides a
way to observe the reproduction of societal arrangements between the sexes.

The death of a human being has always been an event which arouses strong
feelings. But historically and cross-culturally these feelings have not been the
same (Stubbe 1985). The internal states of the persons left behind are diverse,
and so are the external, conventionalized ways of expressing grief (the latter are
the central point of interest in anthropological linguistics). The study of oral
genres and of registers is a convenient way to look at emotional performance
and the way it is gendered. With Ochs and Schieffelin (1989:7) we take affect
to be a broader term than emotion, to include feelings, moods, dispositions,
and attitudes associated with persons and/or situations. Sadness is an emotion
which combines with other affects. Our particular concern as anthropological
linguists is to study the conventional display of emotion and affect through
semiotic means and by understanding its social meaning; we are not concerned
with the ‘truth’ of feelings. We are very concerned with how cultural masculini-
ity or femininity is made accountable by performing certain affects.

A few authors (e.g., Feld 1982, Urban 1988) point out that while the vocal
and verbal styles of ritual keening and lamenting are interculturally different,
they display common semiotic features and share in common certain resem-
blances with what we call “wailing” and “crying”, and there are many icons and indices associated with bowing and being lowered into the ground:

As a semiotic device, wailing is linked to affect, just as at the core one assumes ‘crying’ as a formal device is linked to ‘sadness’ (Urban 1988:386).

As well in Georgia, cries of grief and appeals to the deceased occur. They are spoken or sung in lines (pulse units), using crying sounds, voice changes, drawn-out sighs, slowly falling intonation contours with integrated peaks, bowed bodily postures and an expressive lexicon. In comparison to the examples discussed in the literature (e.g., by Urban on Amerindian Brazilian ritual wailing 1991: 148 ff) Georgian laments are much richer in their poetics. They contrast in detail a desolate present with an idyllic past, praise the deceased person and those present, giving detailed descriptions of pain and also of scenes from the shared former life, show a complex management of address and intertextuality by reporting numerous dialogues in which either the deceased, other deceased friends and relatives or those present are involved. They implore the deceased to deliver several messages from them to the dead persons whom she/he will soon meet. Lamenting women involve themselves in a moving and line-structured dialogue about life on earth and in the hereafter.

Ritual wailing fulfills many functions simultaneously. First of all, it helps to communalize and structure feelings evoked by the death of a person. Death, with its finality and inexplicability, is one of the strongest emotional experiences of mankind (Aries 1988), one which is, however, differently externalized and worked out in each culture. Societies create “feeling rules” (Hochschild 1979, 1983) as the aspect of ideology that deals with emotion. If a close person dies, “feeling rules” demand sadness; there are cultural appropriateness standards for this. In Georgia (as well as in many other cultures) sadness is practiced in a symbolically stronger way by women than by men. It is women who stay with the sick during their transition from life to death. It is obligatory that a woman sit at the bedside of a dying person. Society uses this “liminal” phase (van Gennep 1960, Turner 1969: 94–130) to reproduce its gender order. In Georgia being-a-woman is not only associated with the liminal phase of giving life but also with accompanying it to the end. Rituals of transition (and other rituals), however, fulfill no instrumental functions, but have many-layered social functions. These interconnected functions likewise combine with affects. We see these affects as social indexicals. Along with Hochschild (1979, 1983), Urban (1988, 1991) and many other anthropologists and linguists (e.g., Feihter 1990:96), we assume that the ritualization of affect touches many levels simultaneously.

Also Heller (1980) criticizes naturalistic emotion- and need theories which view human emotional life in terms of a few organically-anchored, substantively fixed stirrings. In agreement with ethology, she argues that mankind has only residual traces of an organically anchored instinct system. Human drive- and emotion potentials are, to the contrary, formable: They have embodied very different forms of action historically. In human beings, emotions, needs and embodied symbols are transmitted together in comprehensible interpretive patterns. As well grief is not simply a biophysical reaction, but rather transmitted through the social-psychological orientational patterns of the culture and includes specific linkages which we will call, following Urban, “meta-affects”.

Urban described one (and only this one) meta-affect for wailing in Amerindian Brazil as follows:

That is to say, one emotion (sadness) points to or ‘comments upon’ another emotion (the desire for social acceptance). Seen in the context of social action, ritual wailing involves the signaling by one actor of a feeling of grief. But the signal is emitted in a way that other actors consider appropriate. Hence the sadness itself is rendered socially intelligible, and it is through this intelligible sadness that the basic intelligibility and acceptability of the social actor emerges. Thus, an actor’s own affect must be controlled as a means of signaling who one is. In short, affect becomes meta-affect. (1988: 386)

I assume a higher degree of complexity and greater diversity of meta-affects in the case of ritual mourning. I conceptualize such dispositional as meta-affects, which in the case of ritual coming to terms with a death are also of affective significance for the community. With the term “meta-affect” I emphasize the affective dimension of the aspects of gender, religion, regional identity, morality, social hierarchy, and communality, which are important in the ritual process. I would like here to focus on the affective perspective; obviously each of the named phenomenal domains could also be viewed from a different perspective, e.g., purely text analytically or functionally. Functions suggest an instrumental perspective. Affects suggest the perspective of embodied performance. Meta-affects have indexical values which are all linked.

The indexical associations we already discussed influence the affect management and performance in the complex of mourning. One affect comments on another: they are all interconnected. Gender politics, e.g., takes on the Gestalt of a specific affect management and performance. It has an influence on the production of empathy, religion, social hierarchy, community and regional identity, and conversely as well.
White (1990) points to the fact that there are prototype schemata for emotive discourse which give an indication of the types of inferential paths that make emotional speech a moral idiom. Specific emotions, such as grief, designate interactive scenarios with known evaluative and behavioral implications. The formalized emotional discourse of lamentation promotes social harmony with all its implications of recreating tradition.

3. The Dialectic of distance and involvement

Georgian lamentations meet a high standard of oral poetry, combining verbal art and social purposes. To meet such a high standard of poetic performance demands emotion work. We would be mistaken in regarding lamentation as a form of letting oneself go. There is a dialectic between a certain degree of distancing that is necessary to perform the ritual and the involvement it creates for the audience present.

Emotion work in Georgian ways of managing grief starts with ritualization. Beginning at the first moment after recognizing the death of a person, feelings begin to be formed in accord with cultural conventions. According to Leach (1968, 1976) and many other anthropologists, a form of behavior is considered ritual if it is stereotypical and, within the framework of cultural conventions, in itself powerful, however ineffective in a rational, technical sense. In rituals a second symbolic layer succeeds denotative meanings. The way a ritual is performed carries the most significant social and emotional meaning. A ritual becomes empty if the linkage to the corresponding emotions is lost, as was already established by Durkheim (1915/1965).

Before we look again at a lamentation sequence, we take into consideration what lamenters tell us about their art. In 1998, a couple of women aged from 50 to 70 in Muxrani 1998 told us that they performed xmit natiriebi when their hearts burned very much (guli sainian dameco). One of the women, ženia, put it like this:

My nephew, he was 12 years old when he died. To put it simply. I cried and cried. Nobody could make me silent. Nobody, no, everybody wanted to lament, but I let no one. I wanted to lament alone. And I wanted all the time to keep standing on my feet. All the time crying and lamenting and shedding tears. All the time my tears were running. People tried to stop me, but I couldn’t.

Lamentation is presented as a physical need. She cannot but lament. All the wailers we talked with told us that it must “come from heart”. They strongly entertained the ideology of the naturalness of behaviour thereby implicitly confirming Durkheim’s thesis. Performance aspects are also taken into consideration. Standing on one’s feet while lamenting is more highly estimated than sitting or even lying. She refers to physical reactions (tears were running) but also to her efforts.

3.1 Poetic strategies

Although (and because) the lamenters’ “heart burns” she struggles with wording. Georgian dirges are not only rituals, they also have a strong artistic dimension, which consists in specific “sound and sense strategies”. In her book Talking Voices Deborah Tannen writes that conversational involvement is created by the simultaneous forces of music (sound and rhythm), on the one hand, and of mutual participation in sensemaking, on the other (1989: 135).

Poetics is an important sound strategy. It is by no means only found in the canonical, written text, but rather everywhere where a conspicuous artistic/stylistic orientation becomes evident. Syntactical, semantic and intonational parallelisms, recurrences of formulae, assonances, specific rhythms and melodies, line structures and expressive metaphors above all characterize the performance of dirges as poetic in Georgia. Here a concept of poetry is fundamental which goes back to Roman Jakobson (1960). The latter presented in various articles his basic thesis that poetics consists in a focus on wording and a principle of equivalence of formal structures. The recognition of the same evokes a sense of aesthetic pleasure. Poetics varies in intensity.

It is quite easy to identify a line structure in the dirges because of the special exclamation intonation. With Hymes (1981). I view speaking in lines as characteristic of a poetic structure. It points to the prosodic similarity of the lines, to a patterned intonational contour.

Lamentations demand this specific style of presentation, which is found in no other genre. Stylistization is in this case a form of body politics. As a lamenter a woman enters into the suffering and at the same time acts it out for the community in a beautiful style.

The special style of the lamentation consists in clusters of icons, which are firmly associated with grief in the discourse history:

In fact, the relationships among styles within the broader configuration of culture are grounded in similarity as well as difference. Ritual wailing and
origin myth telling are constructed from features that occur elsewhere, features that have indexical values in those other styles. Ritual wailing and origin myth telling, so to speak, import those features in order simultaneously to sneak in their associated values. In this way, they become, in effect, clusters of iconic through which one looks out at the larger history of discourse and draws the indexically relevant meanings into the present (Urban 1991:120).

Not only in dirges, but in the everyday codes, drawn-out syllables, faltering voices, singsong lines with downward tonal slopes, repeated callings, formulae and crying breaks are associated with intense grief. This potential is exploited in dirges.

The downward melody stylizes grief and mourning, on the one hand, and secures, on the other, a line structure; repetition facilitates text creation and guarantees a certain automatism for both the performer and her public. The melody makes the text easier to memorize.

Every Georgian region has its own lament melody, although there are strong similarities among them. People have told me that listening to the melody of their own region awakens much stronger feelings of sadness than listening to an unfamiliar wailing melody. There are also other differences in singing style. Our data from Megrelian mourning chants, for example, show an extensive use of a creaky voice which the other laments do not show.

I will not go into every detail of the poetic structure of the text, but I would like to point to the many alliterations and sound parallelisms, as, e.g., the /ara/-group (varara, arar ici, ratara, arar ici, and arar vic) in 3, 7, 7, the anadiplosis in 2, 3, 8 and 13 (stoveb), and in 16, 16, 52-53, 55-56, 56-57, 67-68 etc., the epipheton, e.g., with genitiv exclusive in 1, 6, 7 etc., with (v)qvivi(i) in 45, 47, 50, and the line endings with dea/mother in 22, 28, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, etc. It is evident that the wording has a value in itself.

There are also many double- and triple structures, as, e.g., in lines 5, 16, 25 or in 31, 36, 43, 44, 50, 55, 56, etc. Reduplications and three-part structures dramatize what is being said and give it a rhythmic effect.

The orientation of the performer to the community is preserved especially through the aesthetics of the text. No mourner can simply draw back within herself. Her social attention always remains dominant through the demands of the form.

The fact that people later discuss the performances in other contexts can be seen as a further device for its artistic dimension. When a death is spoken about, Georgian people necessarily also talk about the excellence of the oral lament performances presented on that occasion. Excellence is judged by the perfect fulfillment of the generic norms, and originality is judged by the creativity used within the given presentation. Both should be optimally matched. Relatives thank the performers of the best and saddest laments.

3.2 Literary strategies: Detailing and imagery

Lamentations are not only poetical, but also literary. The ethnolinguist Bright (1982) holds that the term “literature” should be reserved for texts which are regarded as possessing value in a society, which are preserved, repeated and handed down in similar forms. Not only stories from the life of the deceased, but also conceptions of the afterworld are continually celebrated in a consistent form in Georgian mourning rituals.

A major form of creating conversational involvement in sense-making is organized by imagery: the power of images to communicate meanings and emotions resides in their ability to evoke scenes, as we will see in an excerpt from a lament. Also details, like reported dialogues, create vivid pictures, and understanding is derived from scenes in which people are placed in relation to each other. Individual imagination thereby becomes group imagination. Thus, a collective memory of the time spent together is not only organized but celebrated. The lamenting women play a big role in creating and celebrating social memory. The particularity and familiarity of details such as those communicated in the dialogue with Eiko (starting in line 80) is very moving.

We will look at conversational detailing and imagery as strategies of giving the text a literary quality. The lamenting women describe the life of the deceased in vivid images. Details and imagery play an essential role in making the xmit natjirlebi easy to memorize.

Ciala praises her mother Mariam for doing everything for her children. In line 77 she uses a conventional, but powerful metaphor to communicate her mother’s engagement for her children. The commentary in line 78 does not belong to the wailing. In line 80 the dialogue with Eiko starts which we will examine closely.

In line 80 Ciala suddenly addresses Eiko, who is in the audience. She opens up a special dialogue with her. She first speaks about her in the third person and then addresses her directly. Ciala talks about her life with Eiko, about their school days. Now the speech is presumably directed at the entire group. She tells that they shared a room (82), Eiko says something which could not be made out. Ciala tells that Eiko came from a rich family, hers was poor (84, 86). The contrast is also iconized on the level of wording: She uses three adjectives to characterize Eiko’s situation and only two (one adjective and one inflected
Sequence 3

76 C: arapers ar gukhlebda, tavis gachveluli sami.

She wanted us to lack nothing, with her limited strength

77 xoroeki mojdelda da evan miters ar dagvvelbda, 

she would have cut off her own flesh for us so that we would not go 

hungry.

78?: 

Eliko also knew that well, isn't that so, Eliko?

One can certainly get through here. There is enough space. You can get 

through.

79?: [?]

80 C: 

Eliko also knows that well, isn't that so, Eliko?

81 

Eliko came from a well-to-do family, pampered, from a rich family

82 

we learned together. lived together, me and Eliko

83 E: [?]

84 C: 

Eliko knew that well, isn't that so, Eliko?

85?: [?]

86 C: 

I came from a poor family, it was hard for us

87 E: [?]

oh, that.

88 C: 

ra aris dasamali, eliko.

89 E: [?]

what is there to hide here, Eliko.

90 C: 

let me take on the burden of your suffering

91 

her mother and my mother always came to visit us together

92 

Eliko, those were times, those were times when they sent us out

(to get this and that)

93: dloob how a beshbsheshen, geemo, ilukEkEshen? 

maarin sid vxcnovrobidi, eliko, sabantaloe?

where did we live then, Eliko, in Saburtalo?

94 E: 

zemeile, zemeile

on Semmel Street, on Semmel Street

95 C: 

how much did they tell us? we should bring back a lot of (beer), 

96 

vame, dada, senc rom gigvara sicili, unda gavcino

Oh, God, mother, you always liked to laugh. I must people laugh

97 E: [?]

98 C: 

you deserved that your bellies will burst, I said, if you drink so much beer.

99 

she laughed and giggled so, those were times, mother, we walked along

100?: 

HE HE HE

verb) to characterize hers. In line 89 Eliko utters one of the central formulae in 
dirges. We do not only take semantics into account (the wish to suffer for the 
other person) but also the role the utterance plays in context. Here it is important 
that Eliko gets actively involved in lamenting.

In line 90 Ciaia points out that Eliko's mother and her own came together 
to visit them. After stating differences, she now focuses their togetherness. This 
again contains the implicit message: Eliko's mother didn't bother about 
differences in wealth. Money didn't play an important role. Eliko's short 
objection in line 87 can be understood in the sense that it is not worth mentioning 
their not paying attention to the wealth difference. In line 91 Ciaia evokes the 
shared joy of the past.

The detailing leads up to telling her mother (and the audience) that they 
were once sent out for beer (92) and to asking about the street where they lived; 
Eliko answers that question (Semmel street, 94). The question in line 93 goes 
along with a shift in address. Again and again in the recollections images of her 
mother and their social life are evoked. In line 98 Ciaia cites her own words. 
Then she informs the audience about her mother's laughing and giggling. In the 
middle of the line she shifts address again, reminding her mother of the
wonderful times they had together. Here, laughter occurs in the middle of a lamentation. For a moment the past good times win over the sad present moment.

Especially the details give the narrative a touch of intimacy that everybody present is allowed to share. Going into details enables Ciala, Eliko and the audience to refer to their memories and construct images of scenes: people in relation to one another and engaged in recognizable activities. Detailing evidently belongs to the strategies of creating involvement. It is implicitly evaluative. Ciala states explicitly that Eliko's family made no distinctions based on wealth. But she also implicitly shows the way Eliko's family ignored differences which are considered important by many people, not only in Georgia. In lamentation we find both implicit and explicit evaluations of persons, activities and situations. Tannen (1989) suggests that images are more convincing and easier to memorize than abstract propositions. Internal evaluation by images, details and reported dialogues is more persuasive than external evaluation. The dialogue with Eliko is especially rich in details.

In line 101 Eliko adds concrete details to the remembering. Ciala continues the evoked image of walking in the streets of Tbilisi. Now there is a lot of turn taking. In line 105 Ciala addresses her mother again. Tamara joins in the joy of memorizing. Lines 107 to 110 in particular show how naturally the deceased aunt Maro is integrated into the dialogue just by talking to her. Religious bonds to the departed are not merely asserted in Georgian dirges, but rather created in speech. The story of what they experienced together with Eliko and her mother continues as a dialogue in which many concrete scenes are evoked. In line 117 the evocation of memories shifts again to cries of grief addressed to her mother. Ciala thanks her mother, and Eliko as well, for everything they have done for her. The relational work which mourners perform is evident here. Ciala repeats the memory of wearing Eliko's dress and coat as a question to her mother. Eliko's crying shows her being moved by the memories she contributed to herself.

From line 123 onwards Ciala sums up what she already made clear: Her mother did everything for her. Tamara adds under which difficult conditions Mariam's activities took place.

As can be seen, laments play an important role for women's social life in Georgia. They act out their attachment to the deceased and to those living, create moving dramas to make everybody share similar feelings, thereby shaping morals and memory.
Concluding remarks

In contrast to Greece, Russia or Sicily, in rural Georgia laments still enjoy a high reputation. Like Greek lamentations (Alexiou 1974, Caraveli 1980, 1986, Seremetakis 1991), Georgian dirges are still seen as unofficial forms of religious expression. For one thing, during Communist rule the practice of religion was not in favor in the USSR and, for another, the currently very popular Georgian Orthodox Church assigns women only background positions and functions. In the unofficial folk religion, however, women have a very significant status as "artists of pain" and mediators between the living and the dead.

The genre is, however, tied to a high form of privacy. Women's verbal art is revealed in a private realm and emerges for a very sad reason. The most beautiful and creative formulations are lodged in the memory of the people as momentarily or as permanently as the occurrence of death itself.

The genre of lamentation shows the connection of emotion, religion, gender and culture. The above-mentioned affects and functions are all linked. Analyzing the culturally defined and socially situated activity of lamentation we may discover how the attribution of gendered emotion creates cultural knowledge about the desirability or undesirability of activities. "Doing Gender" (ethnomethodologically speaking) in the case of mourning rituals is multi-dimensional.

The gravity of the loss to the community is worked out in laments. The social hierarchy of a village is thereby reproduced in a lament's performance. However, as we saw, social hierarchy has not only to do with authority and power, but also with social popularity. Lamentation does not just reproduce the socioeconomical order of a community. To the contrary, it reflects much more the social influence of the deceased person. In a sense it can be seen as a counter discourse. For example, in praising qualities of a dead husband women communicate what they see as a good husband's acting. In lauding a mother's deeds they make them visible for everybody. The lamenters' moral standards are mostly in line with the common Georgian value orders. Insofar the dirges are far from being revolutionary. They just allow forms of renegotiating or correcting these values. For example, male alcoholism is practically quite accepted in everyday life. By praising men who did not drink wailers can take their chance to implicitly criticize certain behaviors.

I have presented an approach which combines text analysis and ethnography of communication. Understanding a culture depends on using all the data which the natives dispose of.

I would like to finish my article by citing the words of Dell Hymes (1981) about native American ethnopoetics, which I consider also true for my kind of work (especially in Germany, where linguistic anthropology is not an established academic field):

There is linguistics in this [book], and that will put some people off. 'Too technical,' they will say. Perhaps such people would be amused to know that many linguists will not regard the work as linguistics. 'Not theoretical,' they will say, meaning not part of a certain school of grammar. And many folklorists and anthropologists are likely to say, 'too linguistic' and 'too literary' both, whereas professors of literature are likely to say, 'anthropological' or 'folkloric,' not 'literature' at all. But there is no help for it. As with Beowulf and The tale of Genji, the material requires some understanding of the way of life. Within that way of life, it has in part a role that in English can only be called that of 'literature.' Within that way of life, and now, I hope, within others, it offers some of the rewards and joys of literature. And if linguistics is the study of language, not grammar alone, then the study of these materials adds to what is known about language. (1981:5)
Transcription conventions

% crying
(·) one hyphen indicates a short pause
(-----) two hyphens indicate a longer pause (less than half a second)
(0.5) pause of half a second; long pauses are counted in half seconds
(was that so?) indicates uncertain transcription
(?) points to an incomprehensible utterance
----- shows overlap; two simultaneous voices
= latching of an utterance by a speaker; no interruption
H audible exhalation
'H audible inhalation
? high rising intonation
: falling intonation
, ongoing (slightly rising) intonation ("more to come")
: indicates that preceding sound is elongated
(... ) crying
blabla fat print means louder and higher
((sits down)) non-verbal actions or comments

Appendix

Lamentation for Grandmother Mariam (Maro), Muxrani (Kartli) 1984

Aunt Tamari, relatives and neighbors of the deceased enter bringing flowers.

1 Tamari: rogor gamsadebulxar, maro deida, genacvale
how beautifully you have prepared yourself, Aunt Maro, genacvale
verara, tamara deida, arar ci ci rana kia, kalo,
no, Aunt Tamari, you don't know what you are doing, woman.

2 Ciala: mame gamsadebulxar, genacvale,
but you have prepared yourself, genacvale,

3 amdeni pattivisema, arar ci ci vikat, tamara deida, uime,
so much deference, I don't know what we could do, Aunt Tamara, oh my.

4 T: ['?]

5 C: gavel dre, gavel saramos, gavel dilas
everyday, every evening, every morning

6 T: \(\text{rogor gamsadebulxar, genacvale,} \)

7 C: ar vici ra gasamovno, genacvale

8 T: mame gamsadebulxar, genacvale
I do not know what pleasure I could give you, genacvale,

9 didi gyans xalxi xart
you come from a large clan

10 ik temogavdebat cvemi bigtvelib, oil kargebi gogave ica,
there you meet our cousins, all the good are there,

11 genacvale, cvemi dedac temogavdeba, ci ci kevili kali ligo
genacvale, you will also meet my mother there, you know how good natured she was

12 '\\(: es gavilebi qvelas ganaqile, agrermc temogvel, lona
share these flowers with everyone there, I implore you, you
\(\text{rogor gamsadebulxar, maro deida, arar ci ci rana kia, kalo,} \)
barebam gui mtkiva, rom am kai ivileba stoveb
but my heart aches that you are leaving your dear children

13 stoveb do midixer
you are leaving them and going away from them
Gender, emotion, and poetics in Georgian mourning rituals

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

(Near the head of the deceased is a small table; on it are arranged a candle, a tump of wheat and the photos of previously deceased relatives and neighbors, among them as well a photo of Tengiz, the joiner of Murat, who sang very well, played musical instruments, and died at age 50. It is customary that people also mourn these photos; people also used to mourn the deceased's garments, but now only photos are wept over. Aunt Tamara was also related to Tengiz; all the Tshuguanis were proud of Tengiz and liked him very much. Now Cila used to his photo and mourned for him. She thereafter reminds the relatives of him and attempts to tell them thereby that the others have also experienced the same or a still worse misfortune.)

God give you joy

Mother, how many favors your cousin has been doing for you, mother
dre da name ak kris tamara,

Tamara is here day and night.

During her illness this exhausted woman asked me if I could also

stay with you at night, child, I would stay with you (she said)
da me ar vulvedi

but I did not let her

Aunt Tamara, you are tired; woman, go home;
damanebe kalo tavi, ra ginda centan eradi metgi deda

leave me, woman, you do not need to stay (I said) mother

how can I, mother, pay back this honor, woman

I like your clan, mother, the Tshuguanishvili clan, mother,

I would like to say so many things to you

gayxare, tamara deda ten svivelba da svivelvelbe

may you be happy, Aunt Tamara, about your children and grandchildren
gyvqvishis

gagaksos rmertma

God give you joy

deda ramdon pativak gcwms sem bigavshi, deda

Mother, how many favors your cousin has been doing for you, mother
dre da name ak kris tamara,

Tamara is here day and night.

dedap amade akvati, rom favelka mixvoda es darli dakhanku kal

during mother's illness this exhausted woman asked me if I could also

stay with you at night, child, I would stay with you (she said)
da me ar vulvedi

but I did not let her

Aunt Tamara, you are tired; woman, go home;
damanebe kalo tavi, ra ginda centan eradi metgi deda

leave me, woman, you do not need to stay (I said) mother

how can I, mother, pay back this honor, woman

I like your clan, mother, the Tshuguanishvili clan, mother,
tried to learn better than the others. Tengiz.

genaclale, tregig, oktro eqi

my dear, good soul, Tengiz, you were gold

cyvanis, kargi, genebabani eqvi, qvelaperi. kargi eqvi

you were wise, good, understanding, you were good at everything

genebabani eqvi da sangebale da qvelaperen,
had an understanding and tactful and everything.

Tengiz, let me bear your suffering, why are you not alive now, why

rario coxclai ara dar ar gugneb, tregig, lemi 'erime

why are you not alive so that you could roar, Tengiz,

let me bear your suffering

Tengiz, genacvale, your death, Vanna's death, Lena's death.

heqari eqvi baxo qelbo, baxo qelbo, baxo qelbo

sugvelas sikvdilama, leemi karis sikvdilama ar imokmeda dedacemis guize?

all your deaths, has the death of my husband left no traces in my mother's heart?

ar imokmeda?

has not affected her?

naalaed pativa gemdai, deda, leemi karni?
did my husband respect you less, mother, my husband?

raro uqvarda, roger uqvarda leemi karnis

how much, how much my husband liked you

iwal, pativi eci dedai, pativi eci

Clllio, do 'something good for mother, do 'something good for her

vetgodsi, kaeo, raxi pativi vic?

then I said to him, man, what could I still do for her

pativi eci, ar momavendada, rom carnovcoda, eti cull momavendab
ar momavendada

do something good for her, he did not give me a moment's rest when

mother visited es

pativi eci, geneacvale

do something good for her, geneacvale

65: C:

da cocixi gocali, dedai da cocixi gocali, if he was alive now, mother, if he was alive now,

ra pativcemonad sherbo, deda, vinnas daclida, genacvale, deda, rainas

he would have done everything for you, mommy, would he have had

someone else do that, mother?

you pitted me, mother, because I was unhappy, did not you

rimomin goccelbide, upatonro om vqvar, deda:

because I was unhappy, I had no one to care for me, mother

what a husband I have lost, mother. for twelve years I have worn mourning
dress

moct, sagotrade, ekavare, melrobodenen

mother, I should put aside my mourning dress, so they said to me

leni qelbo, baxo qelbo, baxo qelbo, baxo qelbo

ceni qul araperi xarxai, raxo vanxor dometi, deda

nothing can bring cheer to my heart, why should I cast aside my mourning
dress. (I replied, mother)

ar daxmi, xoxa gaxvar, me vitoq gavisidum metbi

nothing cheers me, but if I should feel happy again, I will myself cast aside

my mourning dress (I said)

ar gaxvar, deda, exda, geneacvale%

now, could I become happy, mother, now, genacvale

(?)

24):

deda, leemi 'erime, deda, deda, deda,

Mother. I should take on the burden of your suffering, mother, mother, mother,

we have no father, she was mother, she was father to us

arapers ar gakvelba, tavisi gatireveli jam

she wanted us to lack nothing, with her limited strength

koebag gaxvaradga eq, baxo gaxvaradga eq, she would cut off her own flesh for us so that we would not go hungry
one can certainly get through here, there is enough space, you can get through

tere o elikoni kargi icsi, ho eliko?
Eliko also knows that well, isn't that so, Eliko?
we learned together, lived together, me and Eliko
I came from a poor family, it was hard for us
Eliko came from a well-to-do family, pampered, from a rich family

me aqitdli ojaxi an igan vaga, goviarda

what is there to hide here, Eliko,
her mother and my mother always came to visit us together
what laughter, Eliko, those were times, those were times when they sent us out (to get this and that)

Eliko also knows that well, isn't that so, Eliko?
we learned together, lived together, me and Eliko
I came from a poor family, it was hard for us
Eliko came from a well-to-do family, pampered, from a rich family

we lived in one room

we lived together all our lives, mother

we went to Lenin Square on foot wearing house slippers

all the way along Rustaveli we held hands, and you were also happy.

Gender, emotion, and poetics in Georgian mourning rituals

Oh, God, mother, you always liked to laugh, I must make people laugh

you deserved that your bellies will burst, I said, if you drink so much beer.

we went to Lenin Square on foot wearing house slippers

all the way along Rustaveli we held hands, and you were also happy.

we lived together all our lives, mother

you did not feel the difficulties,

and you were children

they came, if they had something, brought it to us

they left us money for the rent
114. ?

115

dagavardadben: xolme, evan grvcvrdadot, nven esem: gakhetebden
we forgot that once, but ran out of the house and they were forced to do
everything

dagavardadben: xolne
when we came back everything was already prepared for us
dagavardadben: xolne%
everything was already prepared for us

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Notes

* I am grateful to Elza Gabedava for help with the Georgian language and her continuing co-
work.

1. See Mills (1991) and Grima (1991) on a similar role of suffering in women's performance
in South Asian folklore.
2. See Kyratzi and Cahill in this volume.
3. "Mortila" means female wails, "mortilash" is plural.
4. Drinking toasts also demand emotion work and emotional performance by men, as is
described in Kothoff (1995b), but wailing is not a component of this work. Toasts are often
delivered in a pathetic keying.
5. This functional ascription is found throughout the rich literature on mourning rituals
6. In order to maintain contact with the dead, food is placed on graves. The people of
Georgia bring food and drink to their dead on all religious holidays; in Eastern regions they
bring xaslama, a porridge made from cooked veal and mutton. The dead receive forty days'
provisions for their journey into the afterlife: that is, they are customarily brought a plate of
food on the second, seventh, and fortieth days, and also a year after death. Wine is poured
over the grave. In addition, mourners carry a burning candle. Later, there is at least one
commemorative day per year.
7. I taught German language and linguistics for six semesters as a lecturer of the German
to Germany with the intention of researching ritual communication. The unusually rich
variety of oral poetic rituals became accessible to me only gradually (Kothoff 1993, 1995a,b).
Later, I integrated my interests into research projects.
8. Every region in the Caucasus has its own ritual peculiarities (Cocagne 1991, Nakašège
1993, Kothoff 2000a). Thus, e.g., in Xevsretia horses are integrated into the burial ritual. A
horse is decorated (—equipped for the journey) and carries all the food that the deceased
person is given in the grave (for use on the coming journey in the afterlife). The deceased is
supposed to use the horse in the hereafter. After the burial the horse is given to a close
relative. The latter may only use the horse for religious and must give it dignified treatment,
since it is in the religious belief already serving in the hereafter. Lamenters also cry over a
carpet which holds the clothes of the deceased.

Nakašège (1993) differentiates four forms of lamentation for Xevsretia: three forms of
lamentation with words and one without words. The forms with words are classified as xazilat
šrili (wailing with shouting), dativš šrili (wailing with reason) and xmit šrili (wailing
with voice). Xmit šrili is the most widespread form, the one dealt with in this article. Davtš šrili
consists mainly of reproaches to the deceased for having left their relatives. They are sung
especially in the first hours after the death. Xazilat šrili is only expressed by the sisters of the
deceased.

Each region has its own norms for dressing the deceased and its own semiotics of
culinary. Meat is forbidden during the period of mourning in many regions and is likewise
not offered in the “keksi,” the mourning meal. Each region is, on the one hand, convinced
that its way of treating the dead is superior to the customary forms of other regions, on the
hand, multicultural Georgia practices great tolerance in accepting others' customs.
Regional identity is extremely strong in Georgia. Even in Tbilisi a person who already belongs to the second generation living there is still introduced as a Mingrelian or a Kajetian. In laments the deceased person's region of origin is constantly referred to.

It is beyond the scope of this article to go into the many peculiarities of the Georgian regions. It will only be maintained that mourning rituals are viewed as a central element of regional identity, which is thereby confirmed.

9. See, e.g., Kotthoff (1995 a, b) for other Georgian ethnopoetic genres which communicate moral values.

10. Bergmann/Luckmann (1994) and Gunther/Knoblauch (1995) define genres as communicative forms with a high degree of stability. Members of societies develop recurrent orientations to communicative patterns which can lead to speech genres. Stabilized communicative genres which contain evaluative judgments about people and human activities are considered genres of moral communication. Morals are understood in Durkheim's sense (1915) as what people do for the community and has a community-oriented meaning which can be evaluated according to the criteria of good and evil.

11. According to Stubbe these forms of self-flagellation are found in many cultures. The practice of savagely lacerating one's face, likewise mentioned in Stubbe's study, is also found in Georgia.

12. In November 1995 a symposium was held at the University of Paderborn on the topic of "The Gender of Gestures - Grief"(the articles are edited by Gisela Ecker 1999). The symposium also confirmed that there is a gender-specific division of labor in rites, images, symbols and art representations of grief (=female).

13. Caraveli (1965) describes a similar function for Greek lamentations.

14. She alludes to the common metaphors of travelling. She means: prepared for the long journey into the afterlife.

15. "Ume" or "vaime" is an interjection of pain.

16. She means that she will stay in contact with her children.

17. In Georgian it is possible, by adding an "o" to the last word in a phrase, to indicate that speech is being quoted. Quoting in the second or third person is marked by this morpheme.

18. Quotations in the first person are marked with "melki".

19. What is meant is that they should both watch over Mariah at night during her illness.

20. Literally the phrase means "pay honor to mother," in practice it means that she should do something for her mother.

21. "By emotion work" I refer to the act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling. To 'work on' an emotion or feeling is, for our purposes, the same as 'to manage' an emotion or to do 'deep acting' (Hochschild 1979:561). Hochschild (1979:558) speaks of "deep acting" and "surface acting" in regard to "emotion work." Both are subject to sociocultural rules and gender. 'Surface acting' and 'deep acting' are combined in lamentation.

22. See also van Gennep (1960), Turner (1969), Werlen (1984) and Senft (1987) on rituality. There are, of course, many different positions on what constitutes rituality, a discussion of this would exceed the scope of this article.

23. We also taped some cross-cultural lamentations. See for the management of regional style differences in Georgian wailing Kotthoff 2000a.

24. Wiensdol (1971) discusses excellence and originality as general evaluative criteria for poetic texts.

25. Recorded by Nina Maxarashvili who kindly provided us with the cassette.

26. Important metaphor for crying.

27. She means herself; formula.

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