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Sophie Elizabeth Raudnitz

Tracing the establishment of political society:
remembering and forgetting in ancient Greek
literature

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Classical Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social
Sciences

The Open University

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Abstract

This thesis explores the connection between memory and the formation of political society in ancient Greek literature. It is grounded in the notion that memory is a political process: its narratives are shaped by the social and political groups to which we belong. In turn, what and how we remember plays a role in shaping and reshaping those same groups.

The thesis examines three 'memory texts': the *Odyssey*, which contains a moment in which forgetting is tied explicitly to political progress; the *Trojan Women*, a play driven by the urge to remember and memorialise as a way of trying to retain political identity; and the *Theaetetus*, which not only contains the first known attempt to create a model of memory but also 'remembers' the *Apology*. The texts are also united by the theme of the law court which runs through all three in the form of a metaphor, an *agōn* and an actual law court trial. This provides an opportunity to examine testimony as the communication of memory in a political context.

The thesis proposes that an approach informed by the theory of cultural, collective and traumatic memory opens new avenues not only for the analysis of these classical texts but also for considering their cultural and political impact at the time of their creation or performance. It also suggests that such an analysis offers a productive alternative to the traditional, individual-focused study of trauma in literature. It finds that while, in certain ways, memory supports the texts' dominant or normative narratives, it also provides ways to challenge them. This process of watching or reading with memory is constitutive of skills relating to citizenship and is provocative of debate about the norms and values of society.

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As I sit down to write these acknowledgements, after the maelstrom of the last few weeks of frantic editing and alternating elation and despair, I am reminded that for the most part, the experience of researching and writing this thesis has been one of absolute joy. I feel very lucky to have had the chance to do it and for this reason, my first thanks go to the Open University, and to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences in particular, who funded the project and made it possible for me.

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Introduction

Thesis overview

This thesis explores the connection between memory and political society in ancient Greek literature. It is grounded in the notion that memory is a political process, conditioned by the societies in which we live and possessing an affective power which, in turn, shapes—or ‘re-members’—those same societies. Informed by a range of theory about cultural, collective and traumatic memory and its expression as testimony, this thesis investigates the ways in which texts across three genres represent the process of memory, examining the things which characters or groups remember and forget and the manner in which they do so. It also explores the role of the reader’s or audience’s memory in textual interpretation: the effect of evoking memories of other texts or particular historical moments and the ways in which the process of remembering a text might prompt re-evaluations, not only of the text in question, but also of the values or norms which underlie the society in which it is performed or read.

To date, the use of Memory Studies within Classics has largely been limited to single genres or to attempts to understand a particular aspect of history or an ancient mind-set. This thesis differentiates itself by looking at memory across the genres of epic, tragedy and philosophy. The texts studied are Homer’s *Odyssey*, Euripides’ *Trojan Women* and Plato’s *Theaetetus* and these particular texts were selected because of the importance of memory within them. The *Odyssey* contains a moment in which forgetting is tied explicitly to political progress; the *Trojan Women* is a play driven by the urge to remember and memorialise as a way of trying to retain political identity; and the *Theaetetus* contains the first known attempt to create a model of memory. The texts are also united by the theme of the law court which runs through all three in the form of a metaphor in the *Odyssey*, an *agōn* in the *Trojan Women* and an actual law court trial in the *Theaetetus*’ allusions to the *Apology*. This theme provides the opportunity to examine testimony as an expression or communication of memory in a political context. The thesis approaches the texts in chronological order so as to be able to demonstrate more easily the resonances of earlier texts within the later ones but it resists the temptation to look for an evolving political consciousness or sophistication.

Memory is much more than a literary theme running through these texts. This thesis sees the politically affective and effective power of memory in literature. The *Odyssey*, the

Trojan Women and the *Theaetetus* are not just 'memory texts', that is texts which contain memories or are about memory. The ways in which memory is represented within them and the way in which the audience's memories become part of the interpretive process, opens new avenues not only for the analysis of these classical texts but also for their cultural and political impact at the time of their creation or performance. In addition, the cross-genre approach taken here and the fact that the thesis brings together texts which are not usually studied alongside each other, is equally enlightening, both about memory and about genre. The thesis finds many continuities in the ways in which texts 'remember' each other and the world around them, and in the ways in which they evoke memory in order to provoke political reflection or debate. The study of memory also serves to elucidate their differences which occur around audiences and performance contexts.

The *Odyssey* chapter uses the metaphor of a law court trial as a useful lens through which to examine the function of memory in the societies of its internal and external audiences. According to this model, the memories expressed in the poem by those such as Menelaus, Nestor, the suitors and Odysseus himself can be viewed as legal testimony and are examined alongside modern and ancient theories of the same. In its examination of who is allowed to give testimony and in what context they are allowed to do so, the chapter explores the various forms by which political power is established in the society of the poem. In analysing the ways in which the audience is invited to view the text's various testimonies and the things which the audience is prompted to remember, the chapter also explores the politically affective and effective power of the poem in performance. Paradoxically, it sees memory as a force which is both paralysing and motivating and finds that memory both reinforces and undermines the normative thrust of the epic.

The *Trojan Women* chapter explores the way in which Hecuba draws on tropes of traumatic testimony. She both acts out and performs traumatic tropes in order to orchestrate a collective response from her internal audience—the chorus—and her external audience in the theatre, as she works to build a memorial narrative to Troy's blameless suffering. The law court theme arises again in the chapter's analysis of the *agōn* which offers a new slant on a well-worn area of scholarly discussion. It sees the *agōn* in the context of the play as a whole and examines its use of conventional fifth century forensic narratives and structures in its study of the unsettling effect of

empathising with Hecuba here and throughout the play. In this chapter, the evocation of audience memory exposes the mechanisms by which Hecuba's emotive narratives gain political traction in the play. By extension, the study of memory and its role in challenging such dominant narratives provokes questions in the audience about their own juridical and political responses to emotive speech in a *polis* constructed on the platform of agonistic speech.

The final chapter frames the *Theaetetus* with Plato's earlier text, the *Apology*. The *Theaetetus* is not an overtly political text, discussing as it does, the nature of knowledge, and yet the memory of the *Apology*—evoked by the awareness that Socrates goes straight from *Theaetetus* to the law court to answer Miletus' charges against him—suffuses the text and affects our reading. Given that this text shows Socrates at the mercy of a powerful institution of the Athenian democratic state, discussing the nature of his own citizenship, the colour that this memory lends to the *Theaetetus* is, inevitably, political. Memory, therefore, adds a political nuance to the chapter's interpretation of the *Theaetetus* but it is also part of the political-philosophical education which, the chapter suggests, is central to Plato's philosophical mission. Whereas the previous chapters see memory as serving to question the texts' dominant narratives, the 'dominant narrative' from Plato's *Theaetetus* is missing or, at least, highly contentious, a fact underscored by the dialogue's ending in *aporia*. In this chapter, a study of the Wax Tablet passage—one itself infused with memories of poetry—suggests the extent to which an interpretation of Plato's text and, indeed, the political philosophy which informs it, might be affected by a tension between remembering and forgetting in the mind of the reader. A process of reading with memory encourages the reader to construct that meaningful narrative for her/himself.

The law court, then, not only provides thematic unity for the thesis but also serves to focus attention on testimony as the means by which memory is communicated. Each chapter will explore the political ways in which testimony is mediated in the texts; the ways that the texts authorise or discredit certain testimonies and the possible reasons for doing so; and the ways that the texts draw attention to the political mechanisms involved not only in remembering and giving testimony to those memories, but also in forgetting and keeping silent. In this way, the thesis will also reflect on the political effect of reading or watching the performance of these texts. The rest of this Introduction will, therefore,

discuss the theory of memory, testimony and politics in order to define these terms as I will use them in the thesis as a whole.

What is memory and what is politics?

This section focuses on drawing out the political nature of memory and for this reason, it makes sense to begin with a short explanation of the ways in which this thesis understands 'politics.' Politics is, as Dean Hammer suggests, the activities and ideologies by which society seeks to determine and implement 'community organisation.'¹ In light of this, it is still possible to speak of 'politics' in connection with the pre- or proto-political societies of the Homeric epics.² In this way I hope to avoid the restrictive definition of 'political' as relating to formal institutions of the *polis*, an approach favoured by, for example, Mogens Hansen.³ Such an approach would rely on the *polis*-centric approach to Greek history criticised by Kōstas Vlassopoulos, as a narrative influenced by nineteenth- and twentieth-century nationalism and Western prejudice.⁴ This thesis is also aligned with Nicole Loraux's broader definition of politics as 'the acknowledgement of conflict in society.' According to this, politics is the way that society institutionalises and manages a force which constantly threatens to erupt and destabilise the city.⁵

However, unlike Hammer, who sees political activity as being divorced from political institutions, this thesis is aligned with Giddens' approach to the structuration of political institutions drawn on by Elton Barker, which holds that political activity reproduces the very structures that engender it: in reading or listening to literary political debate then, 'the reader or audience experiences the process of going through competing arguments, which has the effect of shaping responses to the events: debate becomes internalized. In turn, however, by that very process of internalizing competing arguments, the audience or reader *realises* the institution of debate within the text.'⁶ This is particularly the case when, as in all three texts discussed here, the textual institution is shown to be inadequate in itself.

¹ Hammer (2007), p. 26.

² For epic communities as proto-political see Nagy (1979), p. 7.

³ Hansen (2014), pp. 379-403.

⁴ Vlassopoulos (2007).

⁵ Loraux (2002), p. 21.

⁶ Barker (2009), p. 16, drawing on Foucault and Giddens; Giddens (1984).

The following discussion examines the Wax Tablet passage from Plato's *Theaetetus* alongside other short passages from ancient texts in order to define memory as understood in the contexts of ancient literature. As part of this discussion, it will incorporate modern memory and testimony theory to elucidate the aspects of memory which will be important to this thesis. It will draw on a passage from the *Iliad* in its discussion of the politically affective nature of memory, as related to testimony and empathy and it will use an extract from the *Odyssey* to examine the debates around the politics of collective and cultural memory and to define how these terms are understood in this thesis. In this way, the discussion moves by stages from an exploration of memory as recall, through an analysis of memory as creative, to consider the relationship between memory and history. It concludes by exploring the ways in which memory can be understood as a force, at once emotionally affective and politically powerful.

The Wax Tablet: a model for memory

Plato's Wax Tablet image from the *Theaetetus* is a model for memory and is the one widely adopted over the centuries to describe how memory works. Plato's Socrates explains that each person has a wax tablet in the soul,

Δῶρον τοίνυν αὐτὸ φῶμεν εἶναι τῆς τῶν Μουσῶν μητρὸς Μνημοσύνης, καὶ ἐς τοῦτο, ὃ τι ἄν ἴδωμεν ἢ ἀκούσωμεν ἢ αὐτοὶ ἐννοήσωμεν ὑπέχοντας αὐτὸ ταῖς αἰσθήσεσι καὶ ἐννοίαις, ἀποτυποῦσθαι, ὥσπερ δακτυλίων σημεῖα ἐνσημαινομένους.⁷

Let us say, therefore, that this [tablet] is a gift from Mnemosyne [Memory], mother of the Muses, and whatever we wish to remember from the things we see or hear or which we have in our thoughts, we hold the wax under our perceptions and thoughts and impress them onto it, as if making impressions from signet rings...

For the most part, this is a highly functional model. Thoughts and impressions are imprinted onto the wax tablet and memory is the process of recalling those imprints and matching them to items in the real world.

⁷ Pl. *Tht.* 191d. All quotations from Pl. *Tht* are from Duke et al (1995); translations are a synthesis of Levett, revised by Burnyeat (1992) and Rowe (2015) and have been adapted by me.

As I will explore later, Plato's Socrates rejects this model of memory because it fails to account for abstract thought, but the image took hold in the minds of those who followed him. It is this model which Aristotle develops in *On Memory and Recollection*. According to him, a stimulus (*κίνησις*) produced an impression (*ἐνσημαίνω*) in the soul or mind (*ψυχῆ*), a sort of likeness of the perception (*αἰσθήνματος*). Like Plato, he even compares this impression, to the process of sealing with signet rings (*καθάπερ οἱ σφραφίζόμενοι τοῖς δακτυλίοις*).⁸

The Wax Tablet is at the heart, too, of Cicero's story of Simonides of Ceos and the burgeoning interest in 'memory palaces' and *ars memoriae* which it inspired and which continued through the medieval period and, indeed into the BBC's *Sherlock*.⁹ According to Cicero's story (which may well date from earlier), Simonides was present at a banquet and while he stepped outside, the roof of the palace collapsed, killing all within. Simonides was able to recollect the pattern of the palace and where each person had been dining and in this way, was able to identify the bodies. This suggested to him that:

*Itaque iis, qui hanc partem ingenii exercerent, locos esse capiendos et ea, quae memoria tenere vellent, effingenda animo atque in iis locis collocanda ... res autem ipsas rerum effigies notaret atque ut locis pro cera simalcris pro litteris uteremur.*¹⁰

persons desiring to train this faculty must select localities and form mental images of the facts they wish to remember and store those images in the localities, with the result that the arrangement of the localities will preserve the order of the facts ... and we shall employ the localities and images respectively **as a wax writing tablet and the letters written on it.**

It is, therefore, the aspect of memory as recall, encapsulated by the Wax Tablet metaphor, which seemed most relevant and useful to those in the political-philosophical tradition who followed Plato.

The influence of Plato's image can also be felt outside of that tradition, as late as Freud and it survives in modern discourse, notably in the writing of Jacques Derrida through its Freudian interpretation.¹¹ Freud famously adapted the wax tablet for his model of

⁸ Arist. *Mem.* 450a32-450b1.

⁹ Sherlock's mind palace is a feature of several episodes but was first mentioned in "The Hounds of Baskerville" (2012).

¹⁰ Cic. *De or.* 2.86.354, trans. Sutton and Rackham (1942).

¹¹ In e.g. Derrida (1972).

memory: the 'Mystic Writing Pad.'¹² These 'pads' existed at the time, as they do in a similar form now. They were comprised of a slab of dark brown resin or wax topped with two transparent sheets which could be detached from each other except from at the ends. The upper layer was celluloid; the lower, translucent waxed paper. One could write on the celluloid layer with a pointed stylus which made depressions and marked the wax paper beneath but one could then destroy what had been written by raising the double covering sheet from the wax slab. According to this model of memory, the celluloid acts as a kind of protective layer for the mind, which might be 'crumpled or torn' if written on directly. The paper is the level of the mind which actually receives the stimuli but the wax slab beneath is the memory which retains the impression even after the sheets have been lifted. The principle of the retrieval method laid out by Plato remains unchanged, down to the imagery by which it is described.

However, what is perhaps more significant to this thesis and, in an unacknowledged way, to these later studies of the psychological workings of memory, is the fact that Plato's Socrates describes the Wax Tablet as a 'gift of Mnemosyne, mother of the Muses.' As I will suggest in the Plato chapter, this is an integral part of how the Wax Tablet passage should be read. In order to explore the implications of associating memory with Mnemosyne and her daughters, it is useful to look at the description of Mnemosyne in Hesiod's *Theogony*.

The *Theogony* tells us that the goddess Mnemosyne, her name the ancient Greek word for memory, encompassed not just remembering but also forgetting. To an extent the Wax Tablet model does too, in a functional way, in that Plato's Socrates tells us that what is not imprinted properly will be forgotten. But the Hesiodic image operates very differently because of its poetic dimension. The *Theogony*'s image of memory is bound up with poetic creation and effect. Mnemosyne is said to offer 'forgetfulness of evils and relief from anxieties' (*λησμοσύνην τε κακῶν ἄμπαυμά τε μερμηράων*).¹³ Her daughters, the Muses, were said by Hesiod to inspire others with this gift. Not only did they tell the poets 'of what is and what will be and what was before' (*εἴρουσαι τὰ τ'έόντα τὰ τ'έσσόμενα πρό τ'έόντα*) but their gift had the power to transform or lull the painful memories of his listeners:

¹² Freud (1925) in Strachey (1991).

¹³ Hes. *Theog.* 53-55. All quotations from the *Theogony* are from West (1966); trans. West (1988).

εἰ γὰρ τις καὶ πένθος ἔχων νεοκηδέϊ θυμῷ
ἄζηται κραδίην ἀκαχήμενος, αὐτὰρ ἀοιδὸς
Μουσῶν θεράπων κλειῖα προτέρων ἀνθρώπων
ὑμνήσει μάκαράς τε θεοῦς οἳ Ὀλυμπον ἔχουσιν,
αἴψ' ὄ γε δυσφροσυνέων ἐπιλήθεται οὐδέ τι κηδέων
μέμνηται· ταχέως δὲ παρέτραπε δῶρα θεῶν.¹⁴

Even if someone who has unhappiness in his newly anguished spirit is parched in his heart with grieving, yet when a poet, servant of the Muses, sings of the glorious deeds of people of old and the blessed gods who possess Olympus, he forgets his sorrows at once and does not remember his anguish at all; for quickly the gifts of the goddesses have turned it aside.

In this way, Mnemosyne, the Muses and the poets are seen to have active powers over memory, with its twin aspects of remembering and forgetting.

There are three ideas to be drawn out here with reference to modern memory theory and the way it is conceived and used in this thesis. The first is that the Muses inspire the poet to tell his tale but, though the poet sometimes calls on the Muse to tell him the story accurately, it was not only completely accepted but even expected that these mythical stories would be told differently by different poets at different times.¹⁵ This divinely inspired 'memory' was the foundation of poetic creation and, as an extreme example, permitted Euripides to write his version of the Trojan War in which the 'Helen' over whom they fought was only an *eidōlon*, a shadow created by Zeus. The second is that the concept of memory unites 'what is and what will be and what was before.' It brings the past and the future into the present, disrupting the perception of time as a linear progression. The third is that the memories inspired by the Muses have an affective power on the listener. In this passage from the *Theogony*, the listener is made to forget his anxieties: his emotional state is changed by the power of this memory. As this thesis will show repeatedly, this emotionally affecting nature of memory has political

¹⁴ Hes. *Theog.* 98-103.

¹⁵ For the poet calling on the Muse for an accurate account see e.g. the prelude to the Catalogue of Ships at *Il.* 2.484-86, where the narrator also says that while the Muses 'know' (*οἶδα*) all things, we only 'hear' (*ἀκούω*) rumours or reports (*κλέος*). All citations from the *Iliad* are taken from West (1998).

ramifications. The following subsections will explore these three themes using modern memory theory to draw out the implications of memory words in ancient sources.

i) The 'gift of Mnemosyne,' part 1: memory as creative inspiration

In part, the first idea—that memory is a kind of inspiration—is relevant to this thesis because of the way in which *mimnēsko* ('I remember') and its associated terms are used in epic. In the *Iliad*, by far its most frequent use is in phrases such as 'remember our valour' (*μνήσασθε δὲ θούριδος ἀλκῆς*)¹⁶ or 'remembering his warcraft' (*μνήσαντο δὲ χάρμης*).¹⁷ In these phrases, it is not simply that the warrior remembers or needs to remember how to fight but that the memory is performative: with the memory of valour, the warrior is inspired and infused with valour. This will be important in my *Odyssey* chapter where Telemachus' memory of his father infuses him with some, at least, of his father's attributes and inspires him to actively seek out news of Odysseus.

Alongside this, the idea of memory as creative, or perhaps re-creative, represents a dominant strand in psychological memory theory in the twentieth century. From the 1960s to the 1980s, Ulric Neisser published several key works which reacted against the Platonic model of memory-as-retrieval which had dominated psychological memory studies until this point. He posited the idea that individuals remember according to social cues and that because of this, memory is an unstable entity.¹⁸ It is not the recall of a permanent 'item' fixed in the storage of the mind, but a process according to which experience or observation is recreated in line with social factors pertaining at the time. In his 1981 work, *John Dean's Memory: a case study*, for example, he posited the idea of 'repisodic' memory, a process by which the brain condenses a repeated series of events into a single memory.¹⁹

Endel Tulving, working around the same time as Neisser, argued that remembering is not as radically reconstructivist as Neisser suggested but rather that it is based on 'ecphory.' 'Ecphory' is the synthesis of the 'engram'—a memory trace stored in the brain—and the retrieval cue, or the context in which something is recalled. In this way, he does not

¹⁶ E.g. *Il.* 6.112.

¹⁷ E.g. *Il.* 8.252.

¹⁸ Neisser (1967), (1976) and (1981).

¹⁹ Neisser (1981).

completely negate the idea of memory-as-retrieval but unites the idea of the memory as a storage facility with the notion that its recall is conditioned by the 'retrieval cue.' This cue, as Neisser suggested, is likely to be dependent on social factors. Within 'episodic memory'—the kind of memory associated with recalling the events of our lives—he argues that memories are converted into narrative.²⁰ Experiences, and the memories which recall them, do not naturally form narratives but must be consciously shaped and edited to give meaning in the social context of their recall.²¹ In this way, one of the political dimensions of memory begins to emerge: if politics shapes society (and vice versa), then the factors which shape the re-creation of memory are also political. As I discuss below,²² this becomes still more interesting when characters remember together as a group, not simply reconstructing the past in the present but also reshaping the political group in the process.

This cognitive psychology of memory informs Elizabeth Minchin's recent study of epic verse in which she uses memory theory to invigorate the debate surrounding epic composition.²³ She positions herself in the tradition of Parry and Lord who offered the theory that in oral composition, the poet is heavily reliant on oral formulae rather than individual creativity.²⁴ In addition, she incorporates cognitive psychology (of Tulving, in particular) and socio-linguistic theory in order to study the ways in which memory aids and enhances the composition of Homeric verse and the ways in which narrative can mimic memory and make itself more memorable for both poet and audience.²⁵ In this, she examines the interaction of storyteller, audience and text and looks at how the poet manipulates 'memorability' in the act of creation for maximum mnemonic effect.

The synthesis of storyteller, audience and text is so important for this thesis but I pick up where Minchin leaves off. Her suggestion that material objects in narrative act as 'interpretive cues' for the audience, evoking memories which tell us about the owner and her/his past, is indicative of the way in which memory plays a key role in the interpretive process of the audience, a central idea in this thesis.²⁶ What is more important here, though, is the destabilisation of memory—its 'truth' dependent on who is remembering

²⁰ Tulving and Thompson (1973). See also Erll (2011), pp. 84-87 and Erll (2009), pp. 212-27.

²¹ This is the subject of White (1987), pp. 1-25.

²² See this thesis, 'Collective memory, politics, and the end of the *Odyssey*,' pp. 38-47.

²³ Minchin (2001).

²⁴ See, for example, Thomas (1992), pp. 29-36.

²⁵ Minchin (2001), her approach explored in the Introduction.

²⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 100-28.

and in what context—and the idea that memory becomes narrative as soon as it is articulated, either internally or externally.

The re-creative aspect to memory—the destabilisation of its truth—is also a facet of much memory theory in the field of cultural studies. Here, the focus is, predictably, not so much on the psychological process by which we remember, but on the way in which ‘the past is mediated by, rather than directly reflected in personal memory.’²⁷ This is not simply a matter of partiality or subjectivity but rather one of questioning the assumption that memory can ever be ‘an inner representation of the past’, that the past is ever something which happens ‘outside’ of ourselves.²⁸ Instead, memory always mediates the past and is itself mediated by culture, making it doubly unstable.

This idea becomes particularly interesting when thinking about, for example, genre and performance contexts, especially of epic and tragedy. In epic poetry, memory is mediated by a form, according to which culturally-understood features generate meaning above and beyond the ‘written’ words.²⁹ As I will discuss in Chapter 1, John Miles Foley, for example, explores the oral formulae around characters’ names, such as ‘swift-footed Achilles.’³⁰ These not only fit the metre of the lines, filling appropriate gaps, but also suggest facets to the characters from the mythic tradition other than those which are being demonstrated at the given moment of the story. Furthermore, when Homeric poetry was performed as part of the Panathenaea festival in fifth century BC Athens, its meaning changed from that which might be understood at a private or non-civic occasion. In this fifth-century Athenian context, memory was further mediated by the festival and all of its own civic and cultural resonances. This idea grounds my chapters on the *Odyssey* and the *Trojan Women*.

ii) *The ‘gift of Mnemosyne,’ part 2: memory vs history*

In the previous subsection, I suggested that the process of memory is the means by which the past is mediated and given meaning in the present. This notion feeds into the second idea introduced by Plato’s concept of memory as ‘a gift from Mnemosyne’: that memory

²⁷ Radstone (2005), p. 135.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 135.

²⁹ This is memory as myth; see pp. 45-47.

³⁰ Foley (1991).

'folds' time, disrupting the notion of time's linear progression. In order to explore this idea further, it is useful to think about the ways in which memory might be differentiated from history. The question of this differentiation is contentious but setting out the terms of the debate nonetheless helps to elucidate some of the key ideas.

History and memory have much in common. Like memory, 'written history is a constructive, narrative process, deeply imbued with—often unacknowledged—patterns of culture and ideology.'³¹ Arguably, the difference between memory and history is more to do with how it is narrativised and how it is received than what it actually 'is.' Radstone describes memory as tending to 'invite empathy' where traditional historiography 'invites cooler and more detached reading and writing.'³² History, like memory, is mediated in the present but memory is perceived as being 'live and active', especially while those who remember are still alive. Fundamentally for this discussion of temporality, however, history is commonly understood as 'the unfolding of events in broadly linear fashion, and historiography has been shaped by the linearity and the cause-and-effect structure of realist narrative.'³³ Voluntary memory can act in such a way, causing us to make rational decisions based on our past successes or mistakes. Involuntary memory, though, disrupts such linearity, with memories bursting into the present moment in Proustian fashion and threatening to disrupt our narratives.

Within the field of Classics, Jonas Grethlein has sought to redefine the study of memory to incorporate an understanding of temporality drawn from the work of Reinhart Koselleck and Hans-Georg Gadamer. His analysis, which ranges from epinician poetry, elegy and tragedy to oratory and historiography, suggests that temporality is based on contingency. This offers a way of framing actions, chance and results in a tension with expectations and experience. Past experience provides an expectation for present results and future action, borne out, for example, by traditions, which establish continuity, or by exempla, which juxtapose past and present, providing parallels and giving guidance.³⁴ In this way, he says, the ancient Greeks used memory to bridge the gap between past and present.

³¹ Erll (2011), p. 39.

³² Radstone (2005), pp. 138-9. For further discussion of empathy see pp. 35-38.

³³ Ibid, p. 138.

³⁴ Grethlein (2010), pp. 6-11.

Up to a point, Grethlein's theory about the ways in which the past defines and legitimises communities, or how 'present interests' prompt characters, authors or poets to turn to the past, is entirely consistent with the approach to political memory outlined above. As my analysis of the *Trojan Women* in Chapter 2 will show, Hecuba's individual identity in the present is defined by what she no longer is and no longer has. She contrasts past with present and future and, in this process, we see the disjointedness of past and future identities as she contrasts her royal past with her future as a slave. According to Grethlein's theory, this would be an 'exemplum', juxtaposing past with present to give guidance about the instability of social identity.

However, Grethlein's study, though wide-ranging and important, is focused on voluntary or intentional memory, and overlooks its destabilising, involuntary aspects. While voluntary remembering might bring the past into the present, giving a sense of stability or safety in continuity, involuntary memory can be deeply unsettling to the self and to the narrative. When, for example, Eurycleia sees Odysseus' scar and remembers the circumstances of his injury, the memory breaks through into the narrative of Odysseus' secret homecoming and only death threats can keep his plan on course.³⁵

On the subject of intention, Grethlein's work is also focused on author-intention: the author shows characters remembering the past in such a way as to make sense of their present. While this is a theme which runs through this thesis, the argument here will be focused far more on the connection between those characters' memories and the possible memories aroused in the audience, whether intentionally or unintentionally, and the importance of this nexus of memory for both literary interpretation and for political thought and debate.

In addition to this, while the terms past, present and future are useful in thinking about memory and political identity, they overlook the non-linearity discussed above, which is equally important to both memory and to ancient Greek literature. To remember is to bring the past *into* the present and, when Hecuba remembers her past in the *Trojan Women*, it is its very incongruity with her present and future that provides the emotive force of the drama. Her mourning, too, brings the past of her loved ones into the present moment, causing her to visibly break down, collapsing on the ground. In a similar way,

³⁵ *Od.*19.386ff. All citations from the *Odyssey* are taken from West (2017). The 'present-ness' of this memory in the narrative is explored in Auerbach (1953), 3-23 and with a more modern narratological twist in Bakker (1999), pp. 11-26; see also Purves (2013), pp. 37-62.

Electra's mourning for her father and her memories of his murder in the plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides threaten to disrupt the political narratives laid down by Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. I will say more about the competitive nature of memory below but for now it is enough to note that Electra's mourning dominates her present and her likely future to the exclusion of all else and to the peril of her life.³⁶

For these reasons my thesis is also informed by studies of mourning which stress its non-linear patterns of memory. The non-linear temporality of memory in the case of mourning is something explored by Derrida in *Specters of Marx*, where he writes that mourning is an attempt to make 'remains' present.³⁷ Other models of mourning involve interpreting the present based on a projection into the future. Judith Butler writes that 'grievability' and the 'precarity' of life come as a result of the sense of death in birth; that is, our sense that life is precious and 'grievable' goes hand in hand with its precariousness. She terms this process the 'future anterior': it is a future which has, in the imagination at least, already happened.³⁸

Though they do not address memory as I will, this understanding of temporality is present in the work of classical scholars such as Marcel Detienne and Joel Christensen. Detienne's object in *Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece* clearly differs from mine—his focus being truth where mine is memory—but Detienne explores the figure of the poet with his connection to the Muses, the daughters of memory who authenticate his verse.³⁹ As mentioned above, in Hesiod's *Theogony*, the poet/narrator says that the Muses 'breathed a divine voice into me, so that I might glorify what will be and what was before' (ἐνέπωεθσαν δέ μοι αὐδὴν / θέσπιν, ἵνα κλείοιμι τὰ τ'έσσόμενα πρό τ'έόντα),⁴⁰ and that they sing 'of what is and what will be and what was before' (εἶρουσαι τὰ τ'έόντα τὰ τ'έσσόμενα πρό τ'έόντα).⁴¹ Their authority derives from the fact that they see all time and this is the gift they bestow on the poet. Detienne uses this idea to examine the way in which the poet establishes his authority as a 'master of truth' and this analysis ties into this thesis in its consideration of the politics by which memory-narratives are authorised given the fundamental instability of memory.

³⁶ For the competitive nature of memory see p. 39.

³⁷ Derrida (1994), p.9.

³⁸ Butler (2009), pp.1-29.

³⁹ Detienne (1996), pp. 39-50.

⁴⁰ Hes. *Theog.* 31-32.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 38.

Detienne also details the way in which this authority devolves from the gods to the poets to the ancient kings depicted in epic, Nestor, for example. This is something Joel Christensen also explores in detail in his PhD thesis on rhetoric and politics in the *Iliad*.⁴² He suggests that Nestor's political authority in the poem is drawn from his ability to bring the weight of the past into the present moment, but simultaneously undermined by his tendency to do this because it hints at his redundancy. This is suggestive of a changing political environment and a shifting value system within it and it feeds into my exploration of the *Odyssey* in Chapter 1 and particularly into my analysis of Nestor as an Iliadic witness in an Odyssean world.

iii) The 'gift of Mnemosyne,' part 3: memory and the politics of empathy

In the discussion above about the ways in which memory might be differentiated from history, one of the criteria which I glossed over was that memory invites empathy. This subsection explores the third idea of memory introduced by Plato's 'gift of Mnemosyne': the way in which the process of provoking empathy can have consequences, in the case of this thesis, political consequences. In the example discussed already about the Muses in Hesiod, we hear that the memory-narratives of the poets lead men to forget their troubles. Here, I suggest that this is partly so because of the empathy they feel with the characters in the poetry. They remember 'with' them and feel 'with' them, leading them to forget their own ills.

One particular example from ancient Greek literature represents not only the empathy which memory invites but also the way in which remembering is effective of political action. In one of the *Iliad*'s final—and emotionally climactic—episodes, Priam risks his life to visit Achilles in the Achaean encampment in order to beg for the return of Hector's body. At this moment, Priam is completely vulnerable, alone and defenceless in his enemy's camp. He throws himself at Achilles' knees, with the words 'Remember your father Achilles like to the gods, of such an age as I...' (*μνηῆσαι πατρός σοῖο θεοῖς ἐπιείκελ' Ἀχιλλεῦ, / τηλίκου ὥς περ ἐγών...*).⁴³ By equating himself with Achilles' father, he invites Achilles, whose hands killed his son, to see their suffering side by side, though pointing

⁴² Christensen (2007).

⁴³ *Il.* 24.486-87.

out how much worse is his own.⁴⁴ He equates them again at the end of the speech, with a similar entreaty: ‘Pity me, remembering your father’ (*αὐτόν τ’ ἐλέσον / μνησάμενος σοῦ πατρός*).

The effectiveness of this approach is immediate. His words stir in Achilles the ‘desire to weep for his father’ (*τῷ δ’ ἄρα πατρός ὑφ’ ἡμερον ὤρσε γόοιο*) and as the two men wept together, one remembering his father and his dead friend, the other his son, ‘their groans rose through the house’ (*τῶν δὲ στοναχὴ κατὰ δώματ’ ὀρώρει*). Though the men remember and mourn different things, remembering brings them together in empathetic grief but there is a political dimension here too. Achilles’ first act on remembering his father is to gently push Priam from him, dislodging him from his position as a supplicant and so (to an extent, at least) equalising their positions. As in the examples of remembering valour and warcraft above, memory is seen to have a transformative power. In remembering his father and thus empathising with Priam’s sorrow, Achilles is able to forget his animosity towards Priam and, more importantly, his commitment to vengeance against Hector.⁴⁵ As a consequence, he not only agrees to return Hector’s body but also to guarantee the suspension of Achaean hostilities until after the Trojans have conducted their mourning rites.⁴⁶ This is not simply a personal agreement but a political one. Achilles’ empathy with Priam leads to a rapprochement, albeit temporary, with the enemy.

This section began with the relatively simple idea of memory as recall and has moved by stages towards a conception of memory as something recreative and impermanent, something which ‘folds time’ and something politically effective in its power to evoke empathy. All of these ideas are important to this thesis, but the last is particularly so. At each stage, I have sought to integrate a study of memory in ancient texts with modern memory theory and classical criticism but with regard to memory and empathy, the body of criticism on testimony is so bound up with my discussion that it requires a separate section. To this end, the next section discusses testimony and trauma theory with a particular emphasis on the reception of testimony and the empathetic response.

⁴⁴ *Il.* 24.486-506.

⁴⁵ Though there is a brief resurgence at 24.560 when Priam (prematurely) asks for the return of his son’s body.

⁴⁶ *Il.* 24.656-70.

Testimony: truth, empathy and politics

This thesis focuses on testimony as a way of articulating and communicating memory. In the *Odyssey*, Telemachus, for example, travels to the houses of Nestor and Menelaus to hear their testimony regarding the fate of his father; Hecuba and the Trojan women give their testimony about the causes and effects of the Trojan War; and Plato reimagines Socrates' law court testimony in the *Apology*, the text which, I suggest, might frame the *Theaetetus*. In exploring the tension between what and how characters remember and what and how the audience remembers, this thesis is informed by the theory of testimony. This section examines what testimony is and the ways in which it might be received. The theory of testimony was generated by investigations into trauma in the wake of the Holocaust. However, for all its grounding in twentieth-century history and psychology, testimony theory contains much that is relevant for this thesis.

The seminal work of Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, working within comparative literature and psychoanalysis respectively, relates directly to the testimony of Holocaust victims.⁴⁷ Their ambitious and ground-breaking attempt to theorise the acts of bearing witness and of listening to testimony to trauma—bearing witness to the witness—continues to inform testimony studies today, even taking into account the scepticism with which their work is now received in many quarters. This section will detail some of Felman and Laub's significant contributions to testimony theory and the ways in which they have been criticised by more recent theorists, with a particular eye to the ways such theories inform this thesis.

Felman and Laub propose that 'To testify – to *vow to tell*, to promise and *produce* one's own speech as material evidence for truth - is to accomplish a *speech act*, rather than to simply formulate a statement.'⁴⁸ It is more than a 'statement' of facts or events which are already known to the victim. Rather it gives access for both speaker and listener to a truth known only in the moment of speaking, a truth which, paradoxically perhaps, cannot fully be conveyed by language.⁴⁹ In this sense, although Felman stresses the 'unique' burden of the witness in that testimony cannot be relayed by another without losing its function,

⁴⁷ Felman and Laub (1992).

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 5.

⁴⁹ This idea is closely related to Cathy Caruth's notion of the 'belatedness' trauma as explored in Caruth (ed.) (1995).

she also sees ‘the *appointment* to bear witness’ as ‘an appointment to transgress the confines of that isolated stance, to speak *for* another and *to* others.’⁵⁰ This is particularly apposite in situations in which the person who directly experienced trauma cannot speak for themselves – in the context of the Holocaust, because those who experienced the ultimate trauma were those who were killed.

For this reason, as Laub goes on to elaborate, the relationship between the witness – the person giving testimony – and the witness to the witness – the person eliciting and listening to that testimony – is an important one. He writes of the responsibility which the listener bears towards the speaker. He believes that the listener’s factual knowledge of an event should not lead the listener to form ‘foregone conclusions’ or ‘preconceived dismissals’ about the kind of truth to which they are listening.⁵¹ As Felman suggests, listeners should see testimony ‘not as a mode of *statement of* truth, such as one might find in a court of law, ‘but rather as a mode of *access to*’ truth.⁵² Laub’s now famous example here is of the woman who gave testimony about a riot at Auschwitz in which prisoners set fire to one or a number of chimneys. Historians claimed that her testimony could not possibly be ‘true’ because it conflicted with other verified historical accounts but Laub argues that her story confirms a deeper truth: she testified to the breakage of ‘the all compelling frame of Auschwitz, where Jewish revolts just did not happen and had no place.’ In conjunction with this, her testimony suggests a further truth: that of her own agency of interpretation, an agency which is often overlooked in dealing with ‘victims.’⁵³

In the field of Classics, Jonathan Shay has done important and influential work on representations of war trauma in Homer.⁵⁴ His studies are based on his extensive experience of working as a psychiatrist, listening to the traumatised testimony of returning war veterans from Vietnam. His work has borne fruit in the rehabilitation of veterans affected by PTSD in projects such as Brian Doerries’ Theater of War. While Shay’s reading is valuable here for drawing attention to traumatic behaviours and other physical or verbal testimonies to trauma in epic and tragedy, this thesis does not entirely accept Shay’s reading for three reasons. Firstly, it is reductive in that, for example, his analysis of Achilles’ *aristeia* as a manifestation of the ‘beserk state’ does not allow for any

⁵⁰ Felman and Laub (1992), p. 3.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 61.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 16.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 60.

⁵⁴ Shay (1994) and (2002).

ambiguity in the poem's presentation of Achilles: its simultaneous celebration and problematisation of his *bíē*.⁵⁵ Secondly, it is preoccupied with the manifestation of trauma in the individual and does not allow for a reading of trauma that is also political, collective and culturally transmitted. Thirdly, as the following section will show, criticisms of Felman and Laub are largely (though not exclusively) clustered around the difficult notion of 'truth' and this instability in the term—an instability which is closely connected to social and political contexts as explored above, in relation to memory, is not something which Shay recognises.

As the discussion above on 'memory as re-creation' demonstrates,⁵⁶ memory is always subjective and always, to some extent at least, false. It reflects who we are with, why we are remembering and how we are feeling in the present. During the 1990s, the decade in which *Testimony* was published, the notion of truthful memory was tested, notably, in two extreme cases, involving False Memory Syndrome and Benjamin Wilkomirski.

False Memory Syndrome became a highly controversial topic after a cluster of child abuse cases were brought to trial in the U.S. These cases involved the clash of two groups of psychotherapists. One group worked on conditions under the title Multiple Personality Disorder Syndrome, arguing that the personality of their clients disintegrated as a result of PTSD, here the result of supposed child abuse. According to this group, the trauma of abuse affected their clients to such a degree that the original traumatic experience was deeply repressed and only remembered after extensive recovered memory therapy such as hypnotism. The other group worked under the title of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation and they were assisted by memory researchers such as Elizabeth Loftus. They argued that the recovered memory therapy used by the other psychotherapists was responsible for generating false memories of child abuse to explain the behavioural disturbances in their clients. Loftus' specialty was the unreliability of memory and in clinical tests she proved many times, in line with Neisser, that memory is imprecise and subject to outside influence. In many cases the psychologists and psychiatrists who had practised recovered memory therapies with clients bringing child abuse cases were successfully sued on the charge of generating false memories, sometimes by the clients themselves.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Shay (1994), pp. 77-99.

⁵⁶ See this thesis, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁷ False Memory Syndrome cases as discussed in A. Assmann (2011), pp. 256-57. Also Loftus et al. (1997).

Binjamin Wilkomirski was the pen name of Bruno Dössekler who published an award-winning 'memoir', *Bruchstücke: Aus einer Kindheit 1939-1948* (later translated into English as *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood*), in 1995. The work claimed to be about his traumatic memories as a young Jewish child in Poland and his internment in two Nazi concentration camps. However, in 1998, a Swiss journalist, Daniel Ganzfried, exposed it as a fabrication and his findings were supported by historian Stefan Maechler.⁵⁸ Dössekler himself maintained that he had not simply made up the stories and genuinely believed that he had lived these experiences. He was supported in this by Maechler who believed that he had not attempted to perpetrate a fraud. Rather, it is believed that he had identified so closely with accounts of the Holocaust in which he had immersed himself that he had come to believe that the trauma he read about was his own.⁵⁹

I have gone into some detail about these two examples because, in addition to revealing the problems inherent in speaking of memory and truth, they also bring into focus two further aspects of testimony with which this thesis is concerned: the context in which testimony is given and the affective power of testimony. The rest of this section will discuss these two aspects of testimony and their political ramifications. The 'context of testimony' not only describes where that testimony is given but how it is received and perceived and how its 'truth' value is measured. The 'affective power of testimony' is discussed via LaCapra's notion of 'empathic unsettlement.'

i) Legal testimony vs testimony to trauma

False Memory Syndrome highlights what Aleida Assmann calls a 'clash of frameworks.'⁶⁰ In the therapeutic context of testifying to trauma, victim trauma is characterized by its infusion with the victim's own unique and personal perspective of events and what it felt like to be subject to them.⁶¹ His or her personal, physical experiences of suffering are inseparable from the story told 'and his or her social and cultural authority to tell it.'⁶² They are listened to with 'detached empathy' by the therapist who is only interested in

⁵⁸ Maechler (2001).

⁵⁹ Whitehead (2003), p. 126.

⁶⁰ A. Assmann (2011), p. 258.

⁶¹ A. Assmann (2006), p. 263.

⁶² Margalit (2002), as discussed in Jones (2014), p. 23.

this subjective truth. In contrast, in the context of the court, the legal witness is traditionally seen as less interesting than their testimony, which serves to help elucidate the truth of guilt or lack of it. Biographical aspects are 'invoked only to the extent that they help to probe and to ascertain the testimony.'⁶³ Because of the need to ascertain an objective truth, the witness is listened to with scepticism by the judiciary.

The rise of truth and reconciliation commissions and war crimes tribunals in which testimony to trauma has had to be assessed in a legal setting has gone some way to unsettle the dichotomy between legal testimony and testimony to trauma. Aleida Assmann has theorised this blurring of categories using an examination of a third kind of witness: the religious witness or martyr. The martyr dies in the act of witnessing his or her persecution so cannot give testimony to what s/he has experienced. S/he depends on others 'to witness the suffering, to identify him or her as a martyr (rather than a justly persecuted rebel), and to codify the story for future generations.'⁶⁴ In this s/he is similar to the witness to trauma who not only witnesses for themselves 'but for those who died and were forever silenced.'⁶⁵ She writes that 'The Holocaust witness, like the religious martyr, depends on these secondary witnesses who understand the historic significance of the testimony and make it public.'⁶⁶

Plato's *Theaetetus* demonstrates all three of these types of testimony and their overlap. Firstly, as Chapter 3 will suggest, the *Theaetetus* represents a meeting between Socrates and a youth of Athens, one of those whom he is accused of corrupting. In this way, the text may serve as legal testimony—a sort of extension to the *Apology*—by which the reader may judge the level of Socrates' guilt. Secondly, it is possible to see, as Hannah Arendt has argued, that Socrates' trial and death was represented as a significant trauma for Plato and western philosophy, one which led to a permanent divorce between philosophy and politics as represented in the Digression of the *Theaetetus*. And thirdly, Plato could be described as a witness to Socrates' martyrdom, championing the philosophy of his teacher who was misunderstood and condemned by the political mob. As the chapter will show, I do not believe any of these pictures to be accurate as Plato's representation(s) of Socrates is so much more nuanced and heavily layered than all of

⁶³ Ibid, p. 265.

⁶⁴ A. Assmann (2006), p. 268.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 269. For this idea see also Agamben (2002) as discussed in Jones (2014), p. 27.

⁶⁶ A. Assmann (2006), p. 269.

them suggest. Rather, I will suggest a fourth kind of testimony, one which the readers must construct themselves by careful reading and a balance of remembering and forgetting. In conjunction with the witness to trauma and the witness to the martyr, Assman further states that s/he relies on a wider audience for recognition and affirmation, hence we may see Plato as writing his texts to disseminate his particular version of Socratic thought. As Günter Thomas suggests, ‘a witness is not a witness unless there is someone to hear his or her story.’⁶⁷ It is this aspect of testimony which highlights its political nature, as I will detail below.

ii) The politics of testimony

There is such an imperative for the witness to trauma to have his or her story witnessed by others because, as Thomas goes on to suggest, ‘any act of witnessing, confession, or testimony – even in “historical” cases – relates to disputed, unstable, conflicting, or transitory realities.’⁶⁸ Testimony would not need to take place if a contested truth were not at stake. The setting of the courtroom which pits one argument against another makes this ‘contested territory’ plain.⁶⁹ For this reason, the law court theme which runs through this thesis provides a particularly useful way of analysing testimony in this political context. The theory and examples discussed below draw out the political nature of testimony and continue to exemplify the ways in which the different types of testimony overlap as they are understood in this thesis.

For the reason that their words seek recognition from a listening audience, the witness to trauma is often constituted by themselves or by others as having a moral or ethical claim. John Durham Peters writes that ‘Witnessing ... suggests a morally justified individual who speaks out against unjust power’ and further, that ‘to witness means to be on the right side.’⁷⁰ Both Peters and Avishai Margalit argue that testimony’s ethical claim is based on suffering and as such, it constitutes its own truth.⁷¹ Peters writes that ‘the indisputables of pain and death can serve as a resource to persuade others of the truth of one’s words of witness’ and so the witness’ body ‘serves as a sort of collateral to justify the loan of our

⁶⁷ Thomas (2009), 89-111; ref. pp. 101-02.

⁶⁸ Thomas (2009), p. 96.

⁶⁹ Quotation from Jones (2014), p. 25.

⁷⁰ Peters (2001), pp. 707-723; ref. p. 714.

⁷¹ Margalit in Jones (2014), p. 23.

credence.⁷² Therefore, while listeners have a responsibility to hear the ‘deeper truth’ of testimony, as Laub instructs, they are also subject to the moral ‘imperatives’ of testimony: they ‘must know, must remember, must bear the marks of the past.’⁷³

Because of these moral imperatives, Peters rejects the idea of testimony from the point of view of the perpetrators of atrocity in his influential article of 2001.⁷⁴ However, others have sought to open up this avenue of enquiry and this is certainly of importance if seeking to find a more objective truth, as in the truth commissions or war crimes trials mentioned above.⁷⁵

This thesis considers testimony from the point of view both of the victim of trauma and the witness in the law court. In particular, it considers moments when these types of testimony overlap in such a way that the judgement of the audience, our judgement, is put under scrutiny, in, for example, the dead Amphimedon’s testimony against Odysseus in the underworld in Book 24 of the *Odyssey*, or in Hecuba’s testimony against Helen in Euripides’ *Trojan Women*. Here, the slippery notion of ‘truth’ is important because it is contested. This is not only so because there are multiple viewpoints in play, but also because, as Peters suggests, ‘the journey from experience (the seen) into words (the said) is precarious.’⁷⁶ There is ‘an epistemological gap whose bridging is always fraught with difficulty.’⁷⁷ As in the case of memory, discussed elsewhere, ‘testimonies can be shaped by the schematic constraints of narrative structure and altered, perhaps even created, by the way they are probed (‘refreshed’) by others.’ As human beings, ‘witnesses are evidently a fallible transmission and storage medium for sensory experience.’⁷⁸

This intervention by others external to the witness to recreate or refresh the truth of testimony is evident in legal uses of testimony where, in classical Greece as now, truth is not so much external and objective but part of the different narratives played out by prosecution and defence. This idea is explored at length by Steven Johnstone with regard to fifth- and fourth-century legal oratory and this study draws heavily on his work in its analysis of legal testimony as represented in the literature.⁷⁹

⁷² Peters (2001), p. 713.

⁷³ Wallen (2009), 261-78; ref. p. 262.

⁷⁴ Peters (2001), p. 714.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Stone (2014), pp. 17-30; ref. p. 21.

⁷⁶ Peters, p. 710.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 710.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 710.

⁷⁹ Johnstone (1999). I will discuss Johnstone’s study in much greater detail in Chapter 2 (pp. 157-60).

I supplement Johnstone's work here with that by Kirsten Campbell, writing with regard to the international war crimes tribunal relating to the former Yugoslavia. Campbell concludes that neither the prosecution (which uses more witnesses), nor the defence, sees testimony as complete, factual truth.⁸⁰ The prosecution builds up a picture of verifiable truth by using multiple testimonies. In this way, even when truth is subjective, overlapping stories and repeated statements testifying to similar events contribute to an overall 'true description of the world.'⁸¹ The defence, on the other hand, starts with the assumption that 'the testimonial narrative of events 'is actually an opinion or belief as to what occurred.'⁸² The defence also severs testimony from any necessary relation to the event, and hence to the wrong' and understands it as expressing the speaker's psychological or neurobiological states, rather than the reality of the event.⁸³ According to this model, 'the rupture of bodily integrity results in a rupture of psychic integrity, and consequently a rupture of the integrity of memory.'⁸⁴

Campbell analyses the ways in which the courts must debate and decide on the place, probative value and criteria of evaluation for different kinds of testimony, the relative probity of their witnesses and 'the broader hermeneutic problem of the interpretation of evidence in its relevant historical and cultural context by judges who do not share that social context.'⁸⁵ All of these make a valuable contribution to how audiences, particularly from other places and times, judge the testimony relayed in ancient texts. In this thesis, this will be particularly valuable for thinking about how we, as modern readers, approach ancient material which would have been performed or read in very different contexts in the past.

There are two further aspects to the politics of trauma and testimony which this thesis addresses. These are related to each other and to date both are relatively under-theorised. The first is the notion that trauma, like memory, can be construed as collective or cultural as well as individual; the second, that whereas trauma is often construed as incommunicable, communication is an integral part of cultural trauma.

⁸⁰ Campbell (2014), pp. 83-109.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 89.

⁸² *Ibid*, p. 88.

⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 89.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 89.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 103-4.

It has been useful to think about cultural trauma in the context of the *Odyssey* and the *Trojan Women*, since both present political groups in the wake of the Trojan War and, in the case of the *Odyssey*, a violent event in Ithaca which gives rise to a new or revitalised social order. Jeffrey Alexander has theorised that '[c]ultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.'⁸⁶ According to him, cultural trauma is felt when 'the patterned meanings of the collectivity are abruptly dislodged' and such trauma is a result not of the events themselves but of the 'sense of shock and fear' felt around them.⁸⁷ He speaks of the gap between the event and its representation as the 'trauma process' and suggests that individual agents and then 'carrier groups' make claims of trauma, which, if they find purchase with the collective as a whole, convince the group that they have experienced such a trauma.⁸⁸ There are several other noteworthy aspects to Alexander's theory in terms of this thesis: the connection between cultural trauma, collective identity and the attribution of blame,⁸⁹ and the way in which cultural trauma leads to a revision of political identity—the result of 'a searching re-remembering of the collective past.'⁹⁰

iii) A short digression about 'truth'

From the definition of memory as a re-creative process, to the contests at stake in giving testimony, this study of memory has been bound up closely with the unstable notion of truth. Though it may appear to be at a tangent to this discussion of testimony, the notion of truth and how truth is perceived underlies this whole analysis and needs to be placed at front and centre in order to make this clear. Memory and truth are interwoven linguistically, in the ancient Greek, and also conceptually and philosophically.

The literal meaning of *alētheia* ('truth') is 'unconcealed.' The a- signifies a negative, and the word *lēthē* ('forgetting') derives from *lanthanō*, meaning 'escape notice.' *Lēthē* is also Oblivion, part of the Underworld, hidden from the sight of mortals and from which there

⁸⁶ Alexander (2004), pp. 1-30, quotation from p. 1.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 4.

⁸⁸ Ibid, pp. 11-12.

⁸⁹ Ibid, pp. 13-15.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 22.

is no return. Therefore, 'truth' suggests openness while its opposite signals something hidden or inaccessible.⁹¹

There is a clear association in the ancient Greek mindset between memory and 'truth', but this is not truth as we conceive it. Homeric 'truth', for example, is as Richard Martin has demonstrated closely related to *muthos* (myth): a type of speech which is reliable and authoritative and linked to cultural memory.⁹² Martin denotes *muthos* as a speech act of recollection. He uses the example of Phoenix introducing the story of the Meleagros with *memnēmai* ('I remember') to illustrate this.⁹³ The failure of such a speech act is marked by *lēthē*, as at *Iliad* 9.259 where Odysseus tells Achilles that he has 'forgotten' his father's advice to 'abstain from strife.'⁹⁴ Remembering, therefore, goes hand in hand with 'truth', not in the sense of accuracy as we might understand it, but in the sense of authority.

This is similar to Detienne's point,⁹⁵ that poets and kings *need* memory in order to lay claim to authority for their words: their ability to employ memory gives their speech the ring of truth. It is similar also to Johnstone's analysis of law court testimony in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. According to this, testimonies for the prosecution and defence commonly involved narratives which would *appear* truthful because they were familiar.⁹⁶ Again, where there is no stable conception of empirical truth, authority comes from the way in which memory is articulated as testimony.

In Homer, use of the term *alētheia* also ties into its definition as 'unconcealed.' It signifies 'truth' but often implies 'a whole account', used alongside *pas* (whole). It has the sense of complete openness, of telling all, as opposed to covering things up with deceit. It is used in this way by Telemachus in his request that Nestor tells him the truth about his father: ὦ Νεστορ Νηληϊάδη, σὺ δ' ἀληθές ἐνισπες (O, Nestor, son of Neleus, tell me the true story!).⁹⁷ And again, with *pas* this time, in Nestor's reply: τοιγὰρ ἐγὼ τοι, τέκνον, ἀληθέα πάντα ἄγορεύσω (So, my child, I will tell you the whole story).⁹⁸ In this way also, witnesses

⁹¹ For discussions of the meanings of *alētheia* and *lēthē* see e.g. Nagy (1996), pp. 122-28 and Ieven (2006), pp. 41-51.

⁹² For cultural memory, see this thesis, pp. 43-45.

⁹³ *Il.* 9.527.

⁹⁴ Martin (1989), pp. 77-88; also discussed in Nagy (1996), pp. 122-23.

⁹⁵ See this thesis, pp. 21-22.

⁹⁶ Johnstone (1999), p. 2.

⁹⁷ *Od.* 3.247.

⁹⁸ *Od.* 2.254.

in court, even today 'promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth' before giving testimony.

Over time, the definition of *alētheia* evolved into something more akin to our notion of truth. As Gregory Nagy discusses, already by Pindar *muthos* is being used in contrast to *alētheia*, with *muthos* denoting 'a murky multiplicity of discredited versions.'⁹⁹ However, the link between memory and truth continues to resurface in philosophy through the ages, notably in Heidegger and later in Derrida, both of whom return to Plato's Wax Tablet. Derrida's addresses it first in *La pharmacie de Platon*, where he questions what Mnemosyne - a figure of myth - has to do with philosophy - a field that 'shaped itself entirely on the philosophical difference between *mythos* and *logos*...'¹⁰⁰ He returns to it in *Mémoires for Paul de Man* in which he describes 'the gift (*doron*) of Mnemosyne' as 'like the wax in which all that we wish to guard in our memory is engraved in relief so that it may leave a mark.'¹⁰¹ In both of these works, Derrida criticises a 'philosophical move' which begins with Plato and becomes consolidated by Heidegger, to put ethics at the heart of philosophy.

Derrida uses deconstruction in order to critique and circumvent this philosophical move and, in so doing, addresses the binary of writing/*logos* expressed as good and bad *pharmaka* (drugs) in Plato's *Phaedrus*. In this dialogue, Plato's Socrates draws a distinction between real and artificial memory, with writing representing only a memory aid and *logos* representing 'true' memory. Derrida argues that for Socrates, writing is a *technē* (technique, skill) that does not help real memory (*mnēmēs*) but stimulates only artificial memory (*hypomnēseōs*). The former generates science, whereas the latter generates only opinion. Therefore, writing is corruptive for truth and memory and this is where '*la moralité*' comes in. Deconstruction, meanwhile, differs because in breaking down binary oppositions, it accepts the inevitable contamination between technique and philosophy and, therefore, the impossibility of distinguishing between real and artificial memory.

This, clearly, has much in common with memory theory with its destabilised relationship between memory and truth, which brings us back to an understanding similar to Homer's. There is no such thing as empirically truthful memory and because of this, we can only

⁹⁹ Nagy (1996), p. 123.

¹⁰⁰ Derrida (1972), p.107; see also discussion of Heidegger and Derrida in Ieven (2006), pp. 41-51.

¹⁰¹ Derrida (1986), p. 3.

examine the way in which memory is mediated and expressed. In the context of trauma—to return to the starting point of this digression—the False Memory Syndrome cases, together with the Binjamin Wilkomirski affair, unsettled the concept at the very centre of studies in trauma and testimony: that there is a ‘truthful’ memory which is altered or made inaccessible because of trauma.¹⁰² Studies of these phenomena reinforce the idea, generated in the work of Neisser, for example, that ‘truth’ and ‘memory’ are fickle friends, that both are always precarious.

iv) ‘Empathic unsettlement’

The above discussion of legal testimony and testimony to trauma is instructive about the ways in which hearing testimony can be an affective experience but the example of Binjamin Wilkomirski demonstrates the potential power of testimony to unsettle the psyche. Anne Whitehead suggests that while Felman comments that testimony can ‘penetrate us like an actual life’, transmitting itself through sympathetic identification, for Wilkomirski it *replaces* his actual life.¹⁰³ Although it seems unlikely that many will be affected by traumatic testimony to this extreme, this thesis will make extensive use of Dominick LaCapra’s work on the less extreme notion of ‘empathic unsettlement’ in thinking about the affect and possible political effects of receiving the texts studied. The following discussion outlines the three aspects of ‘empathic unsettlement’ on which this thesis draws most heavily: its ‘virtual’ nature, the transferential relationship it constructs and its power to reeducate politically.

Firstly, according to LaCapra:

Desirable empathy, I would suggest, involves not self-sufficient, projective or incorporative identification but what might be termed empathetic unsettlement in the face of traumatic limit events, their perpetrators and their victims ... It involves virtual not vicarious experience—that is to say, experience in which one puts oneself in the other’s position without taking the place of—or speaking for—the other or becoming a surrogate victim.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Hodgkin and Radstone (2003), p. 6.

¹⁰³ Whitehead (2003), p. 126 quoting Felman in Felman and Laub (1992), p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ LaCapra (2004), p. 135.

This stress on the 'virtual' rather than the 'vicarious', the putting oneself in the place of 'without taking the place of' seems particularly appropriate for thinking about testimony in a literary sense. We feel with the characters depicted to the point that it begins to unsettle our own sense of self but rarely to the point that we believe we *are* that fictional character or autobiographical subject.

Secondly, this thesis builds on the idea that traumatic testimony 'raises problems bound up with one's implication in, or transference relation to, charged, value-related events and those caught up in them.'¹⁰⁵ This will have particular resonance in Chapter 2 of this thesis in contemplating the extent to which the audience empathises with attitudes or viewpoints which they know to be mistaken or even dangerous.

Finally, LaCapra's vision of empathic unsettlement is relevant here because of its political nature. LaCapra states that 'One may even contend that there can be no durable ethical and political change without the reeducation of affect in its relation to normative judgement.'¹⁰⁶ In Chapters 1 and 2, this thesis explores the idea that the empathetic unsettlement resulting from virtual identification with characters depicted provokes political discussion, pushing audiences to question the norms of their own political societies.

That empathy can be politically affective is also borne out by recent studies in the psychology of collective memory. Using a sample audience of a political speech by the King of Belgium, Stone et al identified that temporary forgetting may be induced in a group when the group empathises with the speaker.¹⁰⁷ Their research suggests that French-speaking Belgians were more likely to remember with the (French-speaking) king, not questioning his version of events, whereas Dutch-speaking Belgians were more likely to notice or question perceived elisions and omissions.

Some have been sceptical regarding the potential affective power of empathy generated by literary testimony. Peters suggests that 'literary testimony' cannot really be judged as testimony at all because 'drama offers terror without danger, pity without duty.'¹⁰⁸ This thesis, with others such as Sara Jones, is more optimistic about the power of literature. Jones cites studies by Tessa Morris-Suzuki and Alison Landsberg which indicate that the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 136.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 137.

¹⁰⁷ Discussed in Stone and Hirsch (2014), pp. 321-22.

¹⁰⁸ Peters, summarising Aristotle's *Poetics*, p. 721.

‘affective response’ generated by fiction ‘has the ability to shape that person’s subjectivity and politics’ and can, thereby, create ‘the conditions for ethical thinking precisely by encouraging people to feel connected to, while recognizing the alterity of, the “other”’.¹⁰⁹

Alexander has conceived of the politics of empathy slightly differently. In his study of the way in which the Holocaust came to have the cultural significance it does today, he suggests that although empathy and affect are psychological phenomena they do not occur without certain sociological factors being in place. In the case of the Holocaust, a number of factors influenced identification with the Jews in the USA, including: a reaction against anti-Semitism, caused by hatred of Hitler and the Nazis rather than sympathy with the Jews; followed by the mass media attention to the trial of Adolph Eichmann and the translation of Anne Frank’s diary, its Broadway production and Hollywood adaptation.

A return to the passage from the *Iliad* discussed above (pp. 22-23) and its reception in later texts such as the *Trojan Women* is illustrative of this socio-political aspect to empathy and affect in memory discourses. In the case of the meeting between Achilles and Priam, we might surmise that a cultural respect for fathers in both Trojan and Achaean cultures made this an effective way for Priam to trigger Achilles’ empathy but, in the *Trojan Women*, it is possible to trace the political effect of this passage from the *Iliad* in shaping the social conditions by which sympathy with a defeated enemy—both in literature and in life—might be positively encouraged.

In my reading of the *Trojan Women* in Chapter 2, I respond to a seam of literary criticism which suggests that Euripides’ play could not have been a response to the Athenian slaughter and enslavement of the Melians during the Peloponnesian War. The basis for this criticism is that the Athenians simply would not have had any remorse for their actions because ‘might is right’ and this was how defeated enemies were treated lest they fight back. I suggest, rather, that such views are not sustained either by literature or by history, at least by Thucydides’ account of history. Examples such as this in the *Iliad* and others such as Aeschylus’ *Persians* actively encourage audiences to empathise with a defeated foe for reasons of common humanity. Similarly, Thucydides’ account of the Athenians’ decision to hold a second vote on whether such actions should be carried out in Mytilene—after the ships had already sailed to give the Athenians’ instructions—

¹⁰⁹ Sturken (2008), pp. 73-78 and Landsberg (2004), as discussed in Jones, pp. 41-42.

suggests that while some may have held that ‘might is right’, others had scruples which reflected the empathy displayed on stage and in verse.¹¹⁰

This subsection has demonstrated the ways in which memory-testimony can not only produce an emotional effect on the listener but has also shown that the experience of this emotion can have political consequences. The listener’s psyche may be unsettled leading her/him to ‘remember with’ the speaker, temporarily disrupting old political allegiances and forging new ones. In addition to this, we do not hear testimony in a vacuum but in our own political contexts and these shape the way in which that testimony is received. This last point—that we do not remember or hear testimony in isolation—feeds into the next section of this Introduction which examines the notion of collective and cultural memory. Again, this discussion is built around ancient source material, in this case: the *Odyssey*.

Collective memory, politics, and the end of the *Odyssey*

Zeus’ declaration that he will put complete forgetting (*ἐκκλησιν θέωμεν*) of the slaughter on the warring factions, and so end the civil war in Ithaca before it really begins, encapsulates many key ideas relating to memory with which this thesis will be concerned.¹¹¹ Most obviously, the passage highlights the political nature of memory, on a practical level, in its articulation of memory’s role in conflict and its resolution in society: remembering is the cause of conflict and forgetting is a prerequisite for peace. After the forgetting, Zeus says, there will be wealth and peace (*πλοῦτος δὲ καὶ εἰρήνη ἄλις ἔστω*), a happily ever after.

Nicole Loraux uses this moment of forgetting in the *Odyssey* to illustrate the fact that ‘To forget not only the bad deeds of others but also one’s own anger’ is necessary ‘so that the bond of life in the city may be renewed.’¹¹² Earlier, she terms this ‘a founding forgetting’¹¹³ because this forgetting is the condition on which the new Ithacan state is founded. In the light of the fact that ‘non-forgetting’ could have such disastrous consequences, Loraux writes that the Greeks ‘never stopped trying’ to cast it out, starting

¹¹⁰ Thuc. 3.36-49.

¹¹¹ *Od.* 24.482-86.

¹¹² Loraux (2001), p. 157.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

with Achilles' wrath and ending the *Oresteia* 'in which it would be neutralized without being completely lost; it would be domesticated by being installed in the city, defused, indeed turned against itself.'¹¹⁴ Only divinity can bring this successful conclusion in literature and therefore, when stasis comes and the people are unable to truly forget, 'they will forget in words, with each prohibition on remembering the misfortunes.'¹¹⁵ According to Loraux, the ban on memory in 403 BC was, more precisely, a ban on bringing to court ills done to one during the time of civil war and the oligarchic rule of the 300.

In the fact that the forgetting is 'put upon' (*theōmen*) the population of Ithaca by one in (divine) authority, without the knowledge or permission of the people, the passage also suggests a further political dimension to memory, one which raises questions about memory and power. This is reinforced by the way in which Odysseus is permitted to continue unchecked, for a period, killing all of those who threatened his authority, while the families are denied the chance to mourn their brothers and sons.

This reading brings out what Kansteiner refers to as 'the competitive arena of memory politics':¹¹⁶ as the victor – the man who has silenced his opposition – Odysseus may establish the official memory of events. Memory is established in a competitive process but where the 'losing' memory is suppressed rather than forgotten, this suppressed memory might either lie silent with fear, or might rise to the surface to fight. We see this happen in Sophocles' *Electra*, where Clytemnestra has imposed an 'official' version of Agamemnon's death on society but Electra shares her alternative version first with the chorus, then with Orestes, to form a force of insurrection.¹¹⁷ Foucault terms this 'popular memory' according to his analysis of memory as a discursive practice.¹¹⁸ This results, in *Electra*, in a 'mnemonic battle' between Electra and Clytemnestra – a verbal conflict fought over their different versions of events – before the physical showdown between Clytemnestra and Orestes.¹¹⁹

The passage from the *Odyssey* also invites us to question who is part of this collective and, therefore, who is subject to Zeus' decree. For a start, the decree states that

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 163.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p. 163.

¹¹⁶ Kansteiner (2002), p. 179.

¹¹⁷ Clytemnestra's version is made official by its incorporation into civic ritual (*El.* 277-281).

¹¹⁸ Foucault's 'popular memory' theory and memory as part of a discourse of power in Misztal (2003), pp. 61-63; also discussed in J. Assmann, p. 55.

¹¹⁹ 'Mnemonic battles' coined in Zerubavel (1996), pp. 283-300. *Soph. El. the agōn* between Clytemnestra and Electra at 788ff.

forgetting will be put on the families of those killed (*ἡμεῖς δ' αὖτ' αἰδῶν τε κασιγνήτων τε φόνοιο ἔκκλησιν θέωμεν*) so we might question whether Odysseus and his family will also be made to forget. If not, this will bolster his position of power still further. More significantly than this, though, the passage highlights the difference between the internal 'people' of the poem and the external audience. The external audience cannot be subject to Zeus' decree and this might be interpreted politically in one of two ways. As I will explore in much more detail in Chapter 1, the forgetting within the poem is total: *eklēsis* is an *hapax legomenon* (a term with only one recorded use), implying total forgetting, something impossible in life and only possible in the poem because of divine involvement. However, it could be seen as instructive for the audience—a kind of ideal—as there is political expedience to putting aside wrongs done to us so as to ensure peace. On the other hand, the fact that the audience remembers the brutality of Odysseus' revenge might lead them to question the political norms and values seemingly espoused by the poem.

The final political dimension here is that because this forgetting is 'put upon' upon a social group—one which collectively remembers wrongs done to them—the passage also suggests a social or collective dimension to memory. Because the Ithacans' collective forgetting is the condition on which the state is re-established with Odysseus as king, it seems fair to extrapolate that this process of collective remembering or forgetting also has the effect of defining the political community of Ithaca.

In what follows I will draw out these political dimensions of collective memory using prominent theory from the field of memory studies and in doing so I will show the benefit of the diverse approach offered by a field which encompasses so many disciplines within it. I will then go on to define memory and its political aspects more generally and to consider why an approach based on 'memory' is more useful and appropriate than one predicated on apparently similar terms such as myth or tradition.

i) Collective memory as political process

As suggested in the previous subsection, this thesis owes much to Nicole Loraux's exploration of collective memory in Ancient Athens, particularly in her focus on the Greek terminology of memory and her examination of moments of individual and group remembering and forgetting in key texts across the genres, such as the Homeric epics and

Sophocles' *Electra*. However, the theoretical basis for her model of collective remembering differs markedly from mine and this is in line with our differing objects: hers to explore the specific historical moment which led to the swearing of oaths of forgetting in 403 BC and mine to explore, more generally, how textual representations of affective memory mirror but also reshape the political societies of their audiences.

Loraux adopts a vision of collective memory drawn both from Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* in which he writes of the 'inescapability' of moving between individual and group consciousness,¹²⁰ and what she sees as a Greek conception of the 'individual-city' expressed by Aristotle, Thucydides, Isocrates and Plato in such formulations as: 'the city has decided.'¹²¹ These conceptions of collective memory imply that one can extend an 'individual' consciousness to a group as a whole, an approach which other theorists, such as Susannah Radstone, caution against on the grounds that this has the tendency of 'hardening into literality what might be better regarded as a series of compelling metaphors.'

Although Loraux's use of this model for memory is undoubtedly political, the approach of this thesis brings out not just the idea that memory is always social, but also the inherent politics involved in the process of memory and its effect on the way in which the collective defines itself. This understanding of collective memory is based on a combination of psychological and sociological theory and on its recent use in comparative literature studies, anthropology and history.

This theory of collective memory begins with Maurice Halbwachs' sociological study of the '*mémoire collective*' which builds on Durkheimian principles of the collective consciousness to suggest that '[n]o memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in a society to determine and retrieve their recollections.'¹²² The individual remembers in society, via social triggers and using the social medium of language and so all memory might be described as 'collective memory'; although it is the individual who remembers, the memory will be determined by what the collective considers to be relevant.¹²³ Concurrently with Halbwachs, in the field of psychology, Frederic Bartlett published his results of an experiment in which participants had to memorise an

¹²⁰ Loraux (2001), pp. 74-77.

¹²¹ Ibid, pp. 78-80.

¹²² Halbwachs (1992), p. 43.

¹²³ Ibid; see also J. Assmann (2011), pp. 21-33, A. Assmann (2011), p. 121 and Erll (2011), pp. 75-76.

unfamiliar story. He found that they recalled it according to culturally shaped ideas about what made a good story and concluded that it is these ‘schemata’, these patterns and structures of knowledge, gained through social interaction, which form the way in which we perceive and remember.¹²⁴

According to both of these sociological and psychological theories, remembering is based on what is considered relevant or appropriate in a given social context. As those determining social factors change, for example after the upheaval of regime change or as values are transformed gradually over time, what is remembered will change too. If a group disbands completely, memories will be lost but, while a group is together, those shared memories create a sense of cohesion and belonging. Halbwachs has been criticised for social determinism—here, the sense that the individual’s actions are controlled or predestined by social structures—and for his failure to articulate the theoretical basis for the transition between individual and group memory.¹²⁵ However, in spite of this, his theories have been instrumental in the development of psychological, cultural and sociological theories of memory ever since. They were, for example, highly influential in the research of Ulric Neisser, discussed above, who not only found that memory was a reconstructive, re-creative process, but also that the focus in Psychology on the individual consciousness had led to the neglect of the social aspects of memory. In addition, Halbwachs’ *mémoire collective* underpins Jeffrey Olick’s work on social memory and Jan and Aleida Assmann’s on cultural memory. It is a synthesis of their ideas which informs my use of the terms in this thesis.

Jeffrey Olick’s theory of ‘social memory’ is the model of collective memory on which this thesis will draw when examining, in particular, the literary representations of ways in which individuals and groups remember. Olick emphasises the political nature of memory and this is what makes his theory so useful for this thesis. In the introduction to *The Politics of Regret*, he addresses the relationship between individual memory and group memory, saying that, ‘It is not just that we remember as members of groups but that we also constitute those groups and their members simultaneously in the act, thus “re-member-ing”’.¹²⁶ In a similar way to Giddens, who postulates that political activity reproduces the very structures that engender it (see p. 11), Olick espouses the idea that

¹²⁴ Bartlett (1961); see also Erll (2011) p.83.

¹²⁵ Misztal (2003), p. 5; Steinbock (2013), p. 9.

¹²⁶ Olick (2007), pp. 28-35, quotation from p. 29.

the act of remembering constitutes or reshapes the group and its members. Barbara Misztal criticises him for this approach on the grounds that it does not explain why individuals with the same social cues sometimes remember differently. However, Olick does not deny individual memory, rather he believes that we cannot ‘speak of a presocial individual memory’ any more than we can speak of the collective memory as an entity which remembers without individuals.¹²⁷ The two are a continuum and as such, are inextricably linked, each constantly informing and affecting the other.

Therefore, collective memory is not simply a matter of extending individual psychology to a group, as in Freud’s model used by Loraux. Nor is it to deny that Radstone’s ‘compelling metaphors’ can be useful or instructive but, heeding her warning, this thesis will be vigilant in its examination of ‘the processes of articulation through which past happenings and their meanings are discursively produced, transmitted and mediated.’¹²⁸ For this reason, this study not only addresses memory as it is represented in the texts studied, but also the way in which memory is mediated by the different genres and performance contexts involved. It will consider, for example, the fact that the fifth century BC audience of the *Odyssey* witnessed the ‘founding forgetting’ on Ithaca at the Great Panathenaea, a ritual which celebrated Athens’ own foundation.

While Olick’s work provides the sociological basis for my understanding of collective memory, Jan and Aleida Assmann’s work underpins my definition of ‘cultural memory’. Jan Assmann divides memory into ‘communicative memory’ – that of a few recent generations which is communicated between individuals who have experienced it directly – and ‘cultural memory’ – of which we have no personal memory but which is embedded deep in the history and mythology of the culture in, for example, myth, ritual practice and literature.¹²⁹ It is this, he argues, which binds communities together, creating a sense of political or national identity. The hallmark of both Jan and Aleida Assmann’s work on memory is the connection between cultural memory, collective identity and political legitimation and this connection is central to my thesis, being the site where literature, memory and the establishment of political society converge.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Misztal (2003), p. 76; Olick, p. 35.

¹²⁸ Radstone (2005), p. 137.

¹²⁹ J. Assmann (2011), throughout but especially pp. 6-7 and 36-41.

¹³⁰ Erll (2011), p. 27.

Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney have developed the Assmanns' theory of cultural memory in the field of literary studies and it is from this development that this thesis derives its approach of bringing together characters' and audiences' remembering and forgetting. Erll and Rigney articulate the ways in which memory and literature interrelate, talking of 'memory *in* literature' (the way in which acts of memory are represented in the text), 'memory *of* literature' (a metaphor for the way in which intertextuality operates as a kind of literary memory, tying the text to all other texts), and 'literature as memory' (a medium of cultural memory).¹³¹ They are scrupulous in dealing with the metaphorical nature of 'memory *of* literature' because of criticism levelled at it on the grounds that psychological terminology cannot be transferred onto literature, but they nonetheless value it as a useful mode of analysis, as I do here.¹³² Rigney has developed this further, writing that a text is not the end point of memory but rather part of a 'mnemonic process': it is a carrier of cultural memory, constantly invested and reinvested with new memories as different mnemonic communities encounter it.¹³³ This aspect of cultural memory also informs my approach, especially in my engagement with the reception of epic at the Panathenaea and in fifth century Athenian tragedy.

Rigney's vision of cultural memory is substantially different from the Assmanns' in the respect that while cultural memory in the Assmanns' seminal studies tends to be tied to nationhood, Rigney suggests that literary works play a key role in transferring memories across geographical and temporal borders.¹³⁴ According to Rigney literary scholars have tended 'to view individual texts as the terminus or outcome of remembrance rather than as active ingredients in an ongoing cultural process.'¹³⁵ She is interested not only in how a text views the past but also how it functions 'mnemotechnically'; that is, in the role it plays in fixing, transmitting, and transforming memories across space and time. She views the text as a 'portable monument' and as such, in addition to playing a part in identity formation, it is also capable of arousing an interest in history in groups other than its first readership and creating 'new sorts of affiliations based on "discontinuous" and cross-border memories.'¹³⁶ Rigney's ideas are built on by Wai Chee Dimock who reflects 'the

¹³¹ Erll, and Rigney (2006), pp. 111-15; see also Erll (2011), pp. 149-50.

¹³² Criticism from, for example, Radstone (2010), pp. 26-47 and as discussed in the introduction to the same volume on pp. 1-2.

¹³³ Rigney (2004), pp. 361-96, specifically p. 369.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 389-90.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 369.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 390.

analytic inadequacy of the sovereign state' in *Through Other Continents*.¹³⁷ In the context of my thesis, this aspect of cultural memory is particularly relevant to the study of such Panhellenic texts as the Homeric epics, performed all over the Greek world for several centuries. Dimock's vision of intertextual 'deep time' also provides a rationale for studies such as this in the modern age, as it reveals 'a crisscrossing set of pathways, open-ended and ever multiplying, weaving in and out of other geographies, other languages and cultures' in such a way as to bind literature written here and now not only to the rest of the world but to the rest of time.¹³⁸

In spite of this, the metaphorical nature of 'memory of literature' has prompted some to question the validity of analysing in terms of memory at all, and to wonder why we need to replace 'old' terminology such as myth or tradition. The following section explores the differences between memory and its 'older' alternatives and offers a defence of memory-based criticism, as used in this thesis.

ii) Memory, myth and tradition

In an article highly critical of memory studies, Gedi and Elam wrote that collective memory 'is but a misleading new name for the old familiar "myth"'.¹³⁹ It is 'new jargon' which erodes old distinctions (for example that between memory and history) and it will lead to 'a deterioration, even... a disintegration of entire fields of scientific knowledge',¹⁴⁰ a heavy charge, indeed. Myth is, as Gedi and Elam suggested, an important aspect of memory studies and one integral to this thesis, as it is one of the most important cultural factors informing the poets'/writers' creative process and the audiences' interpretive process. It is not a term which this study of memory in any way attempts to negate. There is precedent for this incorporation of myth into memory theory too. Stephan Feuchtwang has written about the way in which memories of events in the relatively recent past become mythologised in a 'caesura moment'¹⁴¹ and Jan Assmann has also engaged with this idea, arguing that myth is always the outcome when actual historical events are mediated by memory. According to this idea, memory becomes formalised as myth,

¹³⁷ Dimock (2006), p. 3.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 3.

¹³⁹ Gedi and Elam (1996), 30-50, p. 47.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.40.

¹⁴¹ Feuchtwang (2005), pp. 179-93.

exerting ‘a lasting, normative, and formative power.’¹⁴² This is not to say that they become set in stone; myth, rather, offers a template which is flexible and capacious into which new events can be folded and thereby, understood.

Within Classics, Hans-Joachim Gehrke has explored these processes described by Feuchtwang and Assmann in action in ancient Athens, in conjunction with the Persian Wars.¹⁴³ He writes not only of the mythologising of the Battle of Marathon in Athens’ recent history, which defined Athenians’ self-identity as defenders of liberty against the Barbarians and protectors of those weaker than themselves, but also the way in which all earlier Athenian mythology was retrospectively redefined in the light of this.

Furthermore, he writes that myth could be ‘Fed by the imagination of the poets’; for example, he states that details invented by Euripides could quickly become assimilated into the facts of ‘history’.¹⁴⁴

Gehrke chooses not to identify this process as ‘memory’ but instead calls it ‘intentional history.’ His use of the word ‘intentional’ draws attention to the self-conscious moulding and re-moulding of political identity based on the distant past. While his approach is interesting in its own right, ‘intentional history’ does not provide the scope offered by memory. As discussed above, this thesis is grounded in two conceptions of memory which go well beyond Gehrke’s model of ‘intentional history.’ Firstly, in addition to ‘intentional’ remembering, it is also concerned with *involuntary* remembering and the triggering of memories that might suggest an interpretation which runs counter to the main thrust of the text. Secondly, I define memory against conventional definitions of history, as possessing a non-linear temporality and an ability to excite empathy, a politically affective force.¹⁴⁵ In addition, although myth is important to cultural memory, it is only a part of it. If myth is ‘the story’, ‘memory of literature’ concerns specific tellings of the story and the ways in which they interconnect with other tellings of that story or indeed, via linguistic, imagistic or thematic devices, with other texts through time.

‘Tradition’, too, shares some elements of memory. T. S. Eliot, in his seminal essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, suggests that the poet exists in a state which simultaneously connects him to ‘the whole literature of Europe from Homer’ and the here

¹⁴² J. Assmann (2011), p. 38.

¹⁴³ Gehrke (2001), pp. 286-313.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, pp. 298-99.

¹⁴⁵ Radstone (2005), pp. 138-39.

and now of the contemporary world.¹⁴⁶ He also argues that each act of creation in the present moment affects the tradition, reshaping all its works in the light of the new.¹⁴⁷ In this sense, tradition has much in common with memory, which also reconstructs the past from the present and so, folds the tenses.

It is clear that Eliot's conception of tradition shares much with Erll and Rigney's model of cultural memory, in particular, with their idea of intertextuality as a kind of 'memory of literature.' His vision of each new work reshaping all the works before it also has resonance with Dimock's perception of 'deep time.' However, tradition, like myth, only represents a part of memory. Eliot's version of tradition sees it encapsulated in the mind of the poet and in this 'poet' bears a resemblance to Roland Barthes' 'Author-God' who, alone, holds the elusive 'meaning' of the text,¹⁴⁸ however much he, as a being in his own right, is 'surrendered' to his art.¹⁴⁹ With Erll and Rigney, this thesis sees memory as being held, rather, in the relationship between the text and the minds of its readers, their meanings mutually constitutive. In addition, tradition, like myth, suggests a side of memory which is intentional, imposing order and existing as an institution in the Canon. In contrast, memory is an affective process which in its unintentional, insubordinate guise might service the institution of tradition but might equally have an unsettling effect, disrupting its careful narrative of inclusion and exclusion.

Ultimately, this thesis defends the use of 'memory' rather than 'myth' or 'tradition' because memory encapsulates those terms and offers so much more potential for approaching texts. Astrid Erll defines memory as 'an umbrella term for all those processes of a biological, medial, or social nature which relate past and present (and future) in sociocultural contexts,'¹⁵⁰ and thus, when it is used as a medium to explore literary texts, it can unite traditionally disparate approaches to textual criticism such as the historical, sociological and psychological. It also provides a way of thinking about the interaction between text and audience, particularly in the way in which character and audience memories clash or coincide.

¹⁴⁶ Eliot (1932), p. 14.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 15.

¹⁴⁸ Barthes (1977), pp. 142-48.

¹⁴⁹ For the poet 'surrendered' see Eliot (1932), p. 17.

¹⁵⁰ Erll (2011), p. 7.

Classics and memory studies

As I mentioned in the thesis overview at the start of this Introduction, there has been work within Classics which has taken a similar memory-centred approach to classical texts as that which I take here but most of it is focused on single genres. I have discussed a few such works already, for example that by Elizabeth Minchin (on p. 16) and Jonathan Shay (on pp. 24-25). In the field of tragedy, the most ambitious work has been done on the study of memory in two unpublished PhD theses by Elena Christophorou and Catelina Popescu.¹⁵¹

Christophorou's thesis explores individual and collective memory in Euripides' plays and, like the present study, examines the ways in which 'tragic memory' as 'an active, purposeful practice of remembering ... both preserved and created an awareness of the common past of the Athenians.'¹⁵² Her thesis is grounded thoroughly in the theory of memory, such as that by Tulving, Kansteiner and Assmann, and considers the ways in which the intersection of represented memory and audience memory contributes to political definition. Where she concentrates on Euripides, this study broadens the focus to look across genres, but also narrows it to look in more detail at the mode of remembering as testimony.

Popescu's thesis looks at memory across the texts that tell the story of Orestes' matricide. It is also underpinned by theory and involves the interaction of represented memory and audience memory. However the theory which informs her thesis is less political in its focus and more interested in gendered and bodily remembering. Her work is most important for this thesis in its study—in the wake of Aleida Assmann—of the body as a carrier of traumatic memory in tragedy. My own focus on traumatic testimony picks up and builds from this point.

The field of oratory is not represented in this thesis but Bernd Steinbock has done ground-breaking work in cultural memory here. His analysis delineates the various cultural memory communities interacting under the umbrella of the classical *polis* and explores the way in which texts, festivals, rituals, cults and public commemorations acted as carriers as well as repositories of social memory.¹⁵³ In spite of Steinbock's emphasis on

¹⁵¹ Christophorou (2009); Popescu (2012).

¹⁵² Christophorou (2009), pp. 28-29.

¹⁵³ Steinbock (2013).

oratory, this is a useful work for this thesis in thinking about the ritual performance contexts of epic and tragedy and the contexts in which the works of Plato may also have been performed or read.

While the field of work on memory within Classics is still relatively small, there are several works which do not discuss memory directly, or are not informed by memory theory, but which nevertheless have an important bearing on this thesis. These fall, broadly, into the categories of intertextuality and political criticism and are discussed in the following subsections.

i) Intertextuality

Because memory is still a relatively unexplored area within Classics, some of the most interesting and inspiring scholarship on which this project builds has been done in studies which are not couched in terms of memory. Many of these speak of intertextuality in various guises and as such, are related to memory in that intertextuality can be cast as the metaphorical memory which one text has of others. For example, under the heading “Text and Tradition” Simon Goldhill explores the ‘interpenetration of ideas’ between Homeric epic and tragedy through the characters of Orestes, Ajax and Philoctetes.¹⁵⁴ He analyses the ways in which ‘the values and characterization of the heroic past and the contemporary world clash with, undermine, illuminate each other’ making the moral and social evaluations of tragic drama ‘so complex’, concluding that ‘Sophocles may be read for and/or against but never without Homer.’¹⁵⁵

A similar intertextual approach to tragedy is found in Isabelle Torrance’s use of ‘metapoetry.’¹⁵⁶ Her vision of ‘metapoetry’ as consisting of both author-intentioned intertextuality and ‘audience participation in the production of meaning’ contributed to my methodology of considering the site of memory as a process involving the author invoking earlier texts and the audience using memories of these texts in their interpretations.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Goldhill (1986), pp. 138-67.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 161.

¹⁵⁶ Torrance (2013).

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.5.

Intertextuality is also at the heart of Andrea Wilson Nightingale's *Genres in Dialogue*, in which she illustrates the fluidity of genre and posits the notion that genres are constantly in dialogue.¹⁵⁸ It is also an important element of many works of scholarship dealing with literary aspects of Plato's dialogues; for example, Blondell's *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues*.¹⁵⁹ Also, although its specifics sit at a tangent to this study, Johannes Haubold's and G. R. Boys-Stones' edited volume on Plato's interaction with Hesiod, particularly the chapter by Barbara Graziosi on "Hesiod in Classical Athens", was instrumental to my understanding of the ways in which Plato engages 'closely, if obliquely' with other texts in order to challenge and replace them with more 'elevated' discourse.¹⁶⁰

While these discussions of intertextuality were useful for this thesis—especially those by Goldhill and Torrance which focused on its political aspects—construing the intertextual relationship as one of memory seems to me to offer so much more potential. The moments where represented memories, author memories and audience memories meet are explosive and productive. The relationship between author, text and audience is overlapping and reciprocal (though not symmetrical), making it impossible to speak of authorial intention without also speaking of audience memory, or of audience-generated meaning that doesn't interrelate with memories evoked by the author.

As a short aside, it is also worth offering a definition or explanation for my use of the term 'audience'. Throughout, this thesis considers possible audience or reader reactions to the texts studied. For the most part, the factors which inform my conception of 'audience' are closely related to the genres performed or written and will be discussed in individual chapters. However, Revermann's study of competence in audiences of Athenian drama seems relevant, and informs my account of 'audience', across all three genres.

Revermann suggests that there is a spectrum or 'stratification' of audience response and that this stratification is built into the drama.¹⁶¹ In this way, the drama will still 'work' if there is only base-line audience competence but we might assume high-level competence in many in the audience because the '[t]he existence, nature and amount of ... inter-

¹⁵⁸ Nightingale (1995).

¹⁵⁹ Blondell (2002).

¹⁶⁰ Graziosi (2010), pp. 111-132, quotation from p. 131.

¹⁶¹ Revermann (2006), pp. 99-124.

textuality considerably strengthen the argument in favour of frequent exposure to drama and the type of competence thus acquired.¹⁶²

With this in mind, the thesis also accepts that speaking of ancient audiences is inevitably awkward and imprecise, given how little we know about audiences even in ages which are relatively well documented, like those in classical Athens, let alone those which are not. In this, the thesis aligns itself with Victoria Wohl who writes that ‘The best I can do is work from my own reactions, applying the cultural filters I know about (and there are no doubt many more that I don’t know about) to try to imagine his [the audience member’s] response.’¹⁶³ She speaks, as I will, of “our” response ‘in full recognition of the inevitable gulf (synchronic and diachronic) the pronoun conceals and the imaginative projection required to leap it.’¹⁶⁴

ii) Politics and memory

This thesis draws on a range of political readings of epic, tragedy and Plato, some discussed above, others including work by Neil Croally and Justina Gregory on Euripides,¹⁶⁵ and Malcolm Schofield, Sara Monoson and Peter Euben on Plato.¹⁶⁶ Croally and Gregory provide detailed political readings of the *Trojan Women*, considering its possible impact on an Athenian audience in the wake of the slaughter of the Melians during the Peloponnesian War. Schofield, Euben and Monoson attempt to ‘repoliticise’ Plato as an Athenian responding to and engaging with Athenian democracy in his philosophy. Monoson, for example, argues that ‘Plato does not present philosophical practice as a purely other-worldly activity or as a retreat from and opposition to the political world but as a brave and daring effort to call one’s community to its own best possible self without romanticizing what a rigorous pursuit of that best self would entail.’

But while this approach will be important for my Plato chapter, the thesis as a whole is most strongly influenced in its conception of politics and citizenship by Elton Barker’s study on the theme of the *agōn* in Homeric epic, historiography and tragedy and Vincent

¹⁶² Ibid, p. 118.

¹⁶³ Wohl (2015), p. xi.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p. xi.

¹⁶⁵ Croally (1994); Gregory (1991).

¹⁶⁶ Schofield (2006); Monoson (2000); Euben (1994) and (1997).

Farenga's exploration of evolving notions of citizenship in ancient Greece.¹⁶⁷ Both are, like this thesis, cross-genre studies and both use the idea of memory, both explicitly and implicitly, to explore possible audience interpretations. Although memory is not the focus of their investigations and is, therefore, not theorised in these instances, they nevertheless demonstrate a link between memory, literary interpretation and political affect which provided inspiration for this study. This thesis aligns itself with Barker and Farenga and the body of literary criticism of classical works which sees literature as integral to, rather than divorced from, culture and society.

These works by Barker and Farenga were influential in a number of ways to greater and lesser extents. Their perceptions of political performativity inform this thesis' approach not only in the way that it considers the performance of politics in the texts studied but also in the way that it sees the act of memory—particularly collective memory—itself.¹⁶⁸ As discussed above, when groups remember together, that process simultaneously 're-members' the group, subtly or even radically altering the way in which it sees itself in relation to the world around it.

This study also incorporates the notion of political performativity in its analysis of testimony, particularly in the institution of the law-court. I touched, above, on the way in which Johnstone analyses the means by which this occurs via rhetoric and narrative,¹⁶⁹ but Stuart Hampshire's exploration of the institutionalisation of the law court is also important to this thesis. In the words of Hampshire, political society is cemented by 'the principle of institutionalised fairness in procedures for the resolution' of conflict.¹⁷⁰ Political and legal institutions dedicated to 'fair procedures' provide 'a common ground of loyalty shared by the citizens who recognise this institutional bond between them.'¹⁷¹ According to Hampshire too, all such institutions are 'subject to the single prescription *audi alteram partem* ('hear the other side')' and fairness of public procedure depends on this.¹⁷² Therefore, the law-court not only provides a forum for hearing and judging

¹⁶⁷ Barker (2009); Farenga (2006).

¹⁶⁸ See e.g. Farenga (2006), p. 4, building on Goldhill and Osborne (1999) and Barker (2009), p. 16, drawing on Foucault and Giddens.

¹⁶⁹ See this thesis, p. 33.

¹⁷⁰ Hampshire (1999), p. 77

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 77.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, p. 21.

contrasting memory-testimonies but also represents a (performative) process which is instrumental to and constitutive of political society.

This thesis was also influenced by Farenga and Barker's use of Haubold's *Homer's People*,¹⁷³ both in terms of the pre-political groups within the poems and the groups listening. Haubold's analysis builds on seminal work done by Gregory Nagy, who according to Haubold, was ground-breaking in his suggestion 'that what is "poetry" in Homer cannot be grasped without a thorough study of its broader socio-cultural implications and *vice versa*.' Haubold's analysis of the Homeric *laoi* as 'founding people' provides the basis for Farenga's conceptualisation of developing citizenship in the *Odyssey* and Chapter 1 of this thesis interacts with his reading very closely.

One of the most satisfying results of approaching classical texts using memory theory was that it provided a way to steer a course out of the impasse between political and aesthetic approaches to the texts studied, both useful in their ways but both equally reductive. In this, it was also influenced by Barker whose stance is both clearly political but also rooted in the language of the texts. In this, Victoria Wohl's work was also important. In her analysis of form in Euripides' plays, she brings aesthetics and politics together by suggesting that tragedy's power to evoke strong emotions is central to what makes it political.¹⁷⁴ This thesis also aligns itself with such an approach as Chapter 2 will discuss in much greater detail.

The way in which Barker and Farenga were most influential, though, was in their use of memory to inform their criticism. Farenga's chapter on the *Odyssey* identifies, as I do, the ban on memory in *Odyssey* 24 as a moment which has a different significance for its internal and [implied] external audiences. He writes that, for this implied audience, the act of total forgetting becomes a 'grandiose thesmion' prompting them to debate and discuss the means by which Odysseus implemented his justice, whereas for the internal audience, Odysseus' heroic *dikē* will be forgotten and never replicated.¹⁷⁵ I will discuss Farenga's analysis and my rather different conclusions more fully in Chapter 1, but this separation between the memories of internal and external audiences is critical to my approach in this thesis as a whole.

¹⁷³ Haubold (2000).

¹⁷⁴ Wohl (2015), pp. ix-xii.

¹⁷⁵ Farenga (2006), pp. 259-61.

Barker's analysis of Homeric epic feeds into his exploration of the later texts in a way that not only suggests an intertextual relationship but also, implicitly and explicitly, memories of the earlier text in the minds of the audience. Barker refers to memory implicitly, in his discussion of the embedded and actual audiences of the *Iliad* and their response to Thersites in the assembly.¹⁷⁶ Here, he suggests that the audiences' memories of Achilles' challenge to Agamemnon are dependent on their response to Thersites' parody of this challenge, and vice versa. If they are persuaded by Thersites, they may 'trivialise' Achilles' challenge; if however, they view Thersites' dissent through the frame of Achilles' challenge, they will see Thersites as the trivial one. Similar situations arise throughout the poem, notably when Achilles calls the Achaeans to a final assembly regretful of his fall-out with Agamemnon;¹⁷⁷ and when several Achaean heroes, for example Menelaus and Antilochus act out different dissenting modes as spectators at the funeral games.¹⁷⁸ The reciprocal relationship between memory of the past and experience/interpretation of the present in all these examples is one that I have discussed in conjunction with memory theory and one that will inform this thesis.

Barker discusses memory explicitly, and cultural memory implicitly, in his analysis of Sophocles' *Ajax*. Here, he supposes a memory of epic in the tragic audience which feeds directly into their interpretation of Sophocles' play. He writes that Ajax's dissent is marked in particular ways as Achillean and that in the debates which follow it, the audience is invited to view his actions alongside Achilles' but also alongside their memories of his own actions in the *Iliad*. In this way, the audience's memory not only shapes its response to Ajax but prompts debate about the manner and management of dissent in society.¹⁷⁹ In this example, it is the possible disjunction between internal and external audiences which was most instructive for this thesis: not simply that they may remember differently, but that the external audience is viewing the play with the memory of a bank of other texts, notably, the *Iliad*, and that this (cultural) memory informs their interpretation.

Where my approach differs from those of Barker and Farenga is, on the one hand, that memory is my central theme rather than a peripheral consideration and also that, in this

¹⁷⁶ Barker (2009), p. 60.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 78-81.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 86-88.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 281-324.

thesis, memory is theorised. These examples from Barker and Farenga show the potential that a study of memory can bring to political textual criticism but a robustly theorised approach—one which takes into account the inherent politics in the processes of ‘individual’, collective and cultural memory, its re-creative nature and its affective power—provides the opportunity to build on their textual criticism in new and exciting ways.

1 Remembering and Forgetting Among Homer's People

1.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the idea that the *Odyssey's* performance at the Panathenaea was integral to the ways in which the city remembered or commemorated its inception and reshaped its identity in the present. It goes about this by analysing the interrelation of memory between the poem's internal and external audiences. The chapter proposes that where represented memory evokes, reflects or clashes with the memories of the audience, the text provokes debate in the audience about the values and practices which should underlie their society. In the course of this analysis, the chapter identifies represented memory as testimony in the framework of a metaphorical trial and this provides the opportunity to explore the political relations operational within memory and within the text. As central to all of this, the chapter perceives the audience as a political collective, akin to the juridical collectives of democratic Athens, placing on that audience a shared responsibility for justice that is lacking in the poem. At every stage in this process, the chapter draws on the theories of memory, testimony and trauma set out in the Introduction and discussed with more specific relevance to the *Odyssey* below.

The subsections of this introduction set out some of the key ideas in the chapter. I begin by detailing the metaphor of the trial which is based on a reading of the *Odyssey* by Vincent Farenga. I continue by examining the collectives of the internal and external audiences, firstly within the context of Johannes Haubold's conception of the epic *Iaos* and the Athenian *leōs*; secondly by contrasting the Odyssean collectives with those of the *Iliad*; and finally, by considering what might be meant by the collective memory of the external audience.

i) The Odyssey as trial

In his book *Citizen and Self in Ancient Greece*, Vincent Farenga asks the question: 'is it far-fetched to infer that Homer encouraged his audience to identify Odysseus, Telemachus, and Penelope as potential "plaintiffs" in a dispute settlement ... with their enemies, particularly the suitors?'¹⁸⁰ Using an analysis of the Ithacan assembly in Book 2, he concludes that it is not 'far-fetched' at all: Telemachus operates as the "plaintiff" and the suitors, led by Antinous, are his enemies. The dispute is heard by the Ithacan people, the

¹⁸⁰ Farenga (2006), p. 206.

laoi.¹⁸¹ Farenga underpins his reading with Johannes Haubold’s analysis of the epic *laoi* as a “‘founding people” who lay the groundwork for civic institutions.’ Drawing on Haubold, Farenga argues that because the people are depicted as ‘an audience of epic’ within epic poetry, the actual audience is encouraged to see continuity between themselves and the epic *laoi*; in Farenga’s words, they would ‘recognize in Ithaca’s *laos* a primitive, imperfect prototype of themselves.’¹⁸² In the Ithacan assembly of Book 2, because the epic *laoi* take the role of ‘imperfect’ juror-judges, the *Odyssey* encourages its ‘implied’ audience to see themselves as juridical figures, who must ‘compensate for their ancestors’ cognitive and moral helplessness.’¹⁸³ Farenga’s argument concludes that the meaning of justice in the poem differs for its internal jury – the *laos* of Ithaca – who experience Zeus’ divinely bestowed *eklēsis* (‘complete forgetting’), and the external jury – the ‘implied’ audience – who do not.¹⁸⁴ While the internal *laos* of Ithaca is forbidden to remember or retell the tale of Odysseus’ slaughter of the suitors, the implied audience is encouraged to see it as a ‘grandiose thesmion,’ or legal precedent grounded in cultural memory.¹⁸⁵

The notional trial is particularly important in Farenga’s analysis because of his central focus on the evolution of citizenship. Indeed, his chapter on the *Odyssey* is followed by one on Hesiod’s *Works and Days*, which deals with a legal dispute in a *polis* more recognisable to contemporary audiences. This chapter draws on Farenga’s approach—and will return to his analysis of the relationship between the *Odyssey* and *Works and Days* in its conclusion—but I do not argue here that the *Odyssey* literally represents a trial. Unlike Farenga, I find this far-fetched. I do suggest, however, that the model of the trial is a useful lens through which to view memory’s functions in the political societies of epic’s internal and external audiences. My use of the trial metaphor differs from Farenga’s in significant ways though. While Farenga’s exploration of the *Odyssey* as a trial focuses on the first Ithacan assembly in Book 2, my analysis will use the metaphor as a way of reading the text as a whole. According to my analysis, the memories which other

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, pp. 207.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, pp. 209-10, drawing on Haubold (2000).

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, pp. 205-14.

¹⁸⁴ ἡμεῖς δ’ αὖ παιδῶν τε κασιγνήτων τε φόνοιο / ἔκλησιν θεωμεν (‘and put upon them complete forgetting of their sons and brothers’), *Od.* 24.484-85. Translations of the *Odyssey* are based on Lattimore (1965) and modified by me, unless otherwise stated. For the earlier discussion of the *eklēsis*, see pp. 38-40.

¹⁸⁵ Farenga (2006), p. 259.

characters—Menelaus and Nestor, for example—share with Telemachus function as the testimony by which Odysseus and the suitors are judged inside and outside the poem.

To see these memory-narratives as testimony further differentiates my analysis from Farenga's. When he speaks of testimony at all, it is untheorised and presupposes a narrow, legalistic interpretation.¹⁸⁶ In contrast, this chapter considers the full resonance of the term, as discussed in the Introduction. The suppression or encouragement of testimony is revealing of the biases inherent in the way the metaphorical trial is constructed. This, in turn, reflects the authority at play, not only in the world of the poem, but also the authority the poem seeks to exert over its own interpretation. The processes of memory and the evaluation of testimony are key to understanding this play of authority: both memory and evaluation, here, are collective and politically effective. They do not merely feed a literary-critical experience of the text but allow the audience to read beyond the words of the narrator or even the edicts of Zeus.

This chapter will be built around Farenga's conclusion that the *eklēsis* separates the 'imperfect' internal audience from the implied audience, in whom a political transformation is effected. Unlike Farenga, however, who focuses on the *implied* audience members, this chapter also explores the poem's possible reception by its actual audiences in classical Athens, at the Panathenaea. Though this approach is necessarily speculative, its consideration of the political context of the poem's performance and reception will add greater nuance to Farenga's argument. As part of this analysis of internal and external audiences, the chapter will examine the mechanics by which the trial is constructed, in particular, the use made of memory as testimony. By examining who is allowed to remember, or bear witness, how their testimony attempts to 're-member' or restructure political society and how the audience is encouraged to interpret these memories, it will investigate the interplay of memory and power in the poem. Finally, whereas Farenga focuses on the mimetic way in which the poem represents the self-transformation needed to form juridical citizens from the pre-civic *basileus* and *laoi*, my analysis will place greater emphasis on the audience as a collective, and in particular, on their collective memory.

¹⁸⁶ Farenga (2006), p. 255.

ii) Athenian *leōs*/epic *laos*

As stated above, Johannes Haubold's analysis of the epic *laoi* as 'founding people' provides the basis for Farenga's reading of the *Odyssey* and it is also the bedrock of my argument here. Haubold suggests, the performance context of the poem alters the extent to which the audience identifies with the epic *laoi*. He describes a change in the depiction of the *laoi* from epic to archaic and classical texts and explores the effect of this change on the way in which the epic *laoi* were received in classical Athens. In archaic and classical poetry, the *laoi* no longer 'expose the incurable vulnerability of social life' as they do in epic, but rather 'celebrate its successful transformation.' Whereas in Homer, 'the gathering of the people does not usually lead to the establishment of a permanent social structure', archaic and classical texts 'insist that definite progress can be made.'¹⁸⁷ These later *laoi* are peoples who bridge the transition between pre-political and political society and are associated with the foundation of the *polis* or of institutions of it.

One significant example Haubold uses to illustrate this is Athena's institution of the Areopagus in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*:

Aθ. κλύοιτ' ἄν ἤδη θεσμόν, **Ἀττικὸς λεώς**,
πρώτας δίκας κρίνοντες αἵματος χυτοῦ.
ἔσται δὲ καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν Αἰγέως στρατῶ
αἰεὶ δικαστῶν τοῦτο βουλευτήριον.¹⁸⁸

Athena: If it please you, **people of Attica**, hear now my decree,
who are judging the first case of bloodletting.
In future times there will always be this council of judges
for the army of Aegeus.

He argues that it is the people who experience this foundation as a 'decisive change' and that this is indicated by the contrast between Athena's use of 'now' / 'the first case' (*ἤδη* / *πρώτας δίκας*) and 'in the future' / 'always' (*αἰεὶ* / *τὸ λοιπὸν*).¹⁸⁹ Therefore, while the *laos* of the play are still pre-political, this foundational act institutes a link between the people of the primitive past and those watching in the theatre. For the audiences of classical Athens, *these* are the 'founding people' of their city, whereas the *laoi* of epic

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 167.

¹⁸⁸ Aesch. *Eu.* 681-4, Haubold's translation in (2000), p. 171. My use of bold text.

¹⁸⁹ Haubold (2000), pp. 171-72.

represent something more distant both in terms of time and space. They are not only ‘long ago,’ they are also not exclusively Athenian.

In light of this, Haubold suggests that rather than identifying wholly with the Homeric *laos*, ‘the *laos* of Homer’s epic and the *leos* of Athenian ritual intersect with and thus illuminate each other.’¹⁹⁰ He argues that the Great Panathenaea encouraged the Athenian people to see themselves as a gathered *laos* and that because of this ‘it is hard to believe that the celebrants at the Great Panathenaea would not have reacted with a mixture of recognition and rejection to what they heard.’¹⁹¹ However, he concludes that the ritual solution to the Achaeans’ problems is provided not by the poem but by the festival itself in its celebration of the founding of Athens. The Athenians, therefore, identify as ‘Attic because [they] are not Homeric’; and they are not Homeric because they are ‘not doomed like the people of the Achaeans.’ Ultimately, as Haubold states, ‘[t]he problems described in Homer are “Achaean”’; their solution—found in the institutions of Athens’ democratic *polis*—‘is left to the Athenians.’¹⁹²

This chapter sets out to explore not only what is remembered or forgotten by internal and implied audiences of the poem, but also the poem’s cultural and political resonance in the context of democratic Athens. What is especially important in considering this political framework for receiving Homer’s poems is that the audience—especially the audience at the Panathenaea—is a collective. One thing which makes them so is, paradoxically perhaps, their shared cultural memory of the *Odyssey*, the founding history of their culture. The notion of the audience as a collective will be central to this chapter’s exploration of the way in which memory is provoked by the text, with repeated formulas or resonant details, for reasons of political effect. It will also inform the chapter’s understanding of the way in which the ‘apathy’ and ‘moral helplessness’ of Ithacan *laos* encourages audience members to assess their own social structures and social engagement.¹⁹³ It will, furthermore, demonstrate that one aspect of the epic *laos*’ inadequacy is their failure to remember together, to find a consensus and to act as a collective, a failure which the external audience must rectify.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 189.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, p. 189.

¹⁹² Ibid, p. 194.

¹⁹³ Farena, p. 213 and 210 respectively.

iii) Iliadic and Odyssean collectives

As I will come to discuss, the Ithacan assemblies do, at least, allow for some discussion of collective decisions and this stands in stark contrast to the decisions made by Alcinous, for the Phaeacians, and Zeus, for the gods, which are entirely autocratic. Alcinous' decision to transport Odysseus back to Ithaca is made in the Phaeacian assembly.¹⁹⁴ Though there are several references to Alcinous' 'men of counsel,' Alcinous does not invite discussion or advice but opens the assembly with his decision. The assembly closes at the end of his speech with the words *μηδέ τις ἀρνείσθω* ('Let no one refuse').¹⁹⁵ The decision is made, with no debate, despite the prophecy that one day their ship would be turned to stone and rocks thrown up around their island to hide it because of the help they give to wayfarers.¹⁹⁶

This may be seen as courageous on the Phaeacians' part but I suggest that the audience of the *Odyssey* is invited to see the decision of the Phaeacians as inadequate in its failure to allow members of the collective a voice in a course of action which they know may prove disastrous for the community. As Haubold suggests, the *laoi* of Scherie 'have sunk into blissful stagnation.'¹⁹⁷ I will go on to show that aspects of this stagnation are also seen in the Ithacan assembly, where political inaction is allied with poor or ineffectual memories.¹⁹⁸

Indeed, the inadequacy of political decision-making in the *Odyssey* stands in stark contrast to the way in which it is depicted among the Achaeans in the *Iliad* and the audience's memory of this is also something which they may bring to bear on their interpretation of the poem. Although decision-making is highly problematic in the *Iliad*, Elton Barker argues persuasively that the assemblies in the poem may be read as 'part of a series of struggles that progressively explore the possibility for, and value of, dissent in the community.'¹⁹⁹ According to this reading, the audience's experience of debate in the poem 'helps construct an audience engaged in thinking about how people interact with

¹⁹⁴ *Od.* 8. 24-43.

¹⁹⁵ *Od.* 8.43.

¹⁹⁶ *Od.* 8.565-69.

¹⁹⁷ Haubold (2000), p. 115.

¹⁹⁸ See this thesis, pp. 79-84.

¹⁹⁹ Barker (2009), p. 84.

each other in the context of an arena in which public concerns are raised and contested.²⁰⁰ Debate is institutionalised in the *Iliad*, not in the poem, but in the *polis* of the audience. This might be seen, as Barker suggests, in the representation of dispute settlement depicted on Achilles' shield in *Iliad* 18. Here, in the first city depicted, two men put their quarrel over 'the blood price / for a man who had been killed' in front of a jury of elders, 'in session on benches of polished stone' (οἱ δὲ γέροντες / εἴλατ' ἐπὶ ξεστοῖσι λίθοις ἱερῶ).²⁰¹ In such a process, the individual juror interacts with the group in order to formulate a judgement which will benefit the whole community. The fact that the benches are made of stone indicates a permanence to this practice; that the stone is 'polished,' either seems to suggest that the community cares enough to polish the benches or that they have been rubbed to a shine with regular use. In both cases, there is a sense of the institution's value within the political community. If this scene depicts a flash-forward to the life of the *Iliad*'s audience beyond the epic world, there is every reason to think that even the first audiences of the *Odyssey* must have been well-versed in the idea of juridical decision-making as a collective process.

For this reason, I disagree with Farenga's conclusion that the end of the *Odyssey* stands as a 'grandiose *thesmion*' for the implied or external audience. The poem's civic value stands less as a precedent and more as an incitement to debate amongst the collective about the nature of justice and the way it should be enacted. Because of this, the implied audience of the poem must measure itself not only in terms of the development of its individual citizen-jurors but as a decision-making collective. It is their shared memory of the totality of the poem, together with the way in which the poem interacts with their cultural memory, which allows them to do this.

iv) Re-membering the collective

To speak of shared, collective or cultural memory is not to deny that the individual memories of audience members will not differ in some respects, but rather, to suggest that these differences have to be negotiated as a group. In his study of *Polarity and Analogy*, Geoffrey Lloyd discusses the idea that the institutions of democracy 'guaranteed free speech' but that 'it was not imagined that this procured unanimity.' In his terms, the

²⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 87.

²⁰¹ *Il.* 18.497-504.

‘democratic ideal’ was not one of ‘total agreement’ but, rather, one of managing disagreement.²⁰² Similarly, David Elmer’s analysis of collective decision making in Homeric epic rests on the distinction between consensus and unanimity.²⁰³ In consensus all parties are not necessarily of one mind but acquiescence is negotiated and there is a similar negotiation involved in collective memory and its role in interpretation. Certain details or episodes may resonate more strongly with some, given their personal circumstances but these differences feed and enliven the resulting debate.

Moreover, such differences occur within what seems likely to have been a shared experience of the poem as a whole. Martin Revermann’s study of audience competence in the context of tragic theatre suggests that ‘vase paintings...provide fascinating analogies for audience response in the theatre’ and given the preponderance of vase paintings based on epic themes, this seems likely to carry over into audiences of epic.²⁰⁴ He argues that the lack of name tags on such vessels suggests that viewers would have had ‘the expertise needed to decode the iconography’ because such ‘vases would not exist if ‘the predominant response to the iconographies in their primary context of use were (socially exclusive) ignorance and puzzlement rather than (socially inclusive) recognition.’²⁰⁵ This is not to say that audiences would have interpreted this iconography in a uniform way—as discussed above, interpretation would have to be negotiated. Reverman’s study does, however, lend weight to the idea of a base level of uniform recognition among audience members and this suggests that shared memory of such things is also likely.

That there would have been some semblance of a ‘shared memory’ of the poem also seems likely for those audiences at the Athenian Panathenaea, who would have heard the poem not just as a group, collected in one place, but as a political collective with shared values and critically, cultural memory.²⁰⁶ Nicole Loraux suggests that the Great Panathenaea was significant not just in that it commemorated Athens’ founding but that the ritual itself ‘founded and refounded’ the city in its enactment.²⁰⁷ Haubold claims that it was ‘the one Attic festival which most ostensibly plays out processes of social

²⁰² Lloyd (1996), pp. 132-33; quoted in Barker (2009), p. 5 in order to set out ‘the boundaries to debate.’

²⁰³ Elmer (2012), p. 7.

²⁰⁴ Revermann (2006), p. 100.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

²⁰⁶ Graziosi and Haubold (2005), p. 118.

²⁰⁷ Loraux (1993), p. 42.

formation’;²⁰⁸ that ‘it dramatizes precisely that test-case of social life where collective crisis leads on to the rise of a renewed social world whose survival is in turn secured by new institutions, above all a new “contract” with the Patron goddess.’²⁰⁹ My discussion of Farenga and Haubold has shown already that the *Odyssey* is, in itself, a foundational epic for ancient Greek societies—a narrative that ‘set[s] out to explain where we come from’²¹⁰ and as such, a key part of those societies’ cultural memories. When heard at the Panathenaia, however, it becomes part of the ritual of the foundation of Athens specifically, of its inception and of its ritualised re-remembering of that event. In view of this, Haubold suggests, that the Athenians would identify as the Attic *leōs*, both identifying with and rejecting the Homeric *laos* of the *Odyssey*.²¹¹ It is because of this too that the experience of listening to the poem would have been framed for the whole audience by this specific—political—context. And, as discussed in the Introduction,²¹² this shared context would have shaped the kinds of memories and empathies provoked by poem in its audience.

This introduction has set out the key metaphor of the trial which underlies this chapter, providing it with a political context for thinking about memory. As part of this, it has detailed my conception of the audiences internal and external to the poem and has suggested the importance of seeing these audiences as political collectives. It has also suggested the ways in which one might realistically and most productively speak of the external audience’s collective memory in their reception of the poem. The next section draws out some of the theory discussed in the Introduction with more specific relevance to the way it is used in this chapter.

1.2 Modern theory/ancient texts: trauma, testimony and truth.

This chapter draws on the main theories around the political nature of individual and social memory discussed in the Introduction. These theories underpin the chapter’s study of the place of memory in dispute settlement and its analysis of the creative or re-

²⁰⁸ Haubold (2000), p. 185.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 187-88.

²¹⁰ Barker and Christensen (2013), p. 32.

²¹¹ See earlier discussion, pp. 59-60.

²¹² See the discussion of collective remembering, pp. 40-43.

creative memories voiced in the poem.²¹³ They also inform my use of the trial metaphor, especially those theories surrounding the competitive nature of memory,²¹⁴ as the suitors' testimony regarding Odysseus clashes with the 'official version' offered by the narrator. At all times, the synthesis of Assmann's and Olick's theories discussed in the Introduction—that remembering as a group redefines that group—provides the groundwork for my examination of 'audience memory.'²¹⁵

In addition to these theories which underlie the thesis as a whole, this chapter adds, or draws out in greater detail, others which relate to the material more specifically. Firstly, to the bank of political theory discussed in the Introduction, I add here the notion that the text functions as a 'supplement' to the broken political society it represents. In Derrida's writing, the supplement serves two functions: it 'adds' meaning to the thing it supplements but it also signals a 'lack' which must be filled. The supplement is not the whole answer but is itself also lacking.²¹⁶ In the case of the *Odyssey*, the experience of listening to the poem supplements the 'lack' it depicts. It highlights the 'lack' of an effective political society in the poem, the problems of political apathy among the people and of an autocratic rule of law. In so doing, it provokes a response that stresses collective discussion and responsibility. In this way it offers itself as a supplement to stimulate the very political activity in the societies receiving the text, which is lacking in the societies it depicts.

Secondly, the theory of traumatic memory will underpin my analysis of the various testimonies to trauma in the poem but also my notion of the poem's reception by ancient audiences. Trauma is often defined as the effect of an incident which afflicts the individual so profoundly that it cannot be expressed but this chapter will, rather, be concerned with a more collective, communicative experience of trauma such as that described by Jeffrey Alexander and discussed in the Introduction.²¹⁷ The *Odyssey* represents a foundational trauma not just for the Ithacan people but also for ancient Greek society as a whole. The Ithacan *laos* must endure the mass slaughter of the suitors—their brothers and sons—by the returning Odysseus, and the almost-outbreak of

²¹³ For the discussion of memory in dispute settlement in the Introduction see pp. 38-39; for memory as creative see pp. 16-18.

²¹⁴ See this thesis, p. 39.

²¹⁵ For Assmann and Olick's theories see this thesis, pp. 42-43.

²¹⁶ Derrida (1974), p. 144.

²¹⁷ Alexander (2004), pp. 1-30. See Introduction, pp. 32.

civil war, in order for their society to be founded anew, in peace, under the benevolent reign of Odysseus. However, because the *Odyssey* is also a foundational text and ancient Greek audiences would have identified with the *laos* of the poem as the ‘founding people’ (albeit problematically as discussed above), they would also identify this trauma as their own. This is not to say that they would experience the intensity of its effects in their own psyches but that it would be a part of their own cultural memory of the foundation of their society.

The use of the word ‘trauma’ would be anachronistic in Homer but Eupheithes, the first speaker in the Ithacan assembly of Book 24 is described as having ‘**unforgettable grief** in his heart for his son’ (*παιδὸς γὰρ οἱ ἄλαστον ἐνὶ πρεσὶ πένθος ἔκειτο*) and I suggest that such a phrase is indicative of trauma. Dominick LaCapra describes trauma as:

a shattering experience that disrupts or even threatens to destroy experience in the sense of an integrated or at least viably articulated life. There is a sense in which trauma is an out-of-context experience that upsets expectations and unsettles one’s very understanding of existing contexts. ... Here one has an aporetic relation between representation and affect with the possibility of uncontrolled oscillation between poles of a double bind. Indeed one might postulate that an aporia marks a trauma that has not been viably worked through, hence inducing compulsive repetition of the aporetic relation.²¹⁸

Traumatic experience is marked by its shattering effect on the individual’s perception of themselves and the world around them. The traumatic experience is always present and always dominant and this affects the traumatised individual’s expectations, understanding and interaction with others. It is also marked by ‘compulsive repetition’ or (always failed) attempts to articulate the experience.

These definitions of trauma as an event which dominates the psyche and as ‘compulsive repetition’ are also evident in Nicole Loraux’s exploration of the phrase *alaston penthos*.²¹⁹ *Alastos*, like *alētheia* is ‘built on a negation of the root of forgetting’ and is always attached to either *penthos* (mourning) or *kholos* (wrath).²²⁰ It indicates an inability to stop grieving or being angry and therefore, like trauma, it dominates the psyche,

²¹⁸ LaCapra (2004), p. 117.

²¹⁹ Loraux (2001), pp. 161-67.

²²⁰ Ibid, p. 161.

shattering contexts and making the past 'into an eternal present.'²²¹ Loraux describes it, rather poetically, as 'a sense of haunting ... a ghostly presence which enters the subject and does not leave.'²²² It is, like trauma, a compulsion or 'obsession.' The main example which Loraux explores in connection with *alaston* is Achilles in his mourning for Patroclus and wrath with Hector,²²³ and Achilles is the key subject also of Jonathan Shay's *Achilles in Vietnam*, a study of war trauma. Here, he describes Achilles' battlefield rampage as an effect of 'the beserk state,' itself a symptom of his grief-trauma at the death of Patroclus.²²⁴

Loraux also explores the dangers of *alaston* for political stability, which at once translates the term from something intensely personal to something which has an effect on the community.²²⁵ Her argument is that the unforgettable experience forms the 'unforgetful' person who will never give way to amnesty. She focuses here on Electra, who needs to communicate her trauma only to her brother in order for vengeance to be fulfilled, but as I will discuss in detail below, in *Odyssey 24*, Eupeithes' *alaston penthos* mobilises an army.²²⁶

The third and final strand of theory which I add involves the interweaving of the theory of testimony with that of epic formularity, in the sense that both are concerned with narrative 'truth.' These theories provide valuable insights into the ways in which audiences may: evaluate the memory-testimony they hear voiced by the characters of the *Odyssey*; examine the way in which that testimony is received in the poem; and analyse the poem itself and its early reception, especially as the construction of oral epic mirrors closely the working of individual memory and its relationship with cultural memory. This will be particularly significant in this chapter when considering the political dimension to why certain testimonies are authorised in the way that they are and why some are not.

As discussed in the Introduction, Felman and Laub suggest that testimony to trauma should 'be understood ... not as a mode of *statement of*, but rather as a mode of *access to*' truth.²²⁷ In this way, listeners have to look beyond the narrative 'facts' of the

²²¹ Ibid, p. 162.

²²² Ibid, p. 162.

²²³ Ibid, p. 162.

²²⁴ Shay (1994), p. 77.

²²⁵ Loraux (2001), pp. 163-67.

²²⁶ For Eupeithes mobilising an army see this thesis, pp. 102-103.

²²⁷ Felman and Laub (1992), p. 5. See also the Introduction to this thesis, pp. 24-26.

testimony for a more substantial ‘truth.’ Work done in the wake of Felman and Laub, suggests that this definition of testimony is equally true in courtroom situations. As also laid out in the Introduction, Kirsten Campbell has written about the use of testimony in the international tribunals for war crimes that happened during the civil war in the former Yugoslavia.²²⁸ In her study of modes of testimony she examines how testimony is viewed and used by the prosecution, the defence and by the judiciary.²²⁹ Her research concludes that the prosecution does not see testimony as complete, factual truth but rather as ‘meaningful truth,’ in the sense suggested by Felman and Laub.²³⁰ The defence, on the other hand, starts with the assumption that ‘the testimonial narrative of events ‘is actually an opinion or belief as to what occurred.’²³¹ In this way, the relationship between the witness—who, orally, turns memory into narrative—and the storyteller, becomes apparent and so my argument will touch on the long critical debate about truth in the *Odyssey*.

While I do not propose to enter the lists of critics who seek to prove the truth or otherwise of Odysseus’ testimony,²³² the kind of truth the audience might seek in the poem is of great relevance to this chapter. In Graziosi and Haubold’s terms, this takes the form of an authorisation that comes from ‘resonance’ with ‘what bards say and what we know about the universe.’²³³ This resonance is explored by Foley in his reevaluation of Parry and Lord’s work on traditional, oral formulas. For Foley, these are not empty, repetitive units of metrical feet but rather they carry ‘immanent’ meaning: a meaning which is ‘extratextual,’ calling up and indeed, recreating ‘an unexpressed, and inexpressible, whole, a larger story that will forever remain beyond the reach of an acoustically recorded, oral-dictated, or even written textualization.’²³⁴ Foley points, for example, to characters’ noun epithets which, he says, carry the resonance of ‘innumerable separate moments of that character’s existence in oral traditional story.’²³⁵ In this way, we might speak of words, phrases or episodes in the *Odyssey* as resonant items which find their meaning in or against the cultural memory of the audience. Here,

²²⁸ See Introduction to this thesis, p. 31.

²²⁹ Campbell (2014), pp. 97-100.

²³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 99.

²³¹ *Ibid*, p. 88. This quotation serves her argument about a smaller scale case than that in the above analysis but her point - that the defence sees testimony as essentially subjective and fallible - is the same.

²³² See, for example, Richardson (2006), pp. 337-59 and Emlyn-Jones (1986), pp. 1-10.

²³³ Graziosi and Haubold (2005), p. 56.

²³⁴ Foley (1991), p. 5.

²³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 141.

then, the represented memories of the characters, the ‘compositional’ memory of the poet and the cultural memories of the audience intersect.

In analysing the testimonies of the *Odyssey* and the kinds of truth they communicate, it is also important to consider the way in which the text authorises certain narratives and discredits others. Campbell’s analysis of courtroom testimony is useful here. She suggests that international war crimes courts not only have to enforce the law but also have to debate and decide on the principles by which such cases should be adjudicated,²³⁶ in particular, the place, probative value and criteria of evaluation for different kinds of testimony. She cites, for example, first person testimony or hearsay. These are also decisions for the audience of the *Odyssey*. In order to reach judgement on the case, they must formulate the criteria by which they will judge Menelaus’ testimony of Proteus’ testimony regarding Odysseus, to give one example. They must weigh up how to evaluate the relative probity of their witnesses and while, as I mentioned above, these criteria may rely more on storytelling ability and resonance with the tradition than modern day court officials acknowledge, research done into the effectiveness of legal testimony with juries seems to suggest that recognisable stories still hold more persuasive power than those which do not ‘resonate.’²³⁷

Narrative theory is also useful in thinking about the authorisation of narratives or testimonies in the poem, especially when considering hearsay or long first person narratives by characters. Lubomír Doležel sets out the theory that literary truth is established by the text’s narrator, who carries the ultimate authority in the text. His/her words establish the facts of the textual world.²³⁸ This is slightly more complicated in traditional oral poetry as one might see resonance as a kind of external set of standards provided by tradition and cultural memory – a shifting ‘truth’ which is held in a relationship between the poet, the audience and their combined cultural memory – but Doležel’s work is useful here nonetheless. According to his theory, character-speech in the text must be measured against the facts set out by the narrator. Where the character has very long speeches, though, he becomes a kind of ‘Ich-form’ narrator himself. Doležel writes that the ‘Ich-form,’ or first person, narrator must earn his authority. He may do this

²³⁶ Campbell (2014), e.g. p. 83 and p.95.

²³⁷ Derschowitz (1996), pp. 99-105; Pelling, keynote speech from “Looking Back, Looking Forward”, a postgraduate conference at King’s College, London, 3rd June, 2015.

²³⁸ Doležel (1980), pp. 7-25; this analysis from pp. 11-13.

firstly, by signalling the limits of his knowledge, that is, by not pretending to be able to report word for word conversations that he did not hear; and secondly, by signalling the sources of his knowledge, should he narrate events for which he was not present. Therefore, '[b]y explicitly expressing his ignorance, the narrator demonstrates his scrupulousness in defining the limits of his knowledge and, consequently, the scope of his authentication authority.'²³⁹

John Marincola suggests that the issue of authenticating narrative is particularly important to the *Odyssey*, in contrast to the *Iliad* in which poetic knowledge is explicitly equated with inspiration from the Muses. He writes that 'In the *Odyssey*, where discovery and report play a greater role, one finds more interest in the human sources and reliability of knowledge,' especially in the methods of autopsy and enquiry.²⁴⁰ While this chapter will address these methods for authenticating character-narratives within the text—such as those by Nestor, Menelaus and Odysseus—it will also examine the authority of the omniscient narrator's testimony. In particular, it will look at the ways in which the authority of the narrative is used to affirm the authority of characters within the poem, ratifying their words and actions. In such ways the poem seeks to impose one particular political interpretation while shutting off others. In this, it builds on Barker's analysis of "Sideline debate in the *Odyssey*" but whereas Barker sees the narrative as completely successful in closing off other interpretations, the use of memory in my exploration—particularly the enduring memory of the audience—is instrumental to my argument that these other avenues remain wide open.²⁴¹

This 'enduring memory' of incidents or details encourages the audience to link seemingly disparate moments in the text, opening doors into an alternative reading of the poem. While the narrator might affirm the dominant normative thrust of the poem, his use of resonant words, phrases or details provide ways to challenge the authority of his voice. One way in which this chapter explores such an idea is by using Egbert Bakker's theory of interformularity. As with Foley's work on resonance, this theory is built on Parry and Lord's work on epic formulas but Bakker focuses on the effects of repeated formulas which he places on an 'interformularity scale.'²⁴² According to this scale, formulas which

²³⁹ Ibid, p.18.

²⁴⁰ Marincola (1997), pp. 63-64.

²⁴¹ Barker (2009), pp. 88-134.

²⁴² Bakker (2013); the final chapter explains his theory of 'interformularity,' pp. 157-68.

are repeated many times will be instantly recognisable but their repetition will be less meaningful. At the other end of the scale, very 'restricted' formulas – those which are repeated only once – can link two episodes which may otherwise seem totally unrelated.

While there may be unevenness in audience competence, Bakker argues that speakers (here, bards or rhapsodes) can mark new situations which they feel to be similar to previous ones by self-consciously repeating an utterance. 'And the motivation for such conscious behaviour, is, of course, greatest *when speakers can assume that they share the memory of that earlier occasion with their listeners*' (my italics).²⁴³ It is not necessary, then, as a modern scholar, to assume complete and uniform audience competence but rather to be aware of the way in which the poet manipulates traditional themes, narratives and formulas, stimulating memories in such a way that repetition can be meaningful. I will go into greater detail about this in the main body of the chapter but as an example, this chapter suggests that, by linking the murder of Agamemnon by Aegisthus with Odysseus' slaughter of the suitors through the use of repeated formulas, the narrative simultaneously legitimises Odysseus' revenge and calls into question its bloody brutality.

This section has shown how theories relating to collective and cultural memory, as well as trauma and testimony, might be applied with integrity to the *Odyssey*, as an ancient text and part of the oral tradition. The next section discusses in greater detail the ways in which the study of memory works in the text to affect political action and the ways in which it contributes to the build-up to, and construction of, the 'trial.'

1.3 The construction of the trial: memory and power

This section details the ways in which the *Odyssey* prepares the ground for its metaphorical trial. The first subsection considers Telemachus, 'the plaintiff' and the political impetus which the memory of his father gives him. The second examines the different juridical audiences inside and outside the poem. In this, it pays particular attention to the way in which Zeus is authorised as the supreme judge within the poem,

²⁴³ Ibid, p. 163.

revealing a collusion between Zeus, Odysseus and the narrator which seeks to control the interpretation and legacy of the poem.

i) The Plaintiff

I have stated already—in general terms in the Introduction and specifically with regard to the *Odyssey*—that memory has an affective power and that this stimulates political action. So far, I have discussed this a little in relation to the external audience of the poem but it is equally true of the way in which characters are shown to remember in the poem. In Book 1, when Athena visits Telemachus, disguised as Mentès, it is with the intention of ‘stirring him’ (ἐποτρύνω) and instilling *menos* (‘might’) into him.²⁴⁴ Bakker equates this *menos* with memory, drawing attention to the linguistic connection between *menos* and the verb *memona*, which can mean ‘to have in mind,’ ‘be mindful,’ or indeed, ‘to remember.’ *Menos* is, itself, semantically linked to the verb *mimnesko*, ‘to be reminded.’²⁴⁵ Significantly, this is also true for the name, Mentès. When Athena adopts this name in her disguise, she also takes on its resonance. Her role is literally to provoke memory in Telemachus. As Bakker argues, the true sense of memory is ‘to absorb the *menos* of something so as to embody it.’ The warriors in the *Iliad* ‘remember warcraft’ (μνήσαντο δὲ χάρμης) in the thick of battle,²⁴⁶ indicating that their fighting prowess is an embodiment of their memory of ‘warcraft’. So it is in the *Odyssey*, when Athena flies away from Telemachus, revealing her divine status, that Telemachus is reminded of his father (ὑπέμνησέν τέ πατρός) and this ‘reminder’ represents an infusion of paternal *menos*.²⁴⁷

This *menos* is explicitly equated with the ‘determination and courage’ with which Athena/Mentès imbues him, in association with the memory of his father. One could speculate that these are virtues which Telemachus has inherited from him, virtues which he can access now on account of his infusion of *menos*. However, I suggest that this

²⁴⁴ *Od.* 1.89.

²⁴⁵ Bakker (2010), p. 42.

²⁴⁶ *Il.* 8.252 but similar formulae found at 6.112, 8.174, 8.252 and 13.48, amongst many others.

²⁴⁷ Bakker (2010), pp. 37-50.

A similar example of such an infusion of *menos*, again in connection with a character’s father, is when Priam adjures Achilles to remember his father in Book 24 of the *Iliad*. Here, Achilles’ memories fill him with empathy for the Trojan king and he consents to return Hector’s body, the political ramifications of which I discussed in the Introduction (pp.22-23).

moment of remembering his father, represents the start of Telemachus' physical and mental journey to become his father's son and that this process has a strong bearing on the construction of political society in the poem. Joel Christensen writes that in Odysseus' absence, 'all members of the Ithacan state have been stripped of agency in this vacuum of power,' a product, he says, of the trauma of losing a generation of warriors.²⁴⁸ He does not explicitly link trauma to *penthos alaston*, as I do above, but there is a sense of trauma implicit in his suggestion that *penthos alaston* denotes grief which is 'unrelenting' because it is unresolved.²⁴⁹ This lack of resolution, he suggests, is part and parcel of 'our cognitive desire to turn events into action-narratives that have clear outcomes.'²⁵⁰ He argues that after Athena's visit, Telemachus is able to accept that Odysseus is dead, a conclusion which he voices in the Ithacan assembly and restates in his conversations with Nestor and Menelaus.²⁵¹ Christensen suggests that in choosing this end to Odysseus' narrative, Telemachus finds closure and in so doing, regains a sense of agency.

While I agree with Christensen's suggestion that Telemachus begins to select his own narratives and that this process is constitutive of his new sense of political agency, I also believe that Telemachus' statements about Odysseus' death should not be taken at face value. This lack of clarity comes, I suggest, as a result of Telemachus' infusion of paternal *menos*. In Bakker's words, in remembering his father, Telemachus 'absorb[s] the *menos*' of Odysseus 'so as to embody it.' From this point onward he becomes the 'man of the house,' surprising his mother by criticising her for her response to Phemios' song of Troy and instructing her to go back into the house to ply her work because 'the power is [his] in the household' (*τοῦ γὰρ κράτος ἔστ' ἐνὶ οἴκῳ*).²⁵²

In addition to this, however, is a suspicion that Telemachus has become, like his father, *polytropos*. According to Barker, after the failure of the first Ithacan assembly, Telemachus learns that his path lies outside the assembly and that he 'must learn instead to use speech in a different, less open way, and become more like his father, the figure who says one things while keeping another in his heart.'²⁵³ I suggest, rather, that this

²⁴⁸ Christensen (2017).

²⁴⁹ The examples he discusses here are Penelope at *Od.* 1.342, Menelaus at *Od.* 4.108 (here *akhos alaston*, 'endless grief') and Eumaios at *Od.* 14.174 (here *alaston oduromai* 'endless mourning').

²⁵⁰ Christensen (forthcoming).

²⁵¹ *Od.* 2.46 (also

²⁵² *Od.* 1.345-59. For a discussion about how this marks the beginning rather than the end of Telemachus' maturation and for its Iliadic echoes see Barker and Christensen (2013), pp. 134-35.

²⁵³ Barker (2009), p. 112.

change comes as a result of remembering his father on Athena's departure. There is strong evidence to suggest that Telemachus' avowals of Odysseus' death represent an Odyssean misrepresentation of his true state of mind. When Athena (as Mentès) first meets Telemachus, he is imagining his father returning to scatter the suitors and regain his rightful place.²⁵⁴ 'Mentès,' whom Telemachus knows to be a god as s/he flies away in the shape of a bird, tells him that Odysseus is still alive at sea and plotting his way home, and so Telemachus has no good reason to conclude, suddenly, that his father is dead.²⁵⁵ And yet, in the assembly the following day, he states that his 'noble father has been killed' (τὸ μὲν πατέρ' ἐσθλὸν ἀπώλεσα).²⁵⁶

Telemachus' memory of his father is also a stimulus for political action. We may interpret Telemachus' calling of this assembly as the move of a young man beginning to flex his political muscles for the first time. Whether he believes Athena/Mentès' assertion that his father is alive or not, the memory of Odysseus inspires his realisation that to remember and weep is not enough and that action must be taken. There is a sense too in which this assembly could be seen as the reawakening of political life in Ithaca following the long period of stagnation and impotence during Odysseus' absence. According to Haubold's analysis of the Homeric *laoi*, 'renewed political life starts from the gathering of the people,' an interpretation which he draws from Plutarch's *Theseus*.²⁵⁷ Here, Plutarch (supposedly quoting Aristotle) states that Theseus 'established' Athens with the words 'Come hither all ye people' ('δεῦρ' ἴτε πάντες λεῶ') but Haubold suggests that this basic process 'is also implied in many earlier Greek texts.'²⁵⁸ In this way, Telemachus' calling of the assembly is potentially a foundational moment and yet, this assembly is doomed, not least because Telemachus goes into it, like his father, concealing his true opinion. As Barker writes, 'concealment and suppression of real opinions—recognised traits of both the hero and his narrative, and illustrated here by his son—sit ill with the idea of open debate.'²⁵⁹ One might say that Telemachus *wants* the assembly to fail, or that it succeeds on his terms in that it makes the opposition to him transparent so that he can now act to evade or counter it. In any case, as I will discuss in further detail in 'The First Hearing' (pp.

²⁵⁴ *Od.* 1.113-17.

²⁵⁵ *Od.* 1.195-205.

²⁵⁶ *Od.* 2.46.

²⁵⁷ Haubold (2000), pp. 12-13.

²⁵⁸ Plutarch *Thes.* 25.1; Haubold (2000) pp. 12-13, quotation p. 13.

²⁵⁹ Barker (2009), p. 112.

78-84), he knows from the start that he will not stay to rebuild Ithaca's broken political system as he might have done had he been convinced that his father really were dead. Rather, he will depart, as per Athena's instructions, on his own journey of discovery.

ii) Judge and Jury

According to Farenga's outline of the trial described at the beginning of the chapter, the people, the Ithacan *laos*, are the primary juridical audience of the dispute in the *Odyssey*. It is against them that the implied audience of the poem must measure themselves. I suggest rather that, while this may be true in the example of the Ithacan assembly, individual testimonies are heard by a range of audiences throughout the poem. The metaphor of the trial need not end with the folding of the Ithacan assembly but can be extended to explore the poem as a whole. Each juridical audience represented in the poem reaches decisions based on what it hears (the Phaeacians, for example, agree to take Odysseus home on the basis of his testimony) but the only groups privileged to hear *all* the evidence are the gods, in their position of omniscience, and the external audience. The gods, with Zeus presiding, are indeed the ultimate dispensers of justice in the poem, the highest court in the *Odyssey's* world.

However, one of the balancing acts to be negotiated in analysing the poem is that in a sense, the audience finds itself above the gods, privy to their judicial discussions which themselves include memory-testimony about Odysseus. According to this reading, the gods are reduced to the level of witnesses, on a par with the other characters. The 'balancing act' comes because in a foundational narrative such as this – one which sets out for the Greek people this particular chapter in the history of their cosmos – it would be misguided to simply depose the king of the gods and put his speech on a level with that of other characters.²⁶⁰ This sets limits on how an implied audience or an historical ancient audience might interpret the poem.

Nonetheless, it seems appropriate to draw attention to the seeming 'collusion' between the narrator and Zeus (the judge, perhaps) in the poem's prompts regarding where correct judgement should fall. This judicial 'guidance' represents the strong normative

²⁶⁰ Epic as foundational narrative which explores the history of the cosmos is the argument which underlies Graziosi and Haubold (2005).

thrust of the poem regarding the nature and dispensation of justice. Homer sets out his stall early on, giving the first speech of the epic to Zeus, who states that mortals are fools to blame the gods for their misfortunes but rather they bring them on themselves for their own 'recklessness' (*ἀτασθαλία*).²⁶¹ This 'recklessness' does not only describe their actions – in this case, Aegisthus' seduction of Clytemnestra and his murder of Agamemnon – but also their failure to read properly the signs sent to guide them. In Aegisthus' case, according to Zeus, he had continued with his course of action in spite of very clear warnings from Hermes, sent by the gods themselves: he was told but he would not be persuaded.²⁶² As Barker writes, 'Aegisthus is introduced as a paradigmatically poor listener: he failed to interpret his warnings properly, which is why he perishes.'²⁶³ Therefore, Barker argues, 'Zeus' speech is aimed at an audience of the events as a warning to get interpretation right.'²⁶⁴ The audience's failure to remember this paradigmatic example would surely be evidence of their own 'recklessness.' In this way, the poem seeks to control its own interpretation, and in so doing, to preserve Zeus' omnipotence.

The *Odyssey* does not only seek to exert power over its own interpretation but also over rival traditions and indeed, the epic genre as a whole. It seeks to dominate cultural memory as 'the epic to end all epics.'²⁶⁵ One way in which it does this is by referencing and incorporating numerous other *nostoi* narratives – the most obvious being those of Agamemnon, Nestor and Menelaus – and these again, are presented as testimony.²⁶⁶ The poem uses these rival tales in order to explore elements of, or potential dangers in Odysseus' story. Clearly, the threat offered by unfaithful wives is represented by Clytemnestra, just as Menelaus and Helen represent the uneasy peace of reconciliation with such. Menelaus' adventures on his homeward journey foreshadow many of those faced by Odysseus, while the emptiness of Nestor's life on his return, filled as it seems to be with memories of Troy and mourning for Antilochus, might represent the flatness of life after *nostos*.

²⁶¹ *Od.* 1.32-34.

²⁶² *Od.* 1.47-43.

²⁶³ Barker (2009), p. 129.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

²⁶⁵ Barker and Christensen (2013), p. 192.

²⁶⁶ The ways in which the *Odyssey* uses other *nostoi* tales is discussed in Barker and Christensen (2016).

Typically, perhaps, just as the model of decision-making in the *Odyssey* is shown to be autocratic, so the *Odyssey* rides roughshod over all these rival testimonies and situates itself as the *nostos* to end all *nostoi*. Odysseus' wife is not just faithful, she is also clever. She tricks the suitors with her ploy to weave (and unravel) a shroud for Laertes and although the narrator never portrays her as anything other than loyal to Odysseus, she also never rejects the suitors outright but leads them on to suggest that she will eventually marry one of them.²⁶⁷ In this way, the *Odyssey* nods not just to the stories of Menelaus and Agamemnon with their unfaithful wives but also to other versions of the story which may feature a less chaste version of Penelope. Amphimedon even states squarely that Penelope led the suitors on while 'planning [their] death and black destruction' (*ἡμῖν φραζομένη θάνατον καὶ κῆρα μέλαιναν*).²⁶⁸ I will discuss the ways in which the narrative discredits Amphimedon's version below (pp. 85-87), but in allowing such a character—whose narrative *must be discredited*—to voice this rival version, the *Odyssey* seeks to bring the tradition under its control.

Odysseus' adventures eclipse all others and his revenge on over a hundred rivals makes Agamemnon's murder by Aegisthus look paltry. Odysseus' *nostos* will not feel empty because it will not be complete: the *Odyssey* forecasts, by way of Teiresias' prophecy, the way forward into further possible tales of Odysseus journeying to bury his oar in a place where none have heard of the sea. Barker and Christensen comment on the linguistic parity between measure, metra and poetic metre as contained in Odysseus' reference to his future wanderings as 'unmeasured' (*ametrētos*) suffering: if Odysseus' future beyond the *Odyssey* will be 'without metre' then 'this poem heralds the end of ... the heroic metre of heroic epic.'²⁶⁹ They also point out that because of the association between the sea and the epic world, a journey to a place where someone mistakes Odysseus' oar as 'a winnowing fan' indicates 'a literary terrain far removed from the *Odyssey*, far removed even from the kind of heroic epic that Homer's poem represents.'²⁷⁰ In this way, the *Odyssey* is 'the epic to end all epics.'²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ The shroud trick—which also contains the suggestion that Penelope will marry one of the suitors—is related by Penelope at *Od.* 19.137-61; it is also told by Antinous at 2.93-110 and by Amphimedon at 24.125-55. She also institutes the competition of the bow at 21.68-79.

²⁶⁸ *Od.* 24.125-27.

²⁶⁹ Barker and Christensen (2013), p. 192.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 192. These arguments are drawn from Purves (2010), pp. 70-89.

So it is that Zeus is established as the main arbiter of justice in the poem and so also the *Odyssey* seeks control not only over its own interpretation but over the epic tradition. Yet, foolhardy as the poem suggests that it is to stand against the power of Zeus and the dominant narrative of the poem, there is an equally important counter-thrust which leads the audience to question and debate and this, is also founded on memory. While it would be ‘reckless’ to question Zeus’ judgement too far, the details of the trial—explored over the next three sections—provide strong evidence for the need to examine the ways in which decisions are reached and justice is enacted in the text.

1.4 The First Hearing

In the first Ithacan assembly—here, the first hearing—Telemachus attempts to influence the Ithacan *laos* to join with him in expelling the suitors from his house. The *laos* here represents the internal jury whose sympathies must be won in order for Telemachus’ will to be worked and he, his allies who speak on his behalf and the suitors who speak against him, try to harness and manipulate collective memory in order to re-member the community for their own benefit.

In a way, calling this assembly is a foundational act on Telemachus’ part. I will look at how the external audience may interpret this below, but in the world of the poem, Telemachus appears to be calling the people together in order to instigate a collective responsibility for justice in the private concerns of individuals or households. In his question at the beginning of the assembly, Aegyptius reveals why the people might expect an assembly to have been called: to share news of the returning army or to address ‘some other **public** matter’ (ἤέ τι **δήμιον** ἄλλο πιφαύσκεται ἢ δ’ ἀγορεύει).²⁷² As Moses Finley writes, Telemachus’ dispute with the suitors is a household affair and for this reason, the Ithacan people would have been under no obligation to help him.²⁷³ Telemachus is fully aware of this and points his opening speech towards stressing that his own concerns and those of the *laos* are closely linked. His personal loss of his father is their collective loss of a king, ‘who was kind to you *like a father*’ (πατήρ δ’ ὡς ἡπιος ἦεν).²⁷⁴ In so evoking the people’s collective memories of Odysseus—a father to him but

²⁷² *Od.* 2.32.

²⁷³ Finley (1974), p. 90.

²⁷⁴ *Od.* 2.47.

also to the state—Telemachus ‘creates a gathered people,’ who might be capable of acting as a body on his behalf.²⁷⁵

However, as his speech, and the assembly as a whole, progresses, it becomes clear that this is not an impartial jury but one which is already working in collusion with the suitors. In the second half of Telemachus’ impassioned speech, it is apparent that the people are not only the jury but also the accused. While the first half of his speech seeks to align the people’s interests with his, the second stresses how their actions have, until this point, worked against him. He talks about the people’s ‘evil deeds’ (*κακά ἔργα*) in working with the suitors, deeds for which the gods—that higher jury—may punish them, and about the ‘pains [they] put upon [his] heart’ (*ὀδύνας ἐμβάλλετε θυμῶ*).²⁷⁶ He even speaks of the people’s behavior as being more hurtful to him than the suitors’ saying that if it were them eating away his treasures and his cattle it would be easier to cope with because of the systems already in place for dealing with such transgressions within the community.²⁷⁷ If the first half of the speech invites the people to remember Odysseus together, the second half adjures them to remember their own actions, the ultimate goal of both being for the people to re-member themselves around him as their leader.

His actions seem like they might pay dividends when this group is united further in pity for his outburst of tears at the end of his testimony. The power of this unity is palpable, as evidenced by the fact that ‘all the others were stricken to silence, none was so hardy / as to answer angry word against word, the speech of Telemachus’ (*ἔνθ’ ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες ἀκὴν ἔσαν, οὐδέ τις ἔτλη / Τηλέμαχον μύθοισιν ἀμείψασθαι χαλεποῖσιν*).²⁷⁸ Here, the separation between Telemachus and the people on one side and the suitors – ‘all the others’ (*ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες*) – on the other, is clear.

As so often in modern court dramas, however, the statement of the case for the defence alters the people’s sympathies, certainties and so, loyalties. Antinous uses the story of Penelope and the shroud, ‘spinning’ his own memories in order to muddy the reputation of the house of Odysseus and to manipulate political allegiances. Barker discusses Antinous’ representation of the suitors as the Achaeans in this assembly, drawing on Iliadic tropes – and so the audience’s memory of Trojan heroes – in his testimony of

²⁷⁵ Haubold (2000), p. 111.

²⁷⁶ *Od.* 2.67 and 79.

²⁷⁷ *Od.* 2.74-79

²⁷⁸ *Od.* 2.82-83.

proceedings in Ithaca.²⁷⁹ Indeed, although all the people of Ithaca are demarcated as Achaeans at the start of the poem by Athena,²⁸⁰ the suitors' invocation of Iliadic language to justify their pursuit of Penelope along heroic lines points to a deliberate appropriation of this rival poem.²⁸¹

The success or otherwise of Antinous' words is hard to judge as, in what follows, the people's reactions are notably absent from the narration. However, the people, tellingly, become grouped with the suitors in the main speakers' comments. Telemachus, for example, seems swayed by the suitors' self-designation as Achaeans. In his prayer to Athena following the assembly, Telemachus marks the unity of suitors and people against himself by referring to them as one group, delaying his endeavours: they are 'the Achaeans / and particularly the suitors' (*τὰ δὲ πάντα διαρίβουσιν Ἀχαιοὶ / μνηστῆρες δὲ μάλιστα*).²⁸² As a slight side note, this moment also provides further evidence of the fact that Telemachus may not be speaking plainly. In his later exchange with Nestor, he very deliberately sets up the suitors as opposed to the Achaeans and this formulation is adopted by Nestor who wonders whether Odysseus will come one day, perhaps with the Achaeans, in order to punish the suitors.²⁸³

The implicit compliance—marked by silence—between people and suitors is also addressed when Mentor berates the people. He echoes Telemachus' earlier phrase about Odysseus as king, saying that 'no one of the people he was lord over / remembers godlike Odysseus, and he was kind like a father' (*ὥς οὐ τις μέμνηται Ὀδυσσοῦ θείοιο / λαῶν οἴσιν ἀνασσε, πατὴρ δ' ὥς ἥπιος ἦεν*).²⁸⁴ Here, his incitement to remember—his name, like *Mentes*, cognate with *menos*, *mimona* and *mimneskō*—seeks to unite through memory all 'the people' over whom Odysseus was lord, when currently, they are united in their forgetting. Mentor explicitly directs his ire towards 'you other people' (*δ' ἄλλω δῆμω*) who 'sit there in silence ... though they are so few and you so many.'²⁸⁵ These

²⁷⁹ Barker (2009), pp. 103-5.

²⁸⁰ *Od.* 1.90.

²⁸¹ As Haubold suggests, suitors play a very different role from Achaeans in the epic tradition, as suggestion which makes their claim to heroism doubly ironic. His analysis of the Odyssean suitors alongside Helen's suitors in Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women* illustrates that as a group their lifespan is limited by marriage: they 'serve no purpose other than disappearing as suitors.' While they exist they are dominated by 'merciless competition' and ultimately they 'must die' (2000), pp. 139-41.

²⁸² *Od.* 265-66.

²⁸³ *Od.* 3.201-16.

²⁸⁴ *Od.* 2.233-34.

²⁸⁵ *Od.* 2.238-41.

‘other people,’ the not-suitors, are the Ithacan *laos*. However, though he differentiates between suitors and people, he indicates very clearly that silence here represents complicity and that for this they are no longer deserving of just rule.²⁸⁶

Mentor’s use of *mimnēskō* in *μέμνηται Ὀδυσσοῦ θείοιο* carries a similar suggestion to when it was used earlier in conjunction with Telemachus’ infusion of paternal *menos*. Clearly, the Ithacans remember Odysseus – their memories have not (yet) been wiped – but these memories do not carry sufficient force to fill the people with the need for political action. They are not affective in the same way as Telemachus’ memory of Odysseus and the people remain apathetic. In a sense, this is equally true of the audience. In the context of listening to the poem, the audience has no prior memory of Odysseus because he does not even enter the poem until Book 5. One might argue then, that in measuring themselves against the internal *laos*, the external audience might be forgiven for equal apathy. However, the external audience is not watching ‘without memory’ but rather with an extensive cultural memory of the Odyssean tradition. In fifth-century BC Athens too, the likelihood is that most of them will have been familiar with *this Odyssey* too, if Cook’s convincing argument regarding the solidification of the text in sixth-century BC Athens is to be believed.²⁸⁷ For this reason, they would find themselves on the side of the house of Odysseus here, not only out of sympathy for Telemachus but in the certain knowledge of the punishment that lies in store for the suitors’ transgressions.

This early attempt at what we might term, ‘dispute settlement’ by Telemachus, is a failure precisely because his memories of Odysseus are not strong enough, in the face of the suitors’ active presence, to supplement or bolster the inadequate memories of the people. Mentor’s response to this failure is instructive: in spite of Finley’s statement about the Ithacans’ lack of obligation to help Telemachus in this private matter, Mentor’s speech points to a collective responsibility which the people should have felt but did not. Perhaps they were not ready for it but the audience should be.

The formula which Mentor uses to express the people’s silence in his speech—*ἦσθ’ ἄνεω* (‘sitting in silence’)—speaks volumes. In his analysis of the impact of speech acts in Iliadic and Odyssean assemblies, David Elmer writes that when speech is met by silence it

²⁸⁶ Haubold (2000), p. 112.

²⁸⁷ Cook (1995).

always signifies a lack of collective support.²⁸⁸ That the people here remain silent after all the speakers is a sign, then, that they do not actively support anyone but as Haubold suggests, they passively align themselves with the suitors as the most powerful group present. There is also evidence to suggest, again from the examination of assemblies in both epics, that sitting ‘connotes idleness and even impotence.’²⁸⁹ In analysing the formulas concerned with sitting in silence, Montiglio argues that ‘silence joined to sitting is the negation of heroic fervor not only on the battlefield, but also in the arena of speech.’²⁹⁰ According to her analysis, just as Menelaus chides the seated, silent warriors when a champion is called for in the *Iliad*, so ‘Mentor chides the people of Ithaca for remaining “seated in silence” (ἦσθ’ ἄνεω) whereas they should attack the enemy with their words, with assaults of speech.’²⁹¹

Montiglio’s conclusions about sitting in silence have repercussions for how we, as an audience, might judge the failure of this first assembly. She suggests:

sitting in silence only befits those listeners who are not expected to speak in turn, above all an undifferentiated group, which either status or circumstances exclude from verbal participation. It is the multitude that sits down in silence to listen to the words of a single hero, the anonymous multitude that has no right to speak in the Homeric *agorê*.²⁹²

The assembly fails, from Telemachus’ point of view, because he does not succeed in enlisting the people’s support but it is interesting to note that had he and Mentor succeeded, this assembly would have marked the first step towards an institution which does not envision the ‘single hero’ and the ‘undifferentiated group.’ Rather, it would have opened the assembly to the voices of others. But, as I have shown, this openness is something which, at every stage, the *Odyssey* seeks to shut down.

An examination of the differences in the manner in which the internal juridical audience hears the testimonies in the assembly, and the manner in which external audience hears it, reveals the ways in which the *Odyssey* tries to silence other voices. For the internal audience, testimony comes free from any kind of interpretive certainties, whereas the

²⁸⁸ Elmer (2012), p. 26.

²⁸⁹ Montiglio (2000), p. 50.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 51.

²⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 50-51; quotation on p. 51; referencing *Il.* 7.96-103 and *Od.* 2.240.

²⁹² *Ibid*, p. 52.

interpretation of the external audience is framed by the guidance of the narrator and their memories of earlier episodes in the poem. When Zeus sends signs – two eagles who attack each other over the heads of the assembled men – the Ithacans ‘pondered in their hearts over what might come of it’ (ὄρμηξαν δ’ ἀνά θυμὸν ἅ περ τελέεσθαι ἔμελλον).²⁹³ Even the best ‘readers’ among them, will not know, as the external audience does, that Zeus sent the eagles in support of Telemachus’ speech;²⁹⁴ nor, as Barker discusses, that Halitherses, who interprets the signs, is introduced with resonant words which should reinforce his authority as a figure of good counsel and wise judgement.²⁹⁵ He (like Mentor) is introduced with the formula ‘in kind intention toward all, he spoke and addressed them’ (ὁ σφιν εὐφρονέων ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπε), the same used to introduce the wise elder statesman, Nestor, in the assembly in *Iliad* 1.²⁹⁶

The internal audience is not privy, in addition, to the gods’ assembly of Book 1, in which we hear that Zeus, like Telemachus, does not forget Odysseus (Ὀδυσῆος ἐγὼ θείοιο λαθοίμην)²⁹⁷ and that his memory of him, as in Bakker’s formulation above (p. 72), is performative and denotes action on his behalf. They do not know either that our opinions have already been swayed against the suitors by Athena and Telemachus. These all offer strong inducements for the audience to rule with the house of Odysseus.

On the one hand, one might conclude with Barker that for the audience of the *Odyssey*, there is ‘no room for ambiguity,’ even in the notoriously slippery business of reading omens.²⁹⁸ I suggest, however, that the audience’s memory also exposes the techniques by which the poem seeks to manipulate our interpretation and so signals an alternative. In the case of this assembly, if we remember that Telemachus goes into it with instructions from Athena to make his feelings known and then to state that he’s going on a journey, we know that at no point was this assembly *meant* to work. They may also see what the internal audience cannot, that the assembly, in theory, offered the potential for a very different institution, one carried into actuality (as in the case of Achilles’ shield, discussed above, p. 61) in their own society.

²⁹³ *Od.* 2.156.

²⁹⁴ *Od.* 2.145-46. See Goldhill (1988), pp. 3-4 for a discussion of this passage and of the suitors as poor ‘readers.’

²⁹⁵ Barker (2009), p. 99.

²⁹⁶ *Il.* 1.118 and *Od.* 2.160, as discussed in Barker (2009), p. 99.

²⁹⁷ *Od.* 1.65.

²⁹⁸ Barker (2009), p. 100.

While there is no room for debate on Ithaca, the failure of the first assembly provokes the juridical audience into reflection on how things might have been different and in so doing, into debate on the performance of such institutions in their own society. Following the collapse of this first 'law court' hearing, Telemachus must 'build his case' and in order to do this, he travels from Ithaca to collect testimony. The following section discusses three examples of testimony, some of it heard by Telemachus, most not, but all of it heard by the external juridical audience. It explores the authority of these three testimonies and the ways in which the poem reinforces or undermines this authority. This gives a further insight into the politics of power in operation within the poem. It also considers the kind of truth which this kind of epic testimony might convey.

1.5 Testimony in the *Odyssey*

The three memory-testimonies that this section will analyse in order to further understand the play of politics in the *Odyssey* are: Nestor's, for the prosecution; Amphimedon's, for the defence; and Odysseus' own. These testimonies are very different in terms of character and context and these differences play a significant part in how they may be interpreted. Nestor's testimony takes the form of a relatively straightforward legal attestation: it is, as I will demonstrate below, subject to the usual issues of subjectivity and creativity but it is the most clear-cut of the three. Amphimedon's testimony bears more in common with the kind of testimony to trauma considered by theorists such as Felman and Laub. Unlike in contemporary war crimes trials in which the dead cannot testify and 'the missing persons, families and villages ... continually appear like ghosts throughout the case transcripts',²⁹⁹ Odysseus' victims appear as souls in Hades and Amphimedon is asked to speak, remembering the horrific scene of the suitors' slaughter. The difficulty of judging the truth value of Odysseus' testimony, however, imperils the whole endeavour and reveals the inherent futility of looking for empirical truth in memory. Instead, it explores other forms of truth, no less meaningful, in the context of epic poetry.

In looking at how these testimonies are authorised by the text, I will firstly consider the witnesses themselves and their testimonies. All three will be scrutinised in accordance

²⁹⁹ Campbell (2014), p. 104.

with Kirsten Campbell's list of factors which juries must consider in evaluating witness evidence. This consists of: demeanour, conduct, character, probability, consistency, disinterestedness, integrity 'and the fact that they are bound to speak the truth in terms of the solemn declaration taken by them.'³⁰⁰ Secondly, I will examine the involvement of the narrator and other key players in the text. Finally, I will consider the role of the external audience's memory of the text and its cultural memory: the way that they intersect with the testimony heard and the way that they both authorise and undermine the memories voiced.

i) Authorisation by the text, or how the text prepares us to hear the witness

Athena herself, Odysseus' chief advocate in the assembly of the immortals, chooses the character witnesses whom Telemachus should seek out, and in the guise of Mentor, tells him to go to Pylos where he should question Nestor and from there, to Sparta to see Menelaus. Again, Athena's name in this disguise draws attention to her role in provoking memory in the poem and here prepares the audience for a narrative explicitly aimed at stimulating and reflecting on memory testimonies. Athena's involvement in this process alerts the external audience to the fact that Nestor and Menelaus are not merely prompted to remember, they are divinely chosen to give their testimony. While Telemachus does not know this, the fact that these words are spoken by Mentor – his father's trusted companion in Ithaca – means that they carry an authoritative truth for him. Athena, disguised as Mentor, also stresses that Nestor will tell him the truth, saying *ψεῦδος δ' οὐκ ἐρέει* ('He will not tell you any falsehood'), a formula which Nestor – also his father's trusted companion – repeats with regard to Menelaus. For the external audience, then, their testimony, has divine authentication, while for Telemachus the witnesses' authority is evinced by his father's trust in them. In this way, neither the internal audience (Telemachus) nor the external one will hear the testimonies of Nestor and Menelaus without bias.

This is equally true for Amphimedon only, in his case, the narrative/narrator works against him. Before Amphimedon's actual testimony is taken into account, the audience is prejudiced against him as a witness. This prejudice comes as a result of Amphimedon's

³⁰⁰ Campbell (2014), p. 100.

association with the suitors, as I will explore below, but the lack of transparency in his testimony is also partly reflected by his name. ‘*Medon*,’ though often translated as ‘ruler’ is also cognate with *mēdomai*, meaning ‘to be mindful’ or ‘to hold in mind’ so Amphimedon could be ‘concerning being mindful.’ There is clearly an overlap between holding in mind and remembering (as at *Od.* 11.110, 3.334 and *Il.* 4.418) so it may be tempting to give Amphimedon the same kind of authority with regard to memory as Mentos or Mentor. ‘Amphi-’ can also mean ‘both sides’, so there is a suggestion that Amphimedon’s testimony could reflect his ability to be able to remember in an unbiased way, seeing ‘both sides’. However, the names of other suitors and their family members are not entirely straightforward, containing as they do, an element of truth but also one of irony. Agelaus, for example, is ‘the leader of the *laos*’ although he is not the foremost among the suitors and the conflation of the suitors with the *laos* is always controversial, as demonstrated above.³⁰¹

The external audience has heard testimony against the suitors from the start of the poem and has also received guidance as to how to interpret it. Athena, for example, speaks of them ‘forever’ slaughtering Odysseus’ sheep and cows,³⁰² and comments on their ‘insolence’ and ‘disgraceful’ behaviour.³⁰³ The suitors and Aegisthus (the figure whom Zeus used to exemplify a crime deserving of punishment, in the proem)³⁰⁴ are equated in the resonant epithet *ἀναλκις*, meaning impotent, feeble and unwarlike. Nestor denounces Aegisthus as *ἀναλκις*, stating that he stayed at home in comfort while Agamemnon went off to war;³⁰⁵ while Menelaus uses the same term to denounce the suitors for seeking to lie in the bed of a bolder man.³⁰⁶ Zeus also equates and justifies the fates of Aegisthus and the suitors: he speaks of Aegisthus being ‘paid’ (*ἀποτίνω*) for his transgression,³⁰⁷ the same word he uses with regard to Athena’s plans for the suitors in Book 5.³⁰⁸ The external jury would be wise not to disregard such guidance from the

³⁰¹ Barker (2009), p. 127.

³⁰² *Od.* 1.91-92.

³⁰³ *Od.* 1.226-39.

³⁰⁴ *Od.* 1.32-44.

³⁰⁵ *Od.* 3.310.

³⁰⁶ *Od.* 4.334. For further analysis of the equation of Aegisthus and the suitors see Barker and Christensen (2013), p. 93-94.

³⁰⁷ *Od.* 1.43.

³⁰⁸ *Od.* 5.24.

supreme judge. They know, even before hearing his words, that to be led astray by Amphimedon's testimony would seem like 'recklessness.'³⁰⁹

So it is that the poem privileges Nestor's testimony even before it is given. He is chosen as a witness by Athena herself and she guarantees the truth of his words. In contrast, the juridical audience is not only biased against Amphimedon because of his association with the suitors but we are given a divine warning that to side with him against the house of Odysseus would only be to invite disaster. The next subsection considers the testimony itself and its truth value, in the context of cultural memory or resonance.

ii) Testimony and Truth

It is in the light of Campbell's list that Nestor's testimony appears relatively authoritative. Not only is it, as I have argued above, divinely authenticated 'truth' but he exhibits many characteristics of Campbell's ideal witness. For a start, Nestor is 'bound to speak the truth in terms of the solemn declaration taken by [him].'³¹⁰ It is given in response to a formulaic, courtroom-style speech from Telemachus, which asks that Nestor tell him, accurately, all that he has witnessed:

τούνεκα νῦν τὰ σὰ φούναθ' ἰκάνομαι, αἶ κ' ἐθέλησθα
κείνου λυγρὸν ὄλεθρον ἐνισπεῖν, εἴ που ὄπωπας
ὀφθαλμοῖσι τεοῖσιν ἢ ἄλλου μῦθον ἄκουσας
πλαζομένου: πέρι γάρ μιν ὀιζυροὸν τέκε μήτηρ.
μηδέ τί μ' αἰδόμενος μειλίσσεο μηδ' ἐλεαίρων,
ἀλλ' εὖ μοι κατάλεξον ὅπως ἦντησας ὄπωπῆς.
λίσσομαι, εἴ ποτέ τοί τι πατήρ ἐμός, ἐσθλός Ὀδυσσεύς,
ἦ ἔπος ἢ ἐτι ἔργω ὑποστάς ἐξετέλεσσε
δήμῳ ἔνι Τρώων, ὅθι πάσχετε πῆματ' Ἀχαιοί,
τῶν νῦν μοι μῆσαι, καί μοι νημερτές ἐνισπες.³¹⁰

That is why I come to your knees now, in case you might wish
to tell me of his dismal destruction, whether you saw it

³⁰⁹ See, for example, Goldhill (1988), pp. 1-31, in particular p. 6 on which he discusses the suitors' propensity to misread and misrecognise.

³¹⁰ *Od.* 3.92-101.

perhaps with your own eyes, or heard the tale from another
who wandered too. His mother bore this man to be wretched.

Do not soften it because you pity me and are sorry
for me, **but fairly tell me all that your eyes have witnessed.**

I implore you, if ever noble Odysseus, my father,
ever undertook any word or work and fulfilled it
for you, in the land of the Trojans where you Achaians suffered,
tell me these things from your memory. And tell me the whole truth.

So, Telemachus formalises their conversation and sets up a kind of contractual expectation of truth. This formality is reflected in the fact that Telemachus uses the exactly the same formula when asking Menelaus for his equivalent testimony at *Od.* 4.322-331. Just as, in Book 1, Zeus declares that he remembers Odysseus and this memory signifies that he will act on Odysseus' behalf,³¹¹ so here, the contract of truth is founded on memory and reciprocity: Telemachus asks that Nestor tell the truth *if* he remembers the times when Odysseus was good to him in the past.

In addition to his declaration to tell the truth, Nestor signals his integrity as a witness in a number of ways, even though his friendship with Odysseus makes him partisan. In analysing these, it is useful to use both Campbell's checklist and Lubomír Doležal's narratological theories of 'fictional truth' (as set out on p. 69). In some ways, Nestor measures up to these criteria quite well. He signals the limits of his knowledge with clarity saying:

*ὥς ἦλθον, φίλε τέκνον, ἀπευθής, οὐδέ τι οἶδα
κείνων, οἳ τ' ἐσάωθεν Ἀχαιῶν οἳ ἀπόλοντο.*³¹²

So, dear child, I came back, without news, and I knew nothing
of those other Achaians, which had survived, which ones had perished.

Here, as at *Od.* 3.88, Nestor's use of *ἀπευθής* suggests not only ignorance but also his own lack of inquiry, or at 3.88, the limits of mortal inquiry. Also, though he does not cite his sources for the information he provides about the other *nostoi*, he does separate his eyewitness testimony from hearsay, saying that after his separation from the others, all the rest of his news he 'got by hearsay sitting here in my palace' (*ὅσσα δ' ἐνὶ μεγάροισι*

³¹¹ See the discussion on p. 83, this thesis.

³¹² *Od.* 3.184-85.

καθήμενος ἡμερέροισι / πεύθομαι).³¹³ As John Marincola suggests, these methods of *opsis* (eyewitness testimony or autopsy) and inquiry were formative for the way in which the ancient Greeks thought of truth and narrative. For Herodotus, for example, *opsis* was ‘the most certain way to knowledge’; where his own autopsy was unavailable, he had recourse to inquiry, or the use of others’ eyewitness accounts.³¹⁴

In other ways, Nestor’s world view and his belief in his own superior insight bled into his narrative suggesting that his testimony is not to be believed entirely. He states, for example:

καὶ τότε δὴ Ζεὺς λυγρὸν ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μῆδετο νόστον
Αργείοις, ἐπεὶ οὐ τι νοήμονες οὐδὲ δίκαιοι
πάντες ἔσαν.³¹⁵

then Zeus in his mind devised a sorry homecoming
for the Argives, since not all were considerate or righteous.

This must be Nestor’s conjecture about why events happened as they did since he could not have known Zeus’ thoughts. A further conjecture follows: he states that it was Athena’s anger that caused the quarrel between Agamemnon and Menelaus (*ἦ τ’ ἔριν Ατρεΐδῃσι μετ’ ἀμφοτέροισιν ἔθηκε*).³¹⁶ He assumes that he escaped from the evils that beset the others because of his superior insight into the workings of the gods, designating Agamemnon a fool (*νήπιος*) for believing that he could change Athena’s mind with hecatombs,³¹⁷ and saying that he himself ‘fled away for [he] saw how the god was devising evils (*αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ σὺν νηυσὶν ἀολλέσιν, αἶ μοι ἔποντο, φεῦγον, ἐπεὶ γίνωσκον, ὁδὴ κακὰ μῆδετο δαίμων*).’³¹⁸ His use of the word *νήπιος* to designate Agamemnon here is telling, given its usage in the *Iliad*. The word is used many times by the narrator there in order to accentuate the helplessness or ignorance of mortals in relation to the gods.³¹⁹ At such times, the word suggests infantilism or tragic innocence. It is used with most force at *Il.* 18.311, when the narrator castigates the Trojans for being persuaded by Hector to remain encamped outside Troy rather than retreating into the city, as Polydamus advised.

³¹³ *Od.* 3.186-87.

³¹⁴ Marincola (1997), p. 67.

³¹⁵ *Od.* 132-35.

³¹⁶ *Od.* 3.136.

³¹⁷ *Od.* 3.146.

³¹⁸ *Od.* 3.165-66.

³¹⁹ E.g. *Il.* 16.46, 22.445.

Tellingly, Hector himself uses the word to describe Polydamus sixteen lines earlier (19.295) and given the narrator's subsequent condemnation, there is an element of irony, even *hubris*, in his usage, as if in using the term he is assuming more than mortal knowledge or power. With this in mind, Nestor's use of this resonant Iliadic diction might lead to questions regarding his judgement about other 'facts' in his narrative. Perhaps, given his belief in his own 'right-ness,' Nestor's high praise for Odysseus rests on the fact that they were 'of one mind' (*ἕνα θυμον / ἔχοντε νόω*).³²⁰

Unlike Nestor, who is partisan due to his friendship with Odysseus, Amphimedon is partisan because he is an interested party in the case. He uses a similar formulaic contract for delivering truth testimony as that used by Nestor. In this case, the formula is *σοὶ δ' ἐγὼ εὖ μάλα πάντα καὶ ἀτρεκέως καταλέξω* ('I will tell you well and accurately the entire story').³²¹ This echoes another used for eliciting truthful testimony by Menelaus, Alcinous and Odysseus and so we see, as with Nestor, a resonant formulaic and formalised 'solemn declaration to speak the truth.'³²² Here again, this contractual truth is based on memory and reciprocity as Agamemnon demands the story in the light of his guest-friendship with Amphimedon.

Up to a point, his testimony—as his name suggests—is remarkably balanced. While he does not own openly to the suitors having eaten Odysseus out of house and home, he does confess that when Odysseus returned, disguised as a beggar, the suitors attacked him 'with evil words and blows' (*ἔπεσίν τε κακοῖσιν ἐνίσσομεν ἠδὲ βολῆσιν*) 'in his own palace' (*ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἐοῖσι*).³²³ This seems to acknowledge some, at least, of their transgression against him.

However, in certain key details Amphimedon's story runs counter to the narrative of the suitors' deaths that the audience has already heard from the narrator. Because of this, the authority of his testimony is undermined. He speaks of Penelope's *δόλος* in planning the ruse of endless weaving, not only emphasising her cunning but also stating that by this device, 'she was planning our death and black destruction' (*ἡμῶν φραζομένη θάνατόν καὶ κῆρα μέλαιναν*).³²⁴ He implies that Penelope and Odysseus were acting in cahoots (a

³²⁰ *Od.* 3.128.

³²¹ *Od.* 24.123.

³²² *Od.* 4.486, 8.573 and 15.383.

³²³ *Od.* 24.161-63.

³²⁴ *Od.* 24. 127.

point of view with which some critics have sympathised) in setting up the contest of the bow.³²⁵ While this reading is possible, Zeus' warning about the 'recklessness' of siding with the suitors suggests that the poem resists such a straightforward interpretation. Finally, when Amphimedon comes to describe the manner of the suitors' deaths, he says—correctly—that Odysseus must have been helped by some god,³²⁶ but there is no acknowledgement that this help may have been attributable to divine justice, in retribution for the suitors' own behaviour.

Some have attempted to evaluate Odysseus' testimony using similar criteria to those outlined above but trying to judge Odysseus' narrative in these terms underlines the futility of looking for objective, 'external' truth in memory. As a witness, Odysseus is 'abysmally imperfect': he has a 'demonstrated penchant and talent for lying' and 'yet at times he tells the exact truth.'³²⁷ When Alcinous requests Odysseus' story, he does so with that resonant formulaic request which, as in the examples above, sets up a contractual understanding that the truth will be told. He says, *ἀλλ' ἄγε μοι τόδε εἶπε καὶ ἀτρεκέως κατάλεξον* ('So come now tell me this and give me an accurate answer').³²⁸ However, Odysseus does not reply in kind, even though the first part of his narrative, at least, is full of details which are verified at other points in the text. He begins with his name, which we know to be true - *εἴμ' Ὀδυσσεύς Λαερτιάδης* ('I am Odysseus, son of Laertes') and where he's from. He describes Ithaca as a mountain that stands tall with islands settled around it, his own island lying low; a rugged place.³²⁹ Here, for the internal audience, the details he uses are persuasive but for the external audience, these are facts confirmed by the poem as a whole. Some of the facts of his story are also ratified for the external audience by the gods: his encounter with Polyphemus, for example, and his 'imprisonment' on Calypso's island.

Conversely, at times when Odysseus is disguised and the audience knows Odysseus' stories to be untrue—such as when he relates his history to Eumaeus—he does use the contractual formula for a truthful narrative described above. Eumaeus says to Odysseus:

ἀλλ' ἄγε μοι σύ, γεραιέ, τὰ σ' αὐτοῦ κήδε' ἐνίσπες

³²⁵ *Od.* 24. 167. See, for example, Goldhill (1988), p. 28 (n.29).

³²⁶ *Od.* 24.182.

³²⁷ Richardson (1996), pp. 395-96.

³²⁸ *Od.* 8.573. The same expression is used by Menelaus in his request to the Old Man of the Sea at *Od.* 4.486.

³²⁹ *Od.* 9.23-28.

καὶ μοι τοῦτ' ἀγόρευσον ἐτήτυμον, ὄφρ' ἐὺ εἰδῶ.³³⁰

But come, old man, tell me your troubles,
and speak this truly to me, so I may know it well.

And Odysseus replies *τοιγὰρ ἐγὼ τοι ταῦτα μάλ' ἀτρεκέως ἀγορεύσω* ('See, I will accurately answer all that you ask me'). The stories he tells to Eumaeus are, in a way, far more plausible than his stories about sea goddesses or Cyclops and yet we know these latter to be 'truth.' Eumaeus' reaction to Odysseus' narrative should, perhaps be instructive to the external audience of the poem. He believes every word apart from the one nugget that is true: that Odysseus is alive. Meanwhile, very little of Odysseus' narrative to the Phaeacians is verified by other sources in the poem and even those sections may be embellished. If we believe Odysseus, are we allowing ourselves to be carried along by a few points of truth and a plethora of plausible details?

Many scholars have concluded that to seek factual truth, or otherwise, in Odysseus' narrative testimony is not only impossible but also less interesting and instructive than the 'meaningful truth' or truths that lie beneath or around his words. The exact nature of this 'meaningful truth' remains ambiguous. Emlyn-Jones, for example, relegates the notion of truth to think instead about telling a tale which is *κατὰ μοῖραν*, or appropriate.³³¹ His analysis of the pirate trope which runs through Odysseus' stories, told to various audiences for differing purposes, ends with the conclusion that 'the story can be used by the teller to convey subtly facts about himself and different aspects of his personality, as well as to convey warnings and suggest paradigms for behaviour.'³³² The 'truth,' according to Emlyn-Jones, is not a question of telling a factually accurate narrative but of creating an appropriate story, for a specific audience, through which to communicate 'truthful' aspects of character or deeper 'truths' about human behaviour. In this, it corresponds exactly to the social and creative formation and communication of memory discussed throughout this thesis.

This section has explored some of the issues relating to interpreting testimony in the *Odyssey* according to the ways in which we might expect to establish the truth value of testimony in court. It concludes by suggesting that the audience may need to question

³³⁰ *Od.* 14.185-86.

³³¹ Emlyn-Jones (1986), pp. 1-10.

³³² Emlyn-Jones, pp.5-8; quotations from p. 8.

the kind of truth it seeks. This approach to truth and memory informs my further discussion of the *Odyssey's* testimonies below. It is also refined by Simon Goldhill's analysis which goes a step further than Emlyn-Jones' to suggest that we need not look for a truth that lies beyond the words spoken. In the same way that memory theory posits that memory constitutes identity, Goldhill suggests that Odysseus/man 'is *made up* by the language in which he represents himself and is represented,' and 'duplicious fictions are a necessary part of the representation and formulation of the self.'³³³ That is, because the audience is given so few hints as to their truth or otherwise they can only use the tales to consider what they reveal about the speaker.³³⁴ This is a concept which I will explore in much more detail below, in connection with the theory of memory and of cultural memory.

iii) Memory and authority

I discussed above the ways that Nestor is authorised as a witness by the gods and by the integrity he displays. In this section, I suggest that he is granted a further level of authorisation from cultural memory and from his resonant reputation in the wider scheme of epic poetry.

We know that there was a Nestor before there was an *Iliad* but it is through the *Iliad* that we, as a modern audience, are most familiar with him.³³⁵ In the *Iliad*, Nestor is valued as a man of experience, as a speaker and as a politician. His advice is listened to (though not always acted upon) and he is a trusted and important member of the Achaean community.³³⁶ One reason why this is so important here is that the Trojan tales he tells of Odysseus in the *Odyssey* do not quite resonate with our memories of the *Iliad*. We might recognise the Odysseus who went out with Diomedes to spy on the Trojan camp in Nestor's statement that:

ἔνθ' οὐ τις ποτε μῆτιν ὁμοιωθήμεναι ἄντην
ἦθελ', ἐπεὶ μάλα πολλὸν ἐνίκᾳ δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς

³³³ Goldhill (1991), p. 56.

³³⁴ Ibid, p. 55.

³³⁵ See, for example, Christensen (2007), pp. 50-51.

³³⁶ For a much more detailed analysis of Nestor's function in the *Iliad*: ibid, pp. 49-130.

παντοίσι δόλοισι.³³⁷

there was no man who wanted to be set up
for cunning against great Odysseus; he far surpassed them
in every kind of stratagem.

However, it is harder to reconcile the notion that the Trojan War boiled down to the Achaeans trying every kind of strategem (παντοίσι δόλοισι) in order to win.³³⁸ In view of Odysseus' reputation for δόλος (craftiness or trickery) in the *Odyssey*, Nestor's depiction of the war as a series of tricks suggests that Odysseus was at the forefront of such assaults and, therefore, the most important player in the final victory over the Trojans. But this is a reading which privileges clever tricks over the valour, warcraft (χάρμης or ἀλκῆς) and force (βίος) which seem to characterise the war in the *Iliad*. That these views are expressed by Nestor gives them greater credence. Our respect for Nestor as a witness—supported by cultural memory of his integrity and reliability—predispose us to accept that this version of Troy is 'true' for the *Odyssey*, even if not for the *Iliad*. So, the *Odyssey* uses Nestor's Iliadic reputation – or rather the audience's memory of it – in order to authenticate its un-Iliadic presentation of the Trojan War and Odysseus' starring role in it.

At the same time, though, the *Odyssey* undermines Nestor's reputation in this post-Iliadic world. What Nestor narrates in his testimony is the breakdown of the Achaean community. In the *Iliad*, the community is almost entirely broken by the argument between Agamemnon and Achilles in the first assembly and the poem explores the way in which the community finds a way of accommodating dissent and reaching consensus in its wake.³³⁹ In this world, Nestor's authority and so, influence, was based, in part, on his memory.³⁴⁰ He served as a link to a race of heroes much greater than those around him and he used his memory to provide examples by which the Iliadic heroes should measure themselves or should act. His memory provided him significant authority and influence in the political group, with political action taken as a result of it. As Christensen explores,

³³⁷ *Od.* 3.120-22.

³³⁸ *Od.* 3.119.

³³⁹ For a much more detailed discussion of these ideas see, for dissent in the *Iliad*, Barker (2009), pp. 40-88; for consensus, Elmer (2012). Elmer does not dispute Barker's argument but suggests that their emphases are different. Where Barker finds space for dissent, Elmer stresses the 'degree to which the poem presents dissent as the necessary precursor to the imminent formation of consensus' (2012), p. 8.

³⁴⁰ For analysis of Nestor's use of autobiographical memory in the *Iliad*, see Minchin (2005), pp. 55-72.

Nestor's introduction in the *Iliad* resonates strongly with Hesiod's *Theogony*.³⁴¹ Like the *basileus* of the *Theogony*, 'his speech flowed from his tongue, sweeter than honey' (ἀπό γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέεν αὐδή).³⁴² Like the *basileus* too, it is through 'the recitation of paradigmatic stories and proverbial wisdom' that he attempts to resolve conflict.³⁴³ He is a vessel of cultural memory and in Nestor, as with the *basileus*, this cultural memory provides the basis for true judgement in matters of group politics and justice.

In the *Odyssey*, Nestor tells Telemachus that the final break-up of the Achaeans happened, not as part of an organic process of dividing to return to their separate lands, but because of another argument in the assembly. This one occurred 'as the sun was setting,' literally and metaphorically, on this political community. The quarrel was between Agamemnon and Menelaus, who, tellingly, called the assembly 'wildly, and in no kind of order.'³⁴⁴ They were 'heavy with drinking wine.'³⁴⁵ Nestor does not relate his part in the assembly but the fact that he calls Agamemnon 'fool' (νήπιος),³⁴⁶ suggests that he offered advice that was not taken. There was a further quarrel in a further assembly among those who left with Menelaus, which split the group again and so the sun set on the heroic Achaeans. With the end of the Achaean community, comes the end of the assembly, an institution which does not ever really recover in the *Odyssey*, in spite of Telemachus' efforts in Book 2.³⁴⁷ Paradoxically, while the *Odyssey* relies on Nestor's authority to establish Odysseus' character, Nestor gives this testimony at the expense of his own political influence and epic reputation: he narrates his own impotence to resolve the problems amongst the Achaeans. In the *Iliad*, Nestor's public sharing of memory is highly prized by the political community, even if, as Christensen suggests, the political community is in transition away from his traditional place as Hesiodic *basileus*.³⁴⁸ His value as an elder statesman, together with the sense of its transience is evinced by the honours bestowed on him by Achilles at the funeral games.³⁴⁹ In contrast, in the *Odyssey*, Nestor remembers privately, as one witness amongst many. More than in the *Iliad*, where

³⁴¹ Christensen (2007), especially pp. 59-63.

³⁴² *Il.* 1.249.

³⁴³ Christensen (2007), p. 63.

³⁴⁴ *Od.* 3.138.

³⁴⁵ *Od.* 3.139.

³⁴⁶ *Od.* 3.146. See also p. 88 of this thesis for discussion of the resonance of this term.

³⁴⁷ For further analysis of assemblies in the *Odyssey*, see Barker (2009), pp. 92-122.

³⁴⁸ Christensen (2007).

³⁴⁹ *Il.* 23.616f.

his lengthy memory-narratives served a political purpose, he now seems lost in the world of his past and in his grief for his son. He is a relic of an age that is now past.

Just as the audience's memory helps to evaluate Nestor's testimony, so too their memories of earlier episodes recounted in the poem defines their reception of Amphimedon's testimony. While, as I have said, his testimony is undermined by the narrative's heavy condemnation of the suitors, the audiences' memories demand that they do not write off his narrative altogether. Amphimedon describes what happened in Odysseus' halls using the resonant term *φόνος* ('slaughter')³⁵⁰—an emotive word, meaning 'murder' or 'slaughter' rather than the less emotive 'killing'—and his description of the scene conveys the sense of panic and horror.³⁵¹ The short phrase *τοὶ δ' ἀγχιστῖνοι ἔπιπτον* (unsatisfyingly translated as: they 'dropped one after another') suggests in the word *ἀγχιστῖνος*, a sense of crowding and closeness, in the heaps of the dead but also in the hall itself:³⁵² they were on top of each other and being struck down on all sides. He also uses the resonant formula *δάπεδον δ' ἅπαν αἵματι θῦεν* ('the floor was smoking / with blood')³⁵³ – the same that Agamemnon used to describe his own slaughter to Odysseus and as used in the main narrative of the slaughter in Book 22 – just before saying that their bodies still lie there, uncared for and unmourned, so claiming that Odysseus has transgressed against them, not only in their slaughter but also in his neglect of what is due to the dead.

I will explore the very different ramifications of the equation of Odysseus' slaughter of the suitors with Agamemnon's version of his murder by Aegisthus' below.³⁵⁴ That analysis will suggest that we might read the slaughter of the suitors against the normative thrust of the poem. Here, I will focus on how Agamemnon's reaction to Amphimedon's story reinforces that normative reading.

As discussed above in relation to his accusations against Penelope (pp. 90-91) and in his implication regarding Odysseus' transgressions against the suitors and their corpses, Amphimedon gives an alternative take on the narrative the audience has just experienced and interpreted. This could destabilise the normative 'truths' of Odysseus' justice but

³⁵⁰ *Od.* 24.169.

³⁵¹ As at *Od.* 2.325, 16.379, 4.843; *Il.* 17.757; *Soph.* *Aj.* 1055 and *Hdt.* 7.170.

³⁵² *Od.* 24.181; as at *Il.* 5.141 and 17.361 in the carnage of battle. I will pick up on the Iliadic resonances of the suitors' slaughter below (pp. 99-100).

³⁵³ *Od.* 24.185, 11.420 and 22.309.

³⁵⁴ See this thesis, pp. 99-101.

when it comes to evaluating Amphimedon's testimony, it is useful to look at the internal jury's response. While we might expect Agamemnon's response to be conditioned by his memories of his own death and, therefore, a recognition that the suitors were killed in a similar manner – in a hall, taken by surprise, people running around and falling on all sides, 'the floor steaming with blood,' it is actually conditioned by his perception of Penelope's faithfulness and virtue, in contrast with his own wife's perfidy. This rings true with our memory of his account which concludes not with self-pity about his death and the manner of it but with his sense of betrayal and the notion that Clytemnestra has brought shame upon the whole of her sex.³⁵⁵

Finally, memory also plays an important role in the audience's evaluation of Odysseus' testimony. I suggested above, in exploring Odysseus as a witness, that memory provides a way to think about Goldhill's notion, that 'duplicitous fictions are a necessary part of the representation and formulation of the self.'³⁵⁶ The way in which this representation of Odysseus' self functions in the *Odyssey*, and the way in which the audience will interpret it, relies on cultural memory. In particular, it relies on 'resonance'. Just as the *Odyssey's* presentation of Nestor and his testimony resonated with and against his presentation elsewhere in epic, Graziosi and Haubold suggest Odysseus' audience can trust his account 'because it resonates with what bards say and what we know about the universe.' With regard to the fact that 'it resonates with what bards say,' they analyse Alcinous' response to Odysseus' account: it can be trusted 'because it sounds like a bardic performance.' His tales resonate with other bardic performances and so, sound like truth. The tales also resonate with what the audience knows about the universe: with the epic cycle which tells and retells the story of the history of the cosmos. As Graziosi and Haubold go on to say, the effect of Odysseus' story on the Phaeacians must have been similar to the effect of the *Odyssey* on its early audiences: they judged the performance of a particular bard or travelling rhapsode on its resonance within the wider tradition.³⁵⁷

The 'significant truth' of Odysseus' tales, and the *Odyssey* as a whole, therefore, comes in their resonance with what the audience knows, from a vast bank of cultural memory, to be true about Odysseus' character and what they know to be true about his epic landscape and its inhabitants. This is not to say that this information tallies exactly with a

³⁵⁵ *Od.* 11.430-34.

³⁵⁶ Goldhill (1991), p. 55.

³⁵⁷ Graziosi and Haubold (2005), p. 56.

known and stable body of work but that their resonance with a multiplicity of tales and tellings gives it an authority strong enough to stabilise the tradition, in the sense that the *Odyssey* became the definitive version of who Odysseus is, while other versions disappeared into obscurity.³⁵⁸ His tales carry the truth that he is Odysseus and that he deserves to return home, to set his lands in order and to rule as king.

This section has suggested that cultural memory of epic and myth, including memory of earlier moments in the poem, signals alternative ways of reading testimony in the *Odyssey*. At the same time as it may provide foundations for Nestor's and Amphimedon's authority as witnesses, it also takes those foundations away, stripping their narratives of that poetic endorsement. This section has indicated that cultural memory may predispose the audience of the *Odyssey* to accept Odysseus and to accept his tales and this, in turn, supports the normative drive of the poem. If we believe that Odysseus deserves to 'return home, to set his lands in order and to rule as king' then we support the narrative which suggests that the suitors must be violently punished, the rebellion of their families suppressed, and oblivion cast upon all. The next section explores the ways in which memory might undermine this normative message.

1.6 The Verdict

Ultimately, there is no trial by jury depicted in the text. The gods help to orchestrate a brutal out-of-court settlement with the suitors; their families are deaf to arbitration; and in the end, there is silence as Zeus 'puts forgetting' on all. This section examines the 'out-of-court-settlement,' the 'final hearing' and the *eklēsis* and explores how we, as the external jury, might read these episodes. It also considers how this text could have functioned as a foundational narrative for political society in the fifth century BC. I have said already that remembering 'with' the poem and so, 'with' Zeus, contributes to the normative thrust of the poem, but that there is an important 'counter-thrust' which is also set in motion by memory. An analysis of the out-of-court settlement in Book 22 and the imposed forgetting in Book 24 helps to elucidate this idea.

³⁵⁸ Peradotto writes about this 'stabilizing' effect with respect to Odysseus' name and what it signifies (1990), pp. 100-101.

There are strong Iliadic parallels inscribed in Book 22 of the *Odyssey* and Pietro Pucci has written in great detail on these. He focuses on the moment when Odysseus beheads Leiodes, his supplicant, as equivalent to that when Achilles beheads Lycaon in *Iliad* 21, bringing out the characteristically Iliadic use of animal imagery to describe Odysseus in this scene as well the fact that Odysseus uses a sword here for the first time in the scene, to mirror Achilles' use of the sword to kill Lycaon.³⁵⁹ For Pucci, these Iliadic memories are stimulated in order to underscore Odysseus' victory over the Iliadic tradition. Whereas Achilles mocks his supplicant for wishing to 'return home after many toils,' Odysseus kills Leiodes because he must have prayed that Odysseus would never return home.³⁶⁰ Pucci writes that Odysseus' 'mimicry' of Achilles 'emphasizes how complete is the *Odyssey's* revision of Achilles' sarcastic, pathetic attitude towards return. Odysseus, in the garb of Achilles, vindicates the value of homecoming, of life and its pleasures.'³⁶¹

It is evident that Pucci's reading of the Iliadic parallels with Book 22 of the *Odyssey* emphasises Odysseus' triumph but I am inclined to agree with Barker's more sinister reading, which stresses the typically Odyssean move from public to private: here, the battlefield to the domestic hall.³⁶² The suitors, those Achaeans of Book 2, are instructed by Eurymachus to 'remember [their] warcraft' (*μνησώμεθα χάρμης*), the only Odyssean use of this formula which occurs a multitude of times in the battle scenes of the *Iliad*.³⁶³ This battle, though, is Achaean against Achaean, and crucially, Odysseus' enemies remain unarmed for a large part of it. It is 'slaughter behind closed doors,' doors which, in Barker's terms not only imprison the suitors inside, but also 'marginaliz[e] open conflict and [bring] it within the bounds of Odysseus' control.'³⁶⁴ Those who might help the suitors, either physically in battle or by witnessing the slaughter and speaking out on their part, remain shut out.

In addition to this, Achilles' *aristeia* in the *Iliad*, which this episode recalls, is itself far from free of ethical ambiguity. The animal imagery – particularly the lion simile – which Pucci highlights as being referenced in Book 22 of the *Odyssey*, is illustrative of the wild, bestial

³⁵⁹ Pucci (1987), pp. 128-141.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 137-8.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 141. It is also possible to see in these examples, the *Iliad* responding to an Odyssean tradition. According to this reading, the Iliadic Achilles cuts off the head of the Odyssean hero who presumes that there is an epic tale in suffering outside of war.

³⁶² Barker (2009), pp. 123-26.

³⁶³ *Od.* 22.73. For Iliadic use, see for example, *Il.* 8.252, 12.393, 14.441 and 15.380.

³⁶⁴ Barker (2009), p. 124.

side of Achilles' *biē*. This imagery, which culminates in Achilles' wish 'to hack [Hector's] meat away and eat it raw for the things that [he has] done to [him],'³⁶⁵ is testament to the way in which the *Iliad* represents *tisis*, or the repayment of wrongs done to one, as highly problematic.³⁶⁶ That the *Odyssey* recalls such bestial imagery,³⁶⁷ in this scene of Odysseus' *aristeia*, in Odysseus' own enactment of *tisis* against the suitors,³⁶⁸ is to lay ambiguity upon ambiguity.

In addition to referencing the *Iliad* here though, the *Odyssey* is 'self-referential,'³⁶⁹ and its self-referentiality – the way that it draws on the audience's memory of previous episodes – is also provocative. Pucci comments on the use of *thuō*, used in Book 22 as well as in Agamemnon's testimony regarding his murder in Book 11 but the similarities between the episodes do not end here.³⁷⁰ Both slaughters take place in halls, at feasts and in each the blood and food mingle: Agamemnon describes how they 'lay sprawled by the mixing bowl and the loaded / tables all over the palace,' (*ὡς ἀμφὶ κρητῆρα τραπέζας τε πληθυσσας / κείμεθ' ἐνὶ μεγάρω*); while in Book 22, 'the good food was scattered on the floor and the bread and roast flesh were spoiled' (*ἀπὸ δ' εἶδατα χεῦεν ἔραζε / σῆτός τε κρέα τ' ὀπτὰ φορύνετο*).³⁷¹ Both describe the 'victims' in terms of beasts for the slaughter: Agamemnon compares his companions to 'pigs with shining / tusks' (*σύες ὡς ἀργιόδοντες*); while the narrator in Book 22 compares the suitors to 'a herd of cattle' (*βόες ὡς ἀγελαῖαι*).³⁷² In the divine assembly of Book 1, Zeus constructs Aegisthus' seduction of Clytemnestra and murder of Agamemnon as the ultimate hubristic act requiring of retributive justice and the text guides us to construe Odysseus' triumph over the suitors as the ultimate act of such justice. However, the equation of these acts – the hubristic slaughter and the glorious revenge – in the diction and imagery with which they are related, must give the audience pause. The suitors' families may be shut out but the audience is shut in with the suitors. We are their witnesses. In this sense, the traumatic memories which Amphimedon voices in his testimony, discussed above (p. 96) are *our* traumatic memories too. The deliberate evocation of the audience's memories in this

³⁶⁵ *Il.* 22.347-8.

³⁶⁶ The problematic nature of *tisis* in the *Iliad* is discussed in Graziosi and Haubold (2005), pp. 131-32.

³⁶⁷ At, for example, *Od.* 22.402.

³⁶⁸ Odysseus' revenge is described as *tisis* at, for example, *Od.* 1.40, 9.479, 11.118, 12.378, 20.169.

³⁶⁹ Pucci (1987), p. 134.

³⁷⁰ *Θυω* is used at *Od.* 11.420 and 22.309.

³⁷¹ *Od.* 11.419-20 cf. 22.20-21.

³⁷² *Od.* 413 and 22.300.

instance is surely a cue that 'justice' is a concept which political society needs constantly to debate and assess, in its definition and in its practice.

In the length and detail of the account of this slaughter, Book 22 far exceeds Agamemnon's testimony of his own death – this isn't, after all, his story – but the very details of this episode are central to the way in which the text uses memory as an affective political force. In his discussion of the *Contest Between Homer and Hesiod*, Haubold remarks that the poet represents 'Homer's ability to depict a scene so gruelling that we would not want to witness it directly.' He goes on to argue that 'Homeric *enargeia* was a quality to display, reflect on and worry about,' that the gruesome details which Homer depicts represent 'a point of concern' for ancient audiences as well as for modern ones.³⁷³ The recent reading of the *Odyssey*, staged by the Almeida theatre, brought this sense vividly to life.³⁷⁴ The eye skips over details when reading and the scene moves quickly but in hearing the recitation of thrust after thrust with spear and then sword, gushes of blood, tearing of tendons, snapping of bones, twitching of feet and ripping off of genitals, the full scale and brutality of the scene cannot be ignored. The scene is long and the details relentless. The suitors' families are unaware of these details when Zeus casts forgetting on them to end the civil war, but they are etched into the minds of the audience, in all their grisly vividness. For this reason, it seems not only that we *can* remember – we are not subject to Zeus' decree – but that we must do so.

In this way, the poem casts doubt upon the very ethical and political certainties it appears to espouse and memory is at the centre of the way in which it does this. The audience's memories of Achilles' *aristeia* in the *Iliad* and Agamemnon's account of his murder from earlier in the *Odyssey*, frame the way in which it receives Odysseus' slaughter of the suitors. So it is that this text which seems to privilege privacy – even secrecy – and storytelling over public debate,³⁷⁵ actually models debate in the ambiguity of its normative 'message.'

During my analysis of the first Ithacan assembly, I suggested that the *laos* had failed to be motivated to action on Telemachus' behalf because their memories of Odysseus were not

³⁷³ Haubold (2014), pp. 13-28; this from p. 26. There is a similar argument in Adorno and Horkheimer (1997), pp. 79-80. Here they discuss the contrast between vivid detail and 'narrative reticence' as a way in which the narrator marks episodes which are not to be forgotten.

³⁷⁴ Goold and Icke (2015).

³⁷⁵ Barker (2009), p. 90; Elmer (2012), p. 232.

powerful enough.³⁷⁶ The slaughter of the suitors could be read as a brutal reminder of Odysseus' power for the Ithacan people and it is in the light of this reminder that the *laos* meets again in assembly.

In many ways, this assembly provides another way in which the text seeks to control its own interpretation. I suggested above that Amphimedon's testimony offered one example of the way in which the text deals with those who seek to undermine it and Eupheithes offers another example here. As I touched on in the opening to this chapter, Eupheithes is partially successful in mobilizing an army against Odysseus and he achieves this through his communication of collective trauma.

In order to accomplish this, he must, as Jeffrey Alexander suggests, communicate such a 'sense of shock and fear' that the collective feels their 'patterned meanings' to have been 'abruptly dislodged.'³⁷⁷ He manages this by reinterpreting for the Ithacans their memory of Odysseus as king, articulating, in Haubold's words, 'a highly plausible forcefully traditional alternative to the official version.'³⁷⁸ The Ithacans have as yet no stable version of what happened to Odysseus and his companions which makes it that much easier for Eupheithes to rewrite the narrative. Now, instead of the sorrowful story we have seen through the eyes of Telemachus or Penelope, Eupheithes tells a story of Odysseus' intentional (Eupheithes uses *medomai*, 'to be minded, intend') ruin of the Achaeans.³⁷⁹ He says that he utterly destroyed his people (*ἀπὸ δ' ὤλεσε λαούς*)—the *laos* here being his companions—and then, on his return, killed others, the best of the Cephallenians (*τούς δ' ἔλθῶν ἔκτεινε κεφαλήνων ὄχ' ἀρίστους*).³⁸⁰ Haubold also draws attention to the fact that the equation of the companions and the *laos* in this version of events emphasises Odysseus' irresponsibility as a king. Whereas the companions have agency and, in the narrative of the poem, destroyed themselves because of their recklessness, the *laos* are powerless and as king, Odysseus should protect them.³⁸¹ Eupheithes' weeping predisposes the Ithacans to pity while his words 'abruptly' dislodge their perceptions of a king who protects his people, stirring more than half to run for their armour.

³⁷⁶ See this thesis pp. 78-84.

³⁷⁷ Alexander (2004), p. 4.

³⁷⁸ Haubold (2000), p. 108.

³⁷⁹ *Od.* 24.426.

³⁸⁰ *Od.* 24.426-29.

³⁸¹ Haubold (2000), pp. 10 and 104-10.

For the Ithacans, the communicative, collective dimension to this trauma is short-lived. Eupheithes' rebellious actions could not be more forcefully put down: as Barker writes, 'It is only after Eupheithes, that last dissenting voice, has been done away with – and god knows how many others with him – that Athena finally intercedes to halt the slaughter.'³⁸² Forgetting cannot be imposed until Eupheithes has got his just desserts for challenging the narrative in such a way.

In a way, though, the silencing of debate is even more total and this becomes apparent immediately after the debate as the gods discuss the *eklēsis*. In the assembly, the Ithacan *laos* is once more shown to be divided and fickle. When Eupheithes speaks, the Achaeans pity him, however when Medon answers him, the Ithacans respond with 'green fear' (*χλωρόν δέος*) at his warning that the gods are supporting Odysseus.³⁸³ So it is that after Halitherses' vehement, 'Let us not go':

οἱ δ' ἄρ' ἀνήϊξαν μεγάλῳ ἀλαλητῶ

ἡμίσεων πλείους: τοὶ δ' ἀθρόοι αὐτόθι μίμον.³⁸⁴

they sprang up with great shouts—

more than half of them—though others remained where they were.

There is still no debate among the people, no weighing up of testimony or evidence and this could certainly be seen as a failing in them which the audience should be ready to rectify among themselves. However, the *eklēsis* challenges this reading. Zeus' imposition of forgetting makes it clear that any and all political debate and consensus among the people is essentially meaningless. Even had the Ithacans been completely unified in their stance against the house of Odysseus, their joint strength would have made no difference in the face of divine will.

Readings of the *eklēsis*, up to now, have gestured towards the fact that this is not the whole story. Barker suggests that the episode shows the 'precariousness' of the narrative's 'hold over alternative voices.'³⁸⁵ Haubold, meanwhile, argues that each time a character conflates the *laoi* with the companions (or the suitors), as Eupheithes does in his speech, this adds a layer of uncertainty to the text, even where we know that the

³⁸² Barker (2009), p. 132.

³⁸³ *Od.* 24.450.

³⁸⁴ *Od.* 24.463-44.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

collapsing of these terms is a misrepresentation.³⁸⁶ In similar ways, Christensen and Farenga are more radical in their interpretation. Christensen sees the *eklēsis* as similar to Platonic *aporia* ('confusion'), suggesting that the aporetic state requires 'group intellectual and emotional work.'³⁸⁷ In language very like Olick's (with regard to social memory), Christensen argues that the audience's perception of and response to the narrative, in the light of this *aporia*, 'remakes' the audience. The social and political debate which it inspires, regarding the decisions made, the morality of revenge and the mode of justice, reforms the audience as a political group. Farenga too, suggests that 'the poet certainly wants his implied audiences to debate and discuss the means and reason giving Odysseus uses to implement that justice.'³⁸⁸

While my reading is similar to these, especially in the sense that the external audience remembers while the internal audience forgets, it is crucially different in putting memory at the centre of the political development of ancient Greek society. It is not simply that the audience must *remember* in the face of Zeus' and Athena's insistence 'that the traditional cognitive acts and emotions on which revenge feeds – especially remembering, retelling, and re-experiencing – be jettisoned with the sort of force Odysseus used to slaughter the suitors,'³⁸⁹ the audience must *retell* the story. For the audience, that collective, communicative aspect of the trauma remains. It is a memory to be repeated and retold. In this, the poem is formative in two very different ways. On the one hand, it demonstrates the political value of forgetting but, on the other, carries a memory that continues to inform and underlie its audience's present identity. This identity – almost anywhere in the ancient Greek world which cherished the Homeric epics, not only in democratic Athens – is that of a society which debates communal issues in the assembly and settles disputes as a group of representative citizens. It is a society which will not allow the events of the *Odyssey* to take place again, neither the stagnation of the assembly as a political institution, nor the brutal and autocratic settling of disputes. Unlike individual trauma, then, this collective trauma gains momentum and affective, political power in communication, in the annual retelling at the Panathenaea.

³⁸⁶ Haubold (2000), pp. 120-1.

³⁸⁷ Christensen (forthcoming). I will return to this discussion of *aporia* at the end of Chapter 3, pp. 238-42.

³⁸⁸ Farenga (2006), p. 259.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 261.

In the context of the trial metaphor, the audience's juridical verdict is unimportant; what matters is that just as memory kickstarts the neglected assembly on Ithaca, so memory fuels and underpins the evolution of political society. It is because of their memory of Agamemnon's account of his slaughter that the audience equates this despicable act of murder with Odysseus' honourable act of justice, causing them to examine justice in their own political community. Similarly, the audience retains memories of the horrific details of Odysseus' 'justice'—details to which the outraged suitors families were never privy—long after the inhabitants of Ithaca are made to forget. The *Odyssey* lived in the cultural memory of Athens as not only a foundational story to explain their origins, but also a foundational trauma which must be communicated and acted upon so as never to be repeated.

In addition to this, as set out in the introduction to this chapter (p. 65) the *Odyssey* acts as a political 'supplement' in its performance, engendering the institution (albeit an informal one) of its audience-jury. The collective apathy and the autocratic style of government modelled in the poem, together with the memories which the text both evokes and creates for its audience, point to the political void in the world of the *Odyssey*: a void where collective discussion and decision-making should belong. The poem also fills this void, setting out the different sides of the dispute and provoking the audience to become engaged not merely in the matter of the suitors' vs the house of Odysseus, but also in the matter of how justice should be performed in society. However, as in the Derridean description, the supplement is, itself, always lacking. For this reason, the audience's commitment to this debate must be ongoing: it will always be a 'striving towards' and will never be 'finished.' The following section will consider the mechanics of the text as supplement in further detail.

1.7 Conclusions: the epic cosmos and the *Odyssey* as supplement

The debate over whether the *Odyssey* portrays a conception of justice which is more advanced than that represented in the *Iliad* is long and heated.³⁹⁰ In spite of this, most critics now agree that in the cosmological history related by epic, the *Odyssey* follows the *Iliad*, a text which foregrounds what it is to be mortal and living as part of a community,

³⁹⁰ See, for example, Lloyd-Jones (1971) and Dickie (1978), pp. 91-101.

and is itself followed by Hesiod's *Works and Days*, a text which discusses what it means to live in a political community in which mortals control justice, though with divine support in the background. Most critics are also agreed that it is the final imposition of forgetting to end civil war which represents the sea change from what has gone before. Farenga describes it as a moment when the gods warn both parties 'to check pursuits of self-interest and pursue instead the interest of community peace and prosperity.'³⁹¹ Heubeck, meanwhile, heralds it as the 'abolition of the blood feud' in favour of an abstract system of justice, to be presided over in future by Odysseus, as king. Heubeck suggests, thereby, that such an abstract system should encompass collective decision-making rather than the personal, private nature of the blood feud.³⁹²

As an illustration of the *Odyssey's* place before the *Works and Days*, Farenga's chapter on the *Odyssey* as proto-trial is followed by one in which he explores Hesiod's *Works and Days* as a text which deals with an actual legal dispute in the mortal world. He sees the *Works and Days* as a forerunner to the statute laws which were inscribed on wood or stone around the classical *poleis* and which were 'particularly concerned to control abuses by magistrates' in the matter of dispute settlement cases.³⁹³ Farenga argues that Hesiod's poetic performance is 'designed to supplant a poor performance by a judicial *basileis*,' the kind of performance Hesiod represents in the poem as delivered by the 'bribe-eating' judges.³⁹⁴ Farenga goes on from this to posit that 'here the "jurors" are members of the poet's audience and the "defendant" is Perses.'³⁹⁵ He argues that 'the poem pleads for what Solon, at around 590, would call *epheisis* or "removal," an "appeal," from one level of justice (before a magistrate) to another (the court of the citizen assembly).'³⁹⁶

In the same way as I suggested with regard to the *Odyssey*, I take Farenga's conclusions further. The key notion for me is that the ill-judging *basileus* in question is a single person and that as such, he is incapable of making sound judgement. This is similar to the story of the judge, Deioeces in Herodotus, who is made king by the Medes, on account of his

³⁹¹ Farenga (2006), p. 261.

³⁹² Heubeck, West and Hainsworth, (1988), p. 412.

³⁹³ Farenga (2006), p. 273.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 280.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 282.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 282.

sound judgements, but who, in his lust for and love of power, becomes despotic.³⁹⁷ The central concept of Solonic *epheisis* is, then, the move from the trial held before a single magistrate, to the trial held before a court of citizen-jurors.

Farenga's argument clearly has much in common with my proposal that the *Odyssey* functions as a political 'supplement,' in that the text itself both enhances, and illustrates a 'lack' in the political structures that it represents. Farenga argues that *Works and Days* suffers as such a supplement because Hesiod's 'peculiar repertoire in *Works and Days* of axioms, proverbs, fables, mythological snippets and *thesmia* reflects an idiosyncratic virtuosity' and is not designed to 'recruit' others to repeat its performance.³⁹⁸ Elmer shares a similar concern about Odysseus in the *Odyssey*, arguing that his performance is unrepeatable by any other than himself,³⁹⁹ and that for all he is a wise politician, he is secretive: his social and political wisdom does little good if it cannot be effectively transmitted to and circulated amongst others.⁴⁰⁰ While this may be true of Odysseus, with regard to the poem as a whole, I suggest the opposite. Although Odysseus' justice is unrepeatable by the ordinary mortal, what *is* repeatable is the process of analysing and debating evidence, of weighing the truth value of speech and of listening and responding as a collective. This process is invited – even demanded – by the poem and was repeated at the Panathenaea.

The model of autocratic government represented in the poem undoubtedly makes the modern scholar, eager to 'trace the establishment of political society,' squirm. In the 'positive' conclusions above, regarding the *Odyssey* as founding a new system of justice, a lot seems to hang on four lines just before the closing credits. What I have proposed is that to focus solely on the represented collective in the poem is to ignore the fact that the poem was performed in front of a very different collective, one which would have been well versed in the process of collective decision-making as depicted on the Shield of Achilles. This is the collective which hears the whole trial, hears all the testimony given in whispered conversations or in lavish after-dinner speeches in other lands, and who can see, and reflect on the dismal apathy and high emotions which hamper productive debate

³⁹⁷ Herodotus 1.96.1ff.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

³⁹⁹ Elmer (2012), p. 227.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

and decision-making in the text. This is the collective who, through its experience of the poem, is transformed into a citizen jury.

While this chapter has analysed the role of memory in establishing the political community via the trial as a metaphor, the following chapter picks up the theme of the law court again to examine how this is formalised and institutionalised in Euripidean tragedy. It will continue to examine the ways in which the audience's memories might authorise or discredit the characters' narratives, but given the subject matter of its key text—the *Trojan Women*—the notion of traumatic memory will come to the fore. In the light of this, it will consider the affective and politically effective impact of traumatic testimony on an audience in the Athenian theatre.

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2 Trauma, Empathy and the Politics of Tragedy in Euripides' *Trojan Women*

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the ways in which memory not only informed and underscored the normative, political thrust of the *Odyssey* but also served to challenge it. In the case of the *Odyssey*, I suggested that audience memory of earlier episodes of the poem, authorised by the gods and the omniscient narrator, reinforced the poem's drive towards autocracy. The 'alternative' memories which challenged this drive were those to which the external audience still had access after the act of divine *eklēsis*. In that chapter too, cultural memory not only added nuance to the aesthetic interpretation of the poem, bringing out resonances of characters and their depictions elsewhere in epic, but also served to authorise certain memories over others in the 'trial' of Odysseus. The chapter suggested that the slaughter in Book 22 of the *Odyssey* became a moment of collective foundational trauma for ancient Greek societies such as classical Athens. For this reason, the poem's place in the cultural memory of fifth-century BC Athens not only affirmed and explained the political society's foundations, but also served to re-member them each year at the Panathenaea, reinforcing the idea that the story must be retold and acted upon politically in order to prevent such a collective trauma from occurring again.

In this chapter, the locus for Athens' 're-membering' of those political foundations moves from the Panathenaea to the City Dionysia. As stated in the Introduction, this thesis is not looking for an evolving political sophistication across the texts studied but there is, inevitably, some kind of teleological narrative here. Tragedy was the aesthetic successor to epic, its plots built on 'slices from Homer's great banquets,' and 'the adoption and adaption of the epic timbre ... central to the force of tragic language.'⁴⁰¹ However, as Haubold suggests, if the epic *laoi* 'expose the incurable vulnerability of social life,' the classical *laoi* rather 'celebrate its successful transformation.'⁴⁰² These classical *laoi*, the *laoi* of tragedy, mark the transition from pre-political society to political society and are associated with the foundation of the *polis* or its institutions.⁴⁰³ In this way, the City

⁴⁰¹ Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 8.347e. Goldhill (1997), p. 129.

⁴⁰² Haubold (2000), p. 167. For more developed analyses regarding tragedy as an institutional realisation of epic see also Goldhill, e.g. (1986), pp. 138-67 and Barker (2009), pp. 280-365.

⁴⁰³ As discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, pp. 59-60.

Dionysia and the tragedies staged in it, represent the institutional fulfilment of epic's foundational narrative.

This chapter will explore the ways in which the *Trojan Women* uses memory, similarly, to establish and authorise Hecuba's narrative of the Trojan War. I will discuss the notion that just as, in the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus, aided by Zeus and the narrator, attempts to control interpretation of his story, so in the *Trojan Women*, Hecuba narrates and stages her own tragedy. In the first stage of this analysis (2.2) I will use trauma theory to explore the ways in which Euripides establishes the authority of Hecuba's narrative and the reasons why the audience might be so receptive to and accepting of this authority. In the second (2.3), I will examine the ways in which Hecuba remembers publicly—making the personal political and *vice versa*—exhibiting and harnessing tropes of traumatic behaviour in order to create a 'community of feeling' in the theatre and so, to generate sympathy for her political interpretation of events. The third stage (2.4) focuses on the idea that Hecuba's memory-narrative is one of exclusion and blame, which emphasises Greek duplicity and cowardliness and eschews all culpability on her own part and on the part of Troy as a whole, instead casting blame onto Helen. As part of this, I will examine the ways in which this narrative is constructed and supported by the play in such a way that it achieves dominance. As in the case of Chapter 1, where memory was seen to support and to challenge the *Odyssey's* normative message, this section will also analyse the ways in which an understanding of memory and trauma theory can help to deconstruct Hecuba's dominant narrative. As part of both processes—of remembering with and against Hecuba—I will examine the role played by the audience's cultural memory of myth, Homeric epic and of other tragedies, such as Euripides' *Hecuba*. Sections 2.5 and 2.6 provide close analysis of this last idea using firstly, the *agōn* and secondly, Hecuba's relationship with Odysseus.

The use of LaCapra's theory of 'empathic unsettlement' in this analysis ultimately provokes wider questions about the ways in which empathy affects the performance of politics and the law in fifth-century BC Athens. In considering the empathic response to Hecuba which the onstage audience demonstrates and which the theatre audience might reasonably be expected to feel, this chapter explores the ways in which Hecuba orchestrates a collective response to her narrative, drawing on forensic rhetoric, familiar poetic and mythic tropes and the language of traumatic testimony. It also explores the

potential dangers for a political system which relies upon juridical responses to such narratives in its political and legal arenas. Finally, it suggests that for the theatre audience, recollection of the 'living moment' of watching and responding to the play provides a means of resistance to the dominant interpretation of events imposed by Hecuba. By exposing the mechanisms of memory and the political manipulation involved, it offers a glimpse of a politics which might be less binary and more embracing of complexity.

The rest of this introduction discusses the theory and criticism that informed this chapter. This will take place over four subsections, the first three focusing on theory and the criticism of tragedy in general, the last, focusing on the *Trojan Women* specifically. Much of the theory which underpins the chapter was discussed in the Introduction and Chapter 1 but here, the performance and orchestration of the traumatic response are of greater importance, alongside LaCapra's theory of empathetic unsettlement. As I will suggest in the first subsection below, one effect of approaching tragedy using this framework of memory theory is that it provides a way of synthesising or transcending the traditional and entrenched 'aesthetic' and 'political' approaches to tragedy which dominated tragic scholarship for so long. In this, as I will show, it builds on recent work by scholars such as Victoria Wohl and Elton Barker. The second subsection outlines my methodology with regard to constructing the audience response which is so central to my investigation. In this, it uses theories of memory and postmemory. The third subsection focuses on the political and legal rhetoric which also plays a vital part in the play and in my analysis of it.

i) Politics and aesthetics in tragic criticism

Though this chapter will not focus on the deep divisions within tragic scholarship it is useful to outline them here to show my indebtedness to both and my departure from them. On the one side, Malcolm Heath has suggested that while it is not impossible or unlikely that Greek tragedy had intellectual (political or religious) resonances for its audiences, 'it may be that our concern with the ideas of tragedy too often becomes in practice a preoccupation overwhelming our awareness of tragedy as a vehicle for emotional stimulus.'⁴⁰⁴ He does not deny that an audience's response to tragedy must

⁴⁰⁴ Heath (1987), p. 37.

contain an intellectual element but states, on the basis of his analysis of ancient sources such as Hesiod, Homer, Plato and Aristotle, that the tragedian's 'overriding task—the one on which competitive success would depend—was to satisfy an audience that looked for emotional stimulus and aesthetic satisfaction.'⁴⁰⁵ In a similar vein, Nicole Loraux has argued that the 'mourning voice' of tragedy appeals to something essentially human in its audience rather than essentially civic.⁴⁰⁶ It finds its truest expression in a cry of pain rather than in the *logos* of political life.

On the other side, scholars such as Paul Cartledge, Simon Goldhill and Edith Hall have seen the classical Athenian theatre as an extension of its law courts and propounded the idea that 'to be in an audience' in classical Athens 'is above all to play the role of democratic citizen.'⁴⁰⁷ According to this political reading of tragedy, the audience is allied to the voting caucus in the assembly and the jury of the law court in the way that it sits in judgement not only on the quality of the dramatic performances on offer at the Great Dionysia, but also on the agonistic debates represented on stage and often (especially in Euripides) conducted in the language of the court, or even as quasi-trials. Such an approach to tragedy raises questions about civic identity and public discourse in the context of a major public festival in the political calendar.

Although neither Heath nor Loraux rejects the claim that tragedy can have both aesthetic and political effects, in privileging one over the other to such a degree, their interpretations—though useful and informative for this study—are reductive. What Victoria Wohl suggests—and what this thesis builds on—is, rather, that tragedy's power to evoke strong emotions is central to what makes it political.⁴⁰⁸ This comes down to the way that Euripides' plays 'shape political sensibilities, create political attachments, structure political feelings.'⁴⁰⁹ My reading relies on Wohl's to a point but departs from it in a crucial respect. For me, the theatrical experience is not limited to 'the living moment' of watching the play in the theatre but must also include the period of reflection which follows. It is in this period, when the audience *remembers* their strong emotions, reflects on why they felt them and *remembers* alternative arguments presented, for example, by

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, pp. 46-47.

⁴⁰⁶ Loraux (2002), pp. 88-89.

⁴⁰⁷ For the connection between theatre and the courts see e.g. Cartledge (1997), p. 15 and Hall (2006), p. 355; the quotation is from Goldhill (1997), p. 54.

⁴⁰⁸ Wohl (2015), pp. ix-xii.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid, p. xii.

less sympathetic characters and *forgotten* in the heat of the moment, that debate is truly internalised and realised.⁴¹⁰ It is this combination of heightened emotion, swayed by memory, followed by reflection, informed by memory, which, I suggest, structures the audience's political engagement with Euripides' plays.

Pat Easterling has argued against this separation between the emotion of the 'living moment' and the intellectual reflection which an audience, civic or otherwise, might experience.⁴¹¹ In her discussions of the role of the chorus, she suggests that, as witnesses, the chorus' 'job is to help the audience become involved in the process of responding' to emotional, intellectual or philosophical issues.⁴¹² One example she gives of this is in relation to the protagonist's *anagnōrisis*. Here, her argument is that Aristotle's notion of catharsis consists of a 'continuous whole': the chorus directs the audience to respond to the protagonist's tragic recognition with pity and fear but there is an intellectual stimulus contained in this recognition also.⁴¹³

However, as Easterling also suggests, 'the guidance offered by a chorus may be quite elusive,'⁴¹⁴ especially when the chorus is made up of people closely involved in the action of the play. In discussing Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, for example, Vincent Farenga notes that 'the nature of the Danaid self is undecidedly cast between extra-political and political senses of identity.'⁴¹⁵ On the one hand, this chorus 'compel[s]' the audience to respond to emotion and to intellectual reasoning that challenges civic discourse. On the other, they demand, with increasing insistence, 'that Pelasgus and the Argives translate their dangerous plea for supplicance into the ultimate democratic discourse: a law in the form of a unanimous vocal vote (*psêphos*).'⁴¹⁶ That is, at the same time as they challenge civic discourse, they demand for themselves the 'ultimate' confirmation that this discourse can offer. The solution which Farenga turns to in order to illuminate this ethical 'obscurity' is memory. The Athenians will remember that 'these women ... in the course of the trilogy turn from being objects of *hybris* into subjects (perpetrators) of violence when they

⁴¹⁰ For an analysis of how the reader/audience internalises and realises the institution of debate see Barker (2009), p.16.

⁴¹¹ Easterling (1996), pp.173-181.

⁴¹² Easterling (1997), p. 164.

⁴¹³ Easterling (1996), p. 178.

⁴¹⁴ Easterling (1997), pp. 163-4.

⁴¹⁵ Farenga (2006), p. 377.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 377.

murder their Egyptian husbands on their wedding night.⁴¹⁷ The audience's memory of the women's wider story contributes to their understanding and interpretation of this problematic moment.

Farenga does not refer to any split between experience and reflection here and indeed, I do not believe that there is one as such. As in Easterling's characterisation of Aristotelian catharsis, I see the theatrical experience as comprising of *both* the moment in the theatre and the period of subsequent reflection: it is a continuous whole in which emotional and intellectual responses circle and inform each other. My reading, as Wohl's, is also based on Aristotle, who depicted Euripides as the 'most tragic' of the tragedians precisely because his plots are of the kind most conducive to fear and pity.⁴¹⁸ These emotions are transporting: to use the terminology of LaCapra, they are 'unsettling' (discussed further in the next subsection). They temporarily take the spectator out of their settled identity, allowing them to feel some of the emotion of another. While the audience may still retain a sense of themselves as spectators, if the drama is effective, this will be weakest when the emotion of the drama is at its most intense. Even were they to feel some discomfort, some sense that the emotion they are reflecting from the protagonists or the chorus does not 'sit right,' it is likely that they would not be able to articulate this fully until the effects of the strong emotion had diminished.

Furthermore, the separation made between feeling in the moment and subsequent intellectual reflection can be misleading because often that period of reflection is also infused with strong feeling. In the Introduction, I discussed the destabilising power of involuntary memory to return and overwhelm the subject (p. 20) and this may well affect the nature of reflection. In addition to this, sometimes—and I believe this is key here—the subsequent emotion one feels may well differ from that experienced in the moment.

ii) Methodology: postmemory, empathy and audience response

My methodology for this chapter is partly informed by Wohl's. Her methodology for constructing audience response—discussed in the Introduction (p. 51)—is largely focused on emotional reactions, grounded in a mixture of her own responses and known 'cultural

⁴¹⁷ Ibid, p. 378.

⁴¹⁸ Arist. *Poetics* 52b29.

filters,' with the caveat that these will, inevitably, not be comprehensive. My approach here builds on hers but also, in its consideration of the connections which ancient audiences might be expected to make, on Martin Revermann's analysis of 'theatrical competence.' Here, through a study of paratragedy in Aristophanic comedy, he develops a theory of 'stratification' which, he suggests, is built into the plays themselves. According to Revermann, the plays are composed with stratified levels of audience competence in mind, the base line being 'an awareness of the key visual and verbal markers of the genres,' while at the highest level they presuppose knowledge of stock scenes, rival playwrights and their plays and the oeuvre of the poet.⁴¹⁹

To Wohl's methodology, I also add the bank of memory, cultural memory and trauma theory already discussed at length in the Introduction and Chapter 1. As outlined in the Introduction (p. 43), this chapter sees cultural memory as the memory which is embedded deep in the history and mythology of the culture in, for example, myth, ritual practice and literature. Homeric epic—the main seam of cultural memory examined here—encompasses all three of these, ingrained as it was in the educational and ritual practices of the city. The chapter looks at how cultural memory of epic, in the specific context of classical Athens, shapes the portrayal and possible receptions of Hecuba. In this, although cultural memory is not fixed, the chapter sees it as a kind of intertextual reservoir on which both tragedian and audience might draw, defining and interpreting characters and actions within and against former, perhaps traditional, incarnations.

Unlike memory, or communicative memory in Assmann's terms, cultural memory is not comprised of first hand experiences. In this, though the generations are many times removed, it bears some important aspects in common with 'postmemory,' as described by Marianne Hirsch and these will be particularly relevant to this chapter. Hirsch describes 'postmemory' as:

the relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right.

⁴¹⁹ Revermann (2006), pp. 117-18.

Postmemory's connection to the past is thus actually motivated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection and creation.⁴²⁰

The events of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* stand as collective foundational traumas to ancient Greek societies and they are recalled imaginatively and creatively in poetry and drama. In this sense, tragedy may be described as postmemory in itself. However, in another sense, the trauma expressed by the characters on stage in the *Trojan Women* may itself be transmitted to the audience 'so deeply and affectively' that they operate on the audience members as postmemory. The audience members are so imaginatively invested in the narratives they hear and they sympathise so closely that they begin to lose the boundary between personal and vicarious experience. This is something explored in both psychological experiments in collective memory and in the theory of traumatic memory.

In terms of psychological collective memory, this idea of empathy and reflection corresponds to the experiments discussed in the Introduction (p. 36), which suggest that collective memory and induced forgetting may be attributable to the way in which we empathise (or not) with a speaker.⁴²¹ According to such studies, empathising with a speaker leads us to remember 'with' them; that is, our memories are guided and formed by their memory-narratives. In such cases, we are less likely to notice or question omissions and elisions than if we do not empathise. These omitted or elided 'facts' are not erased but are mentally inaccessible immediately after the 'event' of listening, only returning when the rush of feeling for the speaker has subsided.

In terms of trauma theory, in writing about the Wilkomirski affair,⁴²² Andrew Gross and Michael Hoffman suggest that the 'prescribed' audience response to traumatic testimony 'is sympathy or personal identification rather than criticism.'⁴²³ As I will in my analysis of Hecuba, they link 'the affect of testimony,' which they describe as 'its emotive power,' to its 'authority.'⁴²⁴ Here, they define 'authority' as a 'subject position made unquestionable by virtue of its suffering.'⁴²⁵ They are critical of the fact that a response of unquestioning 'sympathetic moral righteousness' seems the only acceptable response to traumatic

⁴²⁰ Hirsch (2012), p. 5.

⁴²¹ Stone and Hirst (2014), pp. 314-327.

⁴²² Discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, p. 27.

⁴²³ Gross and Hoffman (2004), pp. 34.

⁴²⁴ Ibid, p. 33.

⁴²⁵ Ibid, p. 33.

testimony. Such a position reflects an emphasis on the personal over the political and in this, the cognitive response is displaced by affect, resulting in the fact that serious questions about why genocide happens are not asked.⁴²⁶

These theories—of postmemory, of collective memory and of traumatic testimony—tend toward the notion that the affective nature of memory narrative leads to the impairment of the audience’s cognitive faculties and destabilises their sense of self. This is something explored further in LaCapra’s theory of empathic unsettlement. LaCapra’s theory in itself unites the emotional and the political response. This theory, which posits an imaginative, vicarious experience of trauma on the part of those witnessing the traumatic testimony of others, suggests that our own sense of self is ‘unsettled,’ though not displaced, by the experience. In turn, this ‘raises problems bound up with one’s implication in, or transference relation to, charged, value-related events and those caught up in them.’⁴²⁷ In this way, LaCapra’s theory could be seen to provide a framework for thinking about Wohl’s audience and its emotional response which shapes and structures political allegiances. The audience responds emotionally to the traumatised testimony of the protagonist and, in so doing, forms political allegiances with them, becoming implicated themselves in decisions which the characters make. LaCapra also discusses the political ramifications of ‘empathic unsettlement,’ suggesting that ethical and political change depends on a ‘reeducation’ regarding the nature of affect in normative judgement.

I suggest that by thinking about Euripides’ plays in the light of empathic unsettlement and the psychological studies outlined above, they might be seen to offer such a ‘reeducation’ by highlighting the extent to which empathy leads to uncomfortable alliances—a discomfort which may only become apparent or articulated as the initial rush of empathy for Hecuba wanes after watching the play. Chapter 1 touched on this in its examination of the audience’s possible response to Odysseus’ revenge on the suitors but Euripides problematises such things more overtly by emphasising the legal and ethical ambivalence of perpetrators and onlookers: in *Medea*’s murder of her children, for example, in *Orestes*’ attempted murder of Helen, or in *Hecuba*’s murder of Polymestor’s children and maiming of Polymestor himself.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 34.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 136.

⁴²⁸ In *Medea*, *Orestes* and *Hecuba* respectively.

iii) Rhetoric and the law court

If the audience's political engagement is structured by emotional response and subsequent memory, the dramatic stimulus for this response in the *Trojan Women* comes from the characters' use of rhetoric. Unease concerning the effects of 'clever' speech – specifically, the notion that listening to such speech can lead one to 'forget' (*λανθάνω*) – is evident in the Homeric poems. At *Iliad* 22.281-82, for example, Hector accuses Achilles of being someone both ready with and clever or wily in speech who spoke 'to make him afraid and so to forget his valour' (*ἀλλά τις ἀρτιεπής καὶ ἐπίκλοπος ἔπλεο μύθων / ὄφρα σ' ὑποδείσας μένεος ἀλκῆς τε λάθωμαι*); while at *Odyssey* 1.56-57 Calypso 'ever with soft and flattering words ... works to charm [Odysseus] to forget Ithaca' (*αἰεὶ δὲ μαλακοῖσι καὶ αἰμυλίοισι λόγοισι / θέλγει, ὅπως Ἰθάκης ἐπιλήσεται*). It is understood in both of these examples that clever or flattering words may lead to one forgetting what, in that moment, is most important and this is an anxiety which Euripides explores.

On this basis, much of the chapter rests on the idea that the plays' testimonies are consciously rhetorical, delivered with the intention of winning over listeners to a particular point of view. Therefore, my study draws on scholarship by Buxton and Goldhill on *peitho* in tragedy and, more particularly, on Johnstone's analysis of Athenian litigation practices in the fifth and fourth centuries BC.⁴²⁹ In his analysis of *peitho* in tragedy, Richard Buxton outlines the clear connection between rhetorical persuasion and democracy. He writes that whereas in epic poetry persuasion is clearly the prerogative of kings, classical Athenian democracy institutionalised the public judgement of disputes and so *peitho* became an important tool of the democratic citizen. Buxton states that *peitho* is not specifically bound to language and that it is also used of sexual seduction and this is an aspect of *peitho* which Goldhill stresses in his analysis of the *Trojan Women*. Here, Goldhill suggests that, while Hecuba 'wins' the *agōn* based on her superior arguments, the connotation throughout is that Helen's beauty and sexual allure, of which Hecuba warns Menelaus so many times, will actually be the persuading force in the end.⁴³⁰

While Buxton and Goldhill specifically discuss persuasion in tragedy, I have found Johnstone's work on rhetorical narratives in the fifth and fourth century law courts most

⁴²⁹ Buxton (1982), Goldhill (1986) and Johnstone (1999).

⁴³⁰ Goldhill (1986), pp. 236-38.

useful for this study. In his extended examination of classical Athenian forensic oratory, Johnstone explores the narratives and gestures that form the bases of the litigation speeches of defendants and prosecutors and it is with these aspects of *peitho* that I will be most concerned here. Johnstone introduces his study by stating that ancient Athenian litigation was, by its nature, an adversarial conflict between two litigants with no legal ‘experts’ such as lawyers or judges, but rather a jury of citizens whom each litigant needed to persuade.⁴³¹ In addition to this, even when the history between the litigants might be fraught with hostilities on both sides, the litigation itself centred on a single transgression made by one against the other.⁴³² As a result, he argues, conflict was simplified by being sharply dichotomised. Each speaker attacked the authority of the other but the jury’s decision lay less with objective or provable truth and more with the litigants’ ability to create ‘the type of story that jurors would recognise as true’ or with their ability to convince the court of their good citizenship outside the realm of the trial.⁴³³ These are, in Johnstone’s words the ‘strategies that rhetorical language used to conceal its status as rhetoric.’⁴³⁴ These strategies will inform my analysis of the litigants’ testimonies in the *Trojan Women*.

Finally, my Introduction briefly outlined the link between the legal and the political as this thesis sees it,⁴³⁵ but this link is so central to this chapter that it is worth justifying my focus on the courts in slightly more detail. Simon Goldhill writes:

For *dikē* is one of the dominant terms in the public discourse of fifth-century Athens. The role of the law courts and the law (*nomos*) is regarded by the ancient writers (as well as modern historians) as essential to the development of the political system of democracy. The general publishing and discussion of laws, the equality of citizens before the law, the citizens’ part in the adjudication of cases, the citizens’ duty to uphold the city’s laws – the movement away from the authority of an individual ruler in the process of decision-making towards the idea of the sovereignty of the city and its laws – are major topics in the discussion of the growth of democracy and democratic ideology.⁴³⁶

⁴³¹ Johnstone (1999), pp. 1-2.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴³⁵ See this thesis, pp. 52-53.

⁴³⁶ Goldhill (1986), p. 34.

By dramatising a quasi-courtroom, with an individual ruler/judge presiding, yet with traits recognisable from the contemporary courts, Euripides invites his audience to reflect on their part as citizens in adjudication as well as on the problems inherent in the contemporary systems for making the laws and dispensing justice. Furthermore, this chapter will suggest that the *Trojan Women* demonstrates the potential dangers in any system—legal or political—which dichotomises conflict and requires the citizen to judge between two opposing speeches.

Thus far I have outlined my approach to tragedy and the place and potential of a memory-based investigation of tragedy within the canon of tragic criticism. I have also discussed the key theoretical texts which inform my investigation. The final introductory subsection will address the place of this chapter within the field of critical work on the *Trojan Women*.

iv) Politics and rhetoric: critical approaches to the Trojan Women

Scholarship on the *Trojan Women* tends to revolve, firstly, around the use of rhetoric and, typically, centres on the *agōn* scene in which Helen and Hecuba serve as defence and prosecution litigants in a trial for Helen's life, in front of Menelaus as judge.⁴³⁷ Often, emotional issues are overlooked in favour of a cold, analytical approach to the logical, point by point nature of the arguments and the contemporary philosophical concerns about truth and religion which are alluded to in Helen's and Hecuba's words. Scodel, for example writes that '*Troades* balances its emotional pathos with a large component of dry and analytic rhetoric.' She and others suggest that the rhetorical tone of the *agōn*, together with inconsistencies in character and style set it apart from the rest of the play.⁴³⁸ Scodel's approach is consistent with scholarship on the Euripidean *agōn* in general. In his study of this, Michael Lloyd suggests that in Euripides' plays, the *agōn* is nearly always 'marked as a distinct and separate section' in contrast to Sophocles' tragedies where the *agōn* is less formally marked and therefore, integrated more naturally.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁷ Scodel (1980), pp. 80-104; Lloyd (1992), pp. 94-112; Goldhill (1986), pp. 235-38.

⁴³⁸ Scodel (1980), p.11; Lloyd (1992), p. 94.

⁴³⁹ Lloyd (1992), p. 2.

Secondly, scholarship revolves around its politics: that is, whether it is pro- or anti-war and whether it constitutes a comment on contemporary events in Melos. Some scholars, Gilbert Murray, Peter Burian and Isabelle Torrance, for example, read the *Trojan Women* as uncompromisingly anti-war and in doing so, they are, as I will go on to show, undoubtedly influenced by the emotions aroused in them by viewing the women's suffering and hearing Poseidon's supposed indictment in the Prologue, on those mortals who sack cities.⁴⁴⁰ Other political interpretations such as that by Neil Croally offer a slightly more cautious approach. Croally suggests that the play is provocative of questions about political concerns concerning Melos but does not offer concrete political views. Nonetheless his stance is still essentially that Euripides is anti-war in general, if not specifically criticising the events of Melos: that he raises questions in order to provoke a re-evaluation of 'the criteria used to judge victory and the value that should be attached to it' and the 'unstated principles which inform the traditional construction of war.'⁴⁴¹ On the other side, some argue, still regarding Melos, that we should not be misled by such modern day scruples about ancient Greek warfare: that the slaughter of men and the enslavement of women would have been viewed pragmatically by contemporary audiences as the inevitable consequences of war in which the more powerful state had to enforce its might to prevent a future challenge to its power.⁴⁴²

This chapter does not see the politics of the *Trojan Women* in terms of those events in Melos, but rather takes its inspiration from Thucydides' representation of the debate regarding Mytilene. According to Thucydides, the Athenians first voted in the assembly to sack Mytilene, killing its men and enslaving its women and children, but the following day, heard further debate and reversed their decision.⁴⁴³ That is to say, rather than commenting on extra-theatrical events, I argue that the play focuses on the democratic process of coming to collective judgement and of the inherent problems and weaknesses in this system. As discussed above, it does this through an examination of the way in which empathy affects memory and unsettles our cognitive faculties.

⁴⁴⁰ Eur. *Tro.* 95-97. Murray and Morwood (2005); Burian (2009); Torrance (2013). By contrast, Kovacs (1983), pp. 334-39, offers a reading of the Prologue which suggests that Poseidon's words have been interpreted incorrectly: that actually he is drawing attention to the increased sense of 'folly and ignominy' when failure follows success.

⁴⁴¹ Croally (1994), quotation from p. 130.

⁴⁴² Carter (2007), pp. 134-35.

⁴⁴³ Thuc. 3. 36-49.

This chapter unites these scholarly concerns of politics and rhetoric but interprets them rather differently. With Elton Barker, it sees the *agōn* as an integral part of the play's politics, not only in the issues it rehearses but also in its formal structure.⁴⁴⁴ This is not, as many have construed it, because it mirrors the democratic process of agonistic speech, forcing the audience to take sides in the debate: it is, as the chapter will demonstrate, obvious whose side the audience should be on. Rather, it incites reflection on the very act of taking sides and the processes by which we make these decisions. The chapter suggests that the *agōn* in the *Trojan Women* functions as a kind of case study for the way that the politics of empathy work in practice, but that in this, it is integral to the themes and character arcs of the drama as a whole. Hecuba's most obviously rhetorical speeches in the *Trojan Women* (e.g. those in the *agōn*) are driven by emotion, with an expected emotional response from her audience, while her most emotional outpourings are consciously rhetorical and political in intent. In both cases, this rhetoric is formed around the way in which she remembers and endeavours to provoke others into remembering 'with' her. When the audience responds to Hecuba emotionally, it often loses sight of – or forgets – alternative 'rational' arguments made by other, perhaps less sympathetic, characters, or contradictions which may make us question the validity of Hecuba's words.

Through this analysis and a further examination of how cultural memory of epic intersects with this discussion, I hope to offer a more nuanced approach to political and aesthetic readings of the *Trojan Women*, one that reveals politics as something messily emotional and far from binary. This is only emphasised by the formally and artificially polarising structure of the *agōn*. Through a study of remembering and forgetting, I suggest that we might understand the play as political, not because of any political message – anti-war or otherwise – that it contains, but because it offers a model by which Euripides' audiences might process, understand and engage with contemporary politics.⁴⁴⁵

This introduction has discussed possibly audience responses to tragedy in the light of their emotional and imaginative investment in the drama and the resulting dissociation between cognition and affect. It has suggested that this is no accident with regard to the *Trojan Women* but that, through Hecuba's use of emotionally driven rhetoric, the play draws attention to the rhetorical strategies employed in actual courts and in the

⁴⁴⁴ Barker (2009), pp. 325-65.

⁴⁴⁵ Barker (2009), pp. 366-67.

assembly. It has further proposed that the play offers a reflection on the processes of collective decision making within the Athenian democracy.

I stated at the outset that this chapter would explore the ways in which the *Trojan Women* uses memory both to authorise and to undermine Hecuba's narrative of Troy, and in particular, Troy's destruction. I have also suggested above that her authority and persuasiveness is such that many have taken it to be *the* narrative of the play. This next section of the chapter addresses the ways in which theories of traumatic memory and testimony help to construct a model for the victim-as-authority, how Hecuba conforms to this model and how the audience's memories of the *Iliad* aid in its construction.

2.2 Hecuba: the authority of the traumatised victim

Before addressing the establishment of Hecuba's authority, it is necessary to clarify the sense in which I can speak about a 'dominant narrative' in connection with a dramatic performance where there is no privileged narrator as such and here I draw on John Gould's *Myth, Ritual Memory, and Exchange*.⁴⁴⁶ Gould quotes Genette as stating that there is a 'truly insurmountable opposition between dramatic representation and narrative' but he overcomes this opposition using a detailed analysis of *Oedipus Tyrannus*.⁴⁴⁷ This play, he suggests, while it does not have an omniscient narrator, does show evidence of an 'implied author,' a 'controlling and selective' mind at work.⁴⁴⁸ There is a 'regulation of narrative information'—a selection about what is left in and what left out—and our experience of the text is 'guided.'⁴⁴⁹ Gould also points to the number of unprivileged, internally focalised narratives in tragedy: the messenger speeches, choral songs protagonists' narratives.⁴⁵⁰ He concludes that the number of these narratives points to the fact that we cannot reduce tragedy to a 'univocal reading,' but rather the plethora of narratives enforces 'our acceptance of narrative multiplicity.'⁴⁵¹ Up to a point I agree with this conclusion; however, this chapter will suggest that Hecuba makes a play for just such a 'univocal reading' and that, to an extent, the play supports her in this

⁴⁴⁶ Gould (2001).

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 319-334. The quotation from Genette is from the Corbett Lecture, Cambridge (1991).

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 320-22.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 325-26.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

effort. Clearly, I do not mean by this that I see this fictional Hecuba as acting independently of Euripides. Rather, the speech that Euripides writes for her constantly and consciously tries to influence the narrative of the play to the exclusion of all other voices.

To a large extent, Hecuba's authority derives from the audience's perception of her as an authentic figure of traumatic memory. Modern trauma theory helps to elucidate the symptoms of her trauma and the features of her traumatic testimony. In writing about testimony to trauma, particularly Holocaust trauma, Aleida Assmann writes:

On the stage of ancient Greek tragedy, the witness carries the news of a catastrophic event as a messenger who has seen an extremely violent scene but has escaped to tell the story. ... In the context of ancient and modern drama, the witness describes what cannot be brought onto the stage, in the name of those who are no longer able to speak for themselves. The division of roles between the one who experiences and the one who testifies becomes here a structural feature of the witness.⁴⁵²

While the messenger speech reporting offstage trauma is undoubtedly a feature of Greek tragedy, this evaluation is not wholly representative of traumatic testimony in the genre and Hecuba is 'testament' to this. She was personally involved in the 'catastrophic event' of Troy's destruction and not a detached bystander in someone else's tragedy. Indeed, she is famed in the literary tradition for her suffering. As Mossman comments, Hecuba is 'the archetype of extreme unhappiness and misfortune from antiquity onwards.'⁴⁵³ Although she wasn't killed herself, we do not know what violence may have been inflicted on her and she did witness the murder of her husband directly. Because of this, we may see her narrative as an authentic testimony to trauma and as such, it bears much in common with observations about the testimony of modern trauma victims.

According to modern trauma theory, the apparent authenticity of testimony also constitutes its authority. Often, this authenticity is evidenced by testimony other than the content of the victims' speech. In his definition of trauma, LaCapra suggests that the trauma victim experiences 'a dissociation between cognition and affect.' By this he means that 'in traumatic experience one typically can represent numbly or with aloofness what

⁴⁵² Assmann (2006), pp. 267-68.

⁴⁵³ Mossman (1995), p. 2.

one cannot feel, and one feels overwhelmingly what one is unable to represent.⁴⁵⁴ The effect of this is that the victim's verbal testimony is often punctuated by gaps in which their inarticulate emotion punctures the narrative.

Trauma theory also suggests that the body of the victim bears witness to her/his spoken testimony. Assmann states that, '[h]aving been in the center of the action, the Holocaust witnesses have not come away unscathed, which is the reason why they testify not only verbally with their words, but also bodily with the symptoms of their trauma.'⁴⁵⁵

According to John Durham Peters, this bodily testimony 'serves as a sort of collateral to justify the loan of our credence.'⁴⁵⁶ In this way, authenticity and authority go hand in hand. If the victim's bodily symptoms convince us that they have experienced trauma then their spoken narrative will have the ring of authority. Without this grounding in trauma theory, Barbara Goff discusses something similar in her study of Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Goff writes that '[t]he death of Phaidra outweighs even the most powerful words,' discrediting all Hippolytus' avowals and allowing credence only to her version of the story written in her letter.⁴⁵⁷ The physical presence of Phaidra's body, therefore, provides her narrative with an authority which Hippolytus lacks.

In a similar way, trauma theory also suggests that authentic testimony such as this has an authoritative 'ethical claim.'⁴⁵⁸ As Peters states, 'Witnessing in this sense suggests a morally justified individual who speaks out against unjust power. ...to witness means to be on the right side.'⁴⁵⁹ This does not negate the fact that testimony is still subject to all the pitfalls of memory discussed in the Introduction, but it does affect the manner in which it is likely to be received.

Just as my exploration of trauma in connection to the *Odyssey* was discussed via the epic formula *alaston penthos*, as glossed by Nicole Loraux, so my discussion of Hecuba's traumatic symptoms is also informed by Loraux's analysis. In this case, Loraux focuses on the use of the word *aei* ('always') and the mourner in Euripidean tragedy, saying that '*aei* punctuates the unbreakable attachment of the weeper to her own tears' and that the 'adverb finds its twin in the interjection *ai ai* [most commonly translated as 'alas'], in

⁴⁵⁴ LaCapra (2004), p. 117.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 269.

⁴⁵⁶ Peters (2001), p. 713.

⁴⁵⁷ Goff (1990), pp. 17-18.

⁴⁵⁸ Quotation from Peters (2001), p. 714 but see also Jones (2014), p. 27 and Wallen (2009), p. 262.

⁴⁵⁹ Peters (2006), p. 714.

which grief seems to be expressed in perfect immediacy without the mediation of articulated speech.⁴⁶⁰ As with *alaston* ('unforgetting' or 'unforgettable'), *aei* signifies the infinite grief of traumatic loss, a grief which dominates and defines the individual. In the terminology of trauma theory, *aei* expresses Assmann's notion of trauma as 'the form of a placeless and restless present that prevents closure' and LaCapra's definition that it 'disrupts or even threatens to destroy experience in the sense of an integrated or at least viably articulated life.'⁴⁶¹ Even more significantly for Hecuba, as I will go on to show below, is that there is a sense in which this infinite, dominating grief 'is an out-of-context experience that upsets expectations and unsettles one's very understanding of existing contexts.'⁴⁶²

Even Loraux's interpretation of *aei* is inadequate to describe Hecuba's grief as expressed in her first speech of the *Trojan Women*. Her words and actions here are expressive of deep, unresolved trauma: not mourning, as in Loraux's analysis, but melancholia. Here, although she uses the phrase *αἰεὶ δακρυῶν* ('endlessly weeping'), she does so in *wishing* that she could express her grief in such an endless lament. As Freud describes in his theory of 'Mourning and Melancholia,' she is unable to work through her grief via the process of mourning and so her grief remains internalised and dominates her psyche.⁴⁶³ Her inability to articulate it or externalise it is suggested by her questioning *τί με χρῆ σιγᾶν; τί δὲ μὴ σιγᾶν; / τί δὲ θρηνηῆσαι;* ('What should I keep silent? What should I not keep silent? What should I lament?'). The all-encompassing nature of her grief is exhibited in her question *τί γὰρ οὐ πάρα μοι μελέα στενάχειν / ἧ πατρὶς ἔρρει καὶ τέχνα καὶ πόσις;* ('What is there but wailing for me, whose fatherland, children and husband are gone?'). Here, she not only states that the mainstays of her existence have gone but also that what replaces them is her grief. As in the traumatic experience, her grief totally dominates her present, and perceived future, existence.

As in the theory of trauma discussed above, Hecuba also shows verbal and physical manifestations of her traumatic experience. In her first speech, when counselling herself to accept and endure her situation and not to 'set the prow of the ship of life / against the swell' (*μηδὲ προσίστη πρῶραν βιότου / πρὸς κύμα*), her memory of what she has lost

⁴⁶⁰ Loraux (2002), p. 35.

⁴⁶¹ Assmann (2011); LaCapra (2004), p. 135.

⁴⁶² LaCapra (2004) p. 135.

⁴⁶³ Freud (1917, reprinted 2005). For later developments of this theory see summary in Stubbley (2003), pp. 222-23; see also Abraham and Torok (1994) and LaCapra e.g. (1994), p. 169-224.

breaks through and her narrative of endurance collapses with an explosive and inarticulate *αἰαῖ αἰαῖ* of pain. We also know from Poseidon's prologue that the actor of Hecuba is lying on the ground, crying (*Ἐκάβην κειμένην πυλῶν πάρος, / δάκρυα χέουσαν πολλά καὶ πολλῶν ὕπερ*, 'Hecuba lying before the gates, shedding many tears for many reasons')⁴⁶⁴ and in Hecuba's own speech she suggests that she cannot move from this position, neither to raise herself up nor even to move from one side to the other in her lament. Rather, she speaks of her *πόθος* (longing or yearning) to turn her back from side to side.⁴⁶⁵ Her inability to move is, then, a physical symptom of her inability to express her grief in a(n endless) lament. In Freudian terms, like the melancholic patient, her ego is completely identified with those she has lost and as a result she is committed to her grief to the exclusion of all the activities of life. She is lying like one dead, on a sepulchre.

In addition to this, Hecuba refers to her head as *ἐκπορθηθεῖσ' οἰκτρῶς* ('pitifully pillaged').⁴⁶⁶ She is referring to her torn hair but the cause of this tearing is unclear. Cropping or tearing hair was a sign of ritual mourning but slaves' hair was also cropped.⁴⁶⁷ Both interpretations, however, accentuate the trauma of its occurrence. The word *ἐκπορθέω* is not used elsewhere to refer to hair cutting. This is no cutting of a ritual curl!⁴⁶⁸ It is an act of violence which either Hecuba has inflicted on herself or which has been inflicted on her by the Greeks. The term *ἐκπορθέω* is used by Poseidon a little under fifty lines earlier to refer to the pillaging of cities, as the Achaeans have pillaged Troy.⁴⁶⁹ Hecuba's use of the word here suggests that what Troy has undergone as a result of war, she has embodied in microcosm.

This is one way in which the play makes of Hecuba a kind of figurehead for the traumatic memory of Troy. Hecuba and, by extension, her women are equated with the 'destroyed' city in the poet's use of the verb *ollumi* to describe both. At the start of the play, Poseidon uses *ollumi* to describe the city as it lies smouldering, laid waste by the Argive spear (*πρὸς Ἀργείου δορὸς / ὄλωλε πορθηθεῖσ'*). Similarly, the Chorus use *ollumi* to describe their own condition as they ask the Muse to sing a tale of Troy, describing 'how I was

⁴⁶⁴ Eur. *Tro.* 37-38. The translations in this chapter are based on Morwood (2000) but I have adapted them.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 116-18.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁴⁶⁷ Lee (2014), p. 262, n. 160.

⁴⁶⁸ C.f. Helen in Eur. *Or.* 128-29 but also Electra in Soph. *El.* 51-52 and Aesch. *Cho.* 167.

⁴⁶⁹ Also used with this meaning at e.g. Th. 4.57 and Lys. 12.83. It does occasionally also refer to persons as at S. *Tr.* 1104, where Heracles refers to himself as the 'spoil of an unseen destroyer' and at Plb. 23.8.6, where it suggests being completely undone.

destroyed, fell a wretched captive of the Argive spear because of the four-footed beast on the four-wheeled wagon (τετραβάμονος ὡς ὑπ' ἀπήνας / Ἀργείων ὀλόμαν τάλαινα δοριάλωτος).⁴⁷⁰ These 'destroyed' women are an extension of their 'destroyed' city. They too are relics or ruins of Troy.

This suggestion that the women and the city are equated is supported by the way in which Euripides uses memories of the *Iliad* in his characterisation of Hecuba as a kind of representative of the city. These memories conjure Hector as representative of Troy in its defence alongside Hecuba as its representative in its destruction. In the *Iliad*, the impact of Hector's death is described as being 'most like what would have happened, if all lowering/ Ilion had been burning top to bottom in fire' (τῷ δὲ μάλιστ' ἄρ' ἔην ἐναλίγκιον ὡς εἰ ἅπασα / Ἴλιος ὄφρυόεσσα πυρὶ φμύχοιτο κατ' ἄκρης).⁴⁷¹ In his fall, the fall of the city is imagined because Hector 'is' the city.

Now that Troy *is* 'burning top to bottom in fire,' it is Hecuba who stands for the city in her position as mourner. Not only are both Hecuba and Troy represented as *ollumi*, but both are described using the simile of a mother bird mourning for its lost chicks. The Chorus describes Troy as

ἠιόνες δ' ἄλαι
ἱακχον οἰμὸς οἴ-
ον τεκέων ὑπερ βοᾷ,
ἄ μὲν εὐνατορας, ἄ δὲ παῖδας,
ἄ δὲ ματέρας γεραιάς.⁴⁷²

The sea shores

- Like a bird wailing for its young -

cry out, here for husbands, here for children,

here for aged mothers.

Similarly, Hecuba commences one of her laments with the words

⁴⁷⁰ Eur. *Tro.* 516-17.

⁴⁷¹ *Il.* 22.410-11.

⁴⁷² Eur. *Tro.* 826-32.

μάτηρ δ' ὡσεὶ ππανοῖς κλαγγαν

ὄρνισιν.⁴⁷³

Just as the mother-bird raises the cry

for its nestlings.

This equation of Hecuba and Troy in its time of mourning gains authority from the *Iliad*. Hector stood for Troy at the time at which its greatest need was protection; now, at the point of its total annihilation, its greatest need is for mourning and commemoration so that it might not be forgotten. As I will discuss in greater detail in the next section, just as Hecuba 'led out the thronging / chant of sorrow' among the women of Troy after Hector's death in the *Iliad* (*Τρωῆσιν δ' Ἐκάβη ἀδινοῦ ἔξῆρχε γόοιο*),⁴⁷⁴ so now, she 'begin[s] the chant' (*ἐξάρξω ἄνω / κλαγγάν*) for Troy.⁴⁷⁵ As the women pause on the brink of oblivion, Hecuba represents the Trojans in memory and mourning just as Hector once represented them in battle.

One way of thinking about their display of grief at this time, might be that the women, with Hecuba at their head, embody what Loraux terms 'a female figure of memory.' Loraux dismisses the appropriateness of this term saying (in her analysis of Sophocles' *Electra*) that

If it were not for Achilles, whose *mēnis* is in all Greek memories, I would say that we have a female figure of memory, which the cities try to confine within anti- (or ante-) politics.⁴⁷⁶

Here, she dismisses the idea of a 'female figure of memory' because Achilles' *alaston penthos* for Patroclus is her foundational instance of the grief and anger caused by unforgetting. However, I argue that the case of Hecuba is different and makes the label of 'female figure of memory' entirely appropriate. Achilles' grief is private, although its effects are public. It is grief for a loved one. Clearly Hecuba and the women also grieve for loved ones but beyond this, they grieve for their city and their culture. The choral odes of mourning range through Troy's history: the building of its walls by Poseidon and Apollo,

⁴⁷³ Ibid, 146-47.

⁴⁷⁴ *Il.* 24. 747.

⁴⁷⁵ Eur. *Tro.* 147-48.

⁴⁷⁶ Loraux (2001), p. 159.

alluded to in their mention of ‘Phoebus’ stonework’ (*τυκίσματα Φοίβου*),⁴⁷⁷ its first destruction by Telamon and Heracles,⁴⁷⁸ and the daily lives they led in the city, performing its rituals and worshipping its gods.⁴⁷⁹ In this way, study of the *Trojan Women* brings to mind Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith’s exploration of the relevance of feminism to studies of collective memory.⁴⁸⁰ They write:

What a culture remembers and what it chooses to forget are intricately bound up with issues of power and hegemony, and thus with gender.⁴⁸¹

In slaughtering the Trojan men, carrying the women off to the far corners of the Greek world and destroying the buildings of the cities, the powerful Greek force is choosing to erase the memory of Troy from history. Hecuba and the women are, therefore, the last embodiments of the cultural memory of Troy but this is memory rendered (almost) entirely powerless. As in Loraux’s description, the women are confined within ‘anti- (or ante-) politics’ not just because they are excluded from political life as women, but in their position now as slaves. Memory of Troy is literally the prisoner of the Greeks.

This section has argued that Hecuba’s authority in the play comes from her position as an authentic victim of trauma. She manifests and acts out traumatic symptoms which lend credibility to her role as such and her authority is shored up by memories of the *Iliad*. However, although this position suggests vulnerability, Hecuba is not *entirely* powerless. As the trauma theory discussed above suggests, it is from her position as victim that Hecuba gains authority as a spokesperson and, as representative of Troy, she speaks with the authority of the Trojan civilisation. While this section has focused on exploring Hecuba’s authoritative victim status, the next section investigates the power she finds in her traumatised state. The narrative of victimhood and suffering which begins with her first speech alone on the stage is communicated and shared in such a way that it comes to dominate the play and the audience’s experience of it. As in the case of Euepeithes in the *Odyssey*, whose *alaston penthos* mobilised an army,⁴⁸² Hecuba’s communication and performance of trauma creates a community—not just on the stage but also in the theatre—and her orchestration of trauma provokes a collective, political response.

⁴⁷⁷ Eur. *Tro.* 814.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 799-839.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1071-80.

⁴⁸⁰ Hirsch and Smith (2002).

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁸² See Chapter 1 of this thesis, pp. 102-03.

Perhaps the ultimate proof of Hecuba's authority is that even though she and her women, and by extension the cultural memory of Troy, are prisoners of the Greeks, the memory of Troy has not only endured but has been preserved and tended by those very Greeks and their descendants.

2.3 Hecuba: performing trauma and re-memembering Troy

This section demonstrates how, from her position as traumatised victim, Hecuba creates a community around her. The discussion takes place over three subsections. The first focuses on the rhetoric Hecuba uses and on the metatheatrical way in which she sets out her intention, conflating her role of queen with that of choral director. The second addresses this rhetoric from the point of view of communicative and collective trauma and the third explores the choral and possible audience responses to Hecuba.

My use of the term metatheatre is drawn from Henrichs, who uses it to examine examples of choral self-referentiality.⁴⁸³ Crucially here, the self-referentiality is almost entirely on Hecuba's part. It is she who was Queen of Troy and she who controls the community still. As I will explore below the chorus remain woefully innocent of their theatrical function.⁴⁸⁴

i) Bringing the group together: rhetoric and metatheatre

As Hecuba builds to the conclusion of her speech she calls on the 'sorrowful wives' (*ἄλοχοι μέλαι*) and 'ill-wedded girls' (*κοῦραι δύσνυμφοι*) in the Trojan camp to bewail Ilium. There is already a metatheatrical element to her speech here in that she is, in doing this, effectively directing the chorus, calling them onto the stage. She also signals her intention for the rest of the play in these few lines. She uses the first person plural for cry/bewail—*αἰάξωμεν*—to show that from this point, mourning will be a communal task. She goes from being 'alone' with only the external audience in the theatre to creating an internal audience of the chorus: the other Trojan women.

⁴⁸³ Henrichs (1995). See also Burian's exploration of metatheatre in (1997), pp. 193-98.

⁴⁸⁴ See this thesis pp. 163-64 for further discussion of the chorus' ignorance and inadequacy as a political collective.

There is a metatheatricality to her next words also, which is highly suggestive of the role she intends to take for the remainder of the play and also of the purpose which she intends the play to serve. She says

*ὅπως ἐξάρξω ἴω
μολπάν, οὐ τὰν αὐταν
οἷαν ποτέ δὴ σκίηπτρῳ Πριάμου διεριδομένα
ποδὸς ἀρχεχόρου πληγαῖς φρυγίους
εὐκόμποις ἐξῆρχον θεοῦς.⁴⁸⁵*

In this way, I will lead
the chant: not the self
same as at that time when
I leaned on Priam's staff,
leading the chorus with the stamp of my foot in Phrygian time
in loud celebration of the gods.

The metatheatricality is particularly evident in Hecuba's use of the word *ἀρχέχορος*, which I have translated literally as 'leading the chorus.' As she suggests, this will be her role over the course of the play: to lead the women in mourning, as she once led them in celebration. In so doing, she hopes to re-member Troy and the Trojan civilisation in the present day by creating a 'community of feeling' around her. The ways in which she goes about this are twofold and one is encapsulated here: she juxtaposes her past with her present in order to heighten her audience's (or audiences') sense of the suffering she endures in the present and will endure in the future. The other way she goes about this is that she performs traumatic behaviour, something I will come to in the next subsection.

In this instance, Hecuba remembers her past in such a way as to redefine her present. Her speech up to now has focused on her powerlessness: as discussed above, she does not even have power over her own body. Now though, she frames her current leading of the mourning chant with the kind of rituals she once presided over. Priam's staff is emblematic of her former power and status in the community and, although her

⁴⁸⁵ Eur. *Tro.* 148-52.

juxtaposition highlights her lack of such status now, there is a sense in which her behaviour mirrors her former life as a sort of echo or relic of that time. She does not have the staff of office, nor the husband-king and the chant is of mourning not of celebration, but it will still be Hecuba who leads it, who brings the Trojan women together.

She has an immediate effect. Her chant brings the chorus of Trojan women—those who danced to the rhythm she beat out formerly—from their tents and it operates on them, as I will demonstrate, as a call to memory. The only thing which defines them as the ‘Trojan women’ now is their shared memory of life as Trojans. Memory, therefore, binds the political community. As Justina Gregory suggests, in this their state of physical powerlessness, their reflections offer ‘not just a defense against psychic dissolution but a positive means of self-assertion and of maintaining communal ties.’⁴⁸⁶ As the group will shortly be divided and sent into slavery all around the Greek world, the brief period of this play operates as a kind of ‘last hurrah’ for memory and community before its utter fragmentation and loss, along with the burning of the literal remains of their city.

More than this, however, there is the sense in her metatheatrical awareness here and elsewhere that Hecuba hopes this memory will bring a kind of epic *kleos* for Troy. In her initial call to the ‘sorrowful wives,’ she says that it is ‘smouldering Ilium’ which they must bewail (τύφεται Ἴλιον, αἰάζωμεν).⁴⁸⁷ She goes so far as to say later that had it not been for the misfortune brought on them by a god, ‘we would be invisible and not sung of by the Muses nor in the songs of later mortals’ (ἀφανεῖς ἂν ὄντες οὐκ ἂν ὑμνήθημεν ἂν / μούσαις ἀοιδὰς δόντες ὑστέρων βροτῶν).⁴⁸⁸ It is with an eye on future memory that Hecuba unites the women to sing of their past.

This conclusion to Hecuba’s first speech, therefore, establishes four main tenets. Firstly, Hecuba is now acting as a leader, bringing together a community. Secondly, her behaviour in this is consciously manipulative. Thirdly, her reason for uniting this group is to re-member and memorialise Troy. Fourthly, she attempts this so as to generate empathy in her audience(s). The section so far has focused on establishing these tenets using Hecuba’s first speech. From here, it will explore in detail how they are developed in

⁴⁸⁶ Gregory (1991), p. 157.

⁴⁸⁷ Eur. *Tro.* 145.

⁴⁸⁸ Here, Lee (1976) and Morwood (2000) suggest that Hecuba is recalling *Il.* 6.357-58 and *Od.* 8. 579-80.

the play as a whole and how Hecuba's performance and communication of traumatic testimony contributes to her mission.

ii) Hecuba: rhetoric and the communication of trauma

I have suggested that the examples from Hecuba's first speech discussed above are all typical manifestations of traumatic behaviour, which give Hecuba's testimony authority. This section suggests that from here on, many of Hecuba's traumatic 'symptoms' are narrated consciously, rather than exhibited unconsciously. This is not to deny that she is genuinely traumatised but rather to suggest that she is channelling her trauma into the generation of a collective reaction such as that theorised by Jeffrey Alexander.⁴⁸⁹ In this way, her response to trauma is communicative and is expressed rhetorically. In effect, rather than trauma obliterating Hecuba's sense of self, as discussed above in relation to her first speech, it actually intensifies and magnifies it.

Hecuba's performance and communication of the affective authenticity of the victim is allied to her use of rhetoric. As stated above, Hecuba's rhetoric in the *agōn* has already received much critical attention but this chapter suggests that her use of rhetoric is prevalent throughout the play and its insidious nature, together with the way it builds is integral to my interpretation of the play's unity.

The alliance of communicative trauma and rhetoric is something which has also been addressed in testimony theory, particularly that relating to the U.S. government's response to 9/11 and their justification for the 'War on Terror.' Mitchum Huehls and Barbara Biesecker both comment on the rhetoric of pre-emption which drove President Bush's speeches at this time. Huehls' theorises that this is a result of needing to 'identify new temporal forms' which would enable America to move beyond 9/11's traumatic effects.⁴⁹⁰ He states that the rhetoric of pre-emption 'determines the future before it has a chance to occur.'⁴⁹¹ One concrete—and highly contentious—result of this thinking was that the government felt it could justify the detaining of suspects at Guantanamo Bay without due process on the grounds that they were pre-empting future attacks.

⁴⁸⁹ See Introduction, p. 32 and Chapter 1, p. 65-66.

⁴⁹⁰ Huehls (2008), p. 42.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 46.

Similarly, Biesecker analyses President Bush's speech-making after 9/11 and focuses on his use of the future anterior in the sentence, 'These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life.'⁴⁹² She deconstructs this in two ways. She calls into question the 'tightly controlled hallucination of a loss that is at once certain and indeterminate, *both* what always already is and what will have been.' On the one hand, the President constructs the 9/11 attacks as attacks on American democracy. His use of the future anterior sees these attacks as part of a mission to 'end a way of life' which justifies an ongoing state of emergency in the country.⁴⁹³ On the other hand, she also discredits the President's statement by addressing the 'alchemy that is rhetoric' involved in his use of 'a way of life.' By this, he clearly means the 'democratic way of life,' which had, she says, 'been an object not only of "contemplation" but of persistent criticism and even rebuke in the recent past. By virtue of the President's rhetoric, however, it reappears as the idealized object of the melancholic citizen-subject's amorous embrace.'⁴⁹⁴

Time is central to both of these analyses of the U.S. government's attempt to orchestrate a collective traumatic response, allowing the government to implement special powers and to conduct a war which, some might speculate, had little to do with terrorism. As suggested in my analysis of the end of Hecuba's first speech, Hecuba's rhetoric is also governed by time and, in particular, by the way in which her present and her projected future are divorced from the expectations of her past.

This element of rhetorical attention to past present and future arises in Hecuba's first major address to the chorus which comes as Cassandra leaves to join Agamemnon as his bride. In what might be seen as a genuine symptom of her trauma, Hecuba falls to the ground in despair, echoing the start of the play and providing another example of her unexpressed feelings erupting physically. However, from this moment, she appears to make political capital of her situation. Her speech becomes markedly rhetorical, as evinced by the tricolon *πάσχω τε καὶ πέπονθα κάτι πείσομαι* ('all I suffer, all I have suffered and all I will suffer').⁴⁹⁵ Lee, reflecting a more widespread critical response to Hecuba's use of rhetoric, suggests that 'the words are not suitable in Hecuba's mouth in

⁴⁹² Biesecker (2007), p. 154.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 155.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 154.

⁴⁹⁵ *Eur. Tro.* 468.

her current sorrowful state,' a kind of stylistic error, perhaps, on the part of Euripides. I suggest, rather, that it is entirely of a piece with Hecuba's consciously manipulative use of the rhetoric of trauma and suffering in the play as a whole.

Hecuba sets out clearly what she will do in the rest of the speech and why she will do it.

She says:

πρῶτον μὲν οὖν μοι τάγάθ' ἐξᾶσαι φίλον·

τοῖς γὰρ κακοῖσι πλείον' οἴκτον ἐμβαλῶ.⁴⁹⁶

First I will sing my swan-song of my former blessings:

in this way I shall inspire greater pity for my woes.

This is another moment of metatheatrical awareness on Hecuba's part, the evocation of pity being, in Aristotelian terms, one of the proper pleasures of tragedy.⁴⁹⁷ It certainly implies an awareness that she is choosing her words with care and that she intends them to have a particular effect. Her use of the word *ἐξᾶδω*, for example, means to sing out but is also suggestive of a last song and is, therefore, emotive in this.⁴⁹⁸ I suggest that, in addition, the word *oiktos*, meaning pity or compassion, carries the connotation of feeling or suffering 'with' someone. In this, it is closely related to empathy and carries the same potential for political affect—for unsettling our cognitive response and for forging new political allegiances—as discussed above.⁴⁹⁹

In practice, the blessings of which Hecuba sings are brief in comparison to the description of her suffering in the recent past and those she imagines in her future. Besides saying that she was born of royal blood and married into a royal house' (*ἤμεν τύραννοι κάς τύρανν' ἐγημάμην*),⁵⁰⁰ and that she gave birth to 'the best of children' (*ἀριστεύοντ' ἐγεινάμην τέκνα*),⁵⁰¹ the rest of her speech concentrates on the deaths of her children and of Priam and on the future she imagines for herself as a slave. She speaks of having 'cut [her] hair before the tombs of her sons' corpses' (*τρίχας τ' ἐτμήθην τάσδε πρὸς*

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid, 472-73.

⁴⁹⁷ Arist. *Poet.* 52b29.

⁴⁹⁸ Lee (1976), p. 154-55. Lee suggests in his commentary that the word is used in Pl. *Phd.* 85a as 'the final cry of the dying swan.'

⁴⁹⁹ See above, e.g. pp. 125-26.

⁵⁰⁰ Eur. *Tro.* 474.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid, 475.

τύμβοις νεκρῶν)⁵⁰² and of her husband's death: she 'saw, with her own eyes, him slaughtered at the hearth' (τοῖσδε δ' εἶδον ὄμμασιν / αὐτὴ κατασφραγέντ' ἐφ' ἐρκείῳ πυρᾷ).⁵⁰³ However, although it is not a 'swansong' as such, the emotive nature of her imagined life as a slave is ratcheted up by her contrast of past and future. When she speaks of the lowly tasks her masters will put her to—keeping the keys as a portress or making bread—she pauses between them to interject, 'the mother of Hector!' (τὴν τεκοῦσαν Ἴκτορα). This signals a rupture between her expectations of the future based on her past status as mother of the city's most valiant hero and the (imagined) actuality. Later, when she hears that her grandson, Astyanax, is to be killed, a similar rhetorical performance of traumatic authenticity can be seen. When she hears of his impending murder, she says:

τί σ' ἐγώ,
 δύσμορε, δράσω; τάδε σοι δίδομεν
 πλήγματα κρατὸς στέρνων τε κόπους·
 τῶνδε γὰρ ἄρχομεν.⁵⁰⁴

What can I
 do, unfortunate child? I can give you
 these strikes to my head, these blows to my breast,
 I have the power for that.

These blows and strikes are ritual gestures of mourning but are also expressive of a traumatic response. The context here is powerfully suggestive of both, as in the case of Hecuba's hair cutting earlier (p. 128). She is clearly anticipating her mourning for Astyanax's body, but, at the same time, this is a physical reaction to the total powerlessness that she feels in the face of the events which overwhelm her. There is nothing that she can do to protect Astyanax or, as she goes on to say, the city. However, unlike her previous traumatic responses which have been pointed out by observers—Poseidon at the start and the chorus when she falls to the ground—in this case, Hecuba

⁵⁰² Ibid, 480.

⁵⁰³ Ibid, 482-83.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid, 792-95.

narrates her own symptoms. Here, she is not so overwhelmed by emotion that she cannot speak; indeed, her words are highly articulate of the powerlessness one feels when confronted by such outrage.

Although she does not go on to contrast past and future here, she does so later when she receives Astyanax's body. There, she contrasts his mouth 'once so free with grand promises' (*ὦ πόλλὰ κόμπους ἐκβαλὸν φίλον στόμα*) to its silence now.⁵⁰⁵ Then she goes on to recount one of these promises in Astyanax's words, made as he clung to her robes: that, on Hecuba's death, 'I shall cut many locks of my hair for you and bring troops of friends to your grave and give you a loving address' (*ἦ πολύν σοι βοστρύχων / πλόκαμον κερῶμαι, πρὸς τάφον θ' ὀμηλίκων / κώμους ἀπάξω, φίλα διδούς προσφθέγματα*).⁵⁰⁶ Instead, she says, 'But I, an old woman without city, without children, will bury your pitiable, young corpse' (*σὺ δ' οὐκ ἔμ' ἀλλ' ἐγὼ σέ τὸν νεώτερον, / γραῦς ἄπολις ατεκνος, ἄθλιον θάπτω νεκρόν*).⁵⁰⁷ This passage emphasises Astyanax's former youthful innocence for pathetic effect. The fact that Astyanax clung to her robes is resonant not of his fear but of his vulnerability and the physical intimacy and trust of their former relationship.⁵⁰⁸ His promises to her show the extent of his love but also highlight the unnaturalness of his early death—it should have been him burying her—something to which Hecuba also draws attention in her words that she, 'an old woman,' will bury his corpse. Furthermore, hearing his direct speech makes the contrast with his now-silent mouth the more emotive.

These examples demonstrate the ways in which Hecuba self-consciously performs traumatic victimhood in order to elicit empathy and to create a community of feeling around her. In these examples, as I have shown, she narrates her traumatic symptoms, suggesting a self-awareness and a theatricality absent from genuine traumatic behaviour. In addition, her rhetoric is suggestive of the fact that what she wants here is for her audience to feel *with* her. As she herself states, she does this by contrasting the riches, the status and the love of her family in her past with the isolation, desolation and poverty of her present and future. She re-members her past and with it, her future. The following

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid, 1180-81.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid, 1182-84.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid, 1185-86.

⁵⁰⁸ For this gloss see Lee (1976), p. 263.

section considers the reception—or possible reception—of her words by her internal and external audiences.

iii) Chorus and audience: the response to Hecuba

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, in considering the effect of such speeches, it is instructive to consider the chorus. According to Gould, Euripides' frequent use of a woman protagonist aligned with a chorus of women enforces a point of view 'from which the "heroic" world of men is seen as wholly alien.'⁵⁰⁹ According to Gould too, the alignment of a woman-protagonist with a chorus of women is grounds for his argument that the choral reaction cannot be read as reflective of the direct or uncomplicated reaction of the democratic community of the audience. In this, Gould is reacting against scholars such as Simon Goldhill, Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Emmanuel Vidal-Naquet. Vernant and Vidal-Naquet's account of the chorus suggests that it embodies 'the collective truth, the truth of the mean, the truth of the [democratic] city.'⁵¹⁰ This is set against the 'excess' of tragic protagonists who belong to an 'absent world,' representing the otherness of the heroic code as it appeared to the dramatists and audiences of the fifth century BC.

Goldhill responds to similar arguments expressed by Gould elsewhere with the suggestion that we might still read the chorus as instructive for the democratic audience in that just because their voice is 'other' does not mean that it has no authority in tragedy. He writes, 'all response to tragedy involves projection, sympathy, idealization – a negotiation of "the other" to find meaning for the self.'⁵¹¹ While I agree with Gould that the voice of the chorus expresses collective memory—as I will show immediately below—I have already established that Hecuba wields considerable authority and I believe that the same is true of the chorus' response, certainly in as far as they direct the audience to empathy here. The notion that this empathy has a political effect takes shape as Hecuba increasingly dominates the stage and all her encounters on it. Although this chorus and protagonist are women and 'others' in Athenian terms, they are not 'others' in the world of the play. As stated above, what Hecuba does is to re-member her social group. The city of Troy, its

⁵⁰⁹ Gould (2001), p. 385.

⁵¹⁰ Vernant and Vidal Naquet (1986), pp. 21-23 and 158-59; Gould (2001), pp. 381-387.

⁵¹¹ For the chorus as representative of collective voice see e.g. Goldhill (1996), p. 253.

king and its heroes, are gone and only the women remain. They are outside as there is no *oikos* to which they should be bound, and they speak for themselves as there are no men to speak for them.⁵¹² From her position of relative powerlessness, Hecuba engenders a political community capable of creating a lasting memorial to their city and even, up to a point (as I will show in connection with the *agōn*), of influencing public decision making. This is no longer a group of 'others' outside the political community: this is the political community depicted in the play. What is more, the audience plays an active role in engendering this community as I will show below.

When Hecuba's individual memories of the luxury and status of her former life and the deaths of her husband and children become shared with the group onstage, they create a bond of common feeling which defines community. She is, in effect, reconstructing, or remembering the chorus' Trojan identity based on a common experience of suffering. The chorus' response to her words reveals their effectiveness in that her individual memory of loss and suffering provokes further memories from the group. Here, as Gould suggests of the chorus in general, because their identity is collective, based on the place in which they live/d or the purpose which they served, the traditional 'I' of the chorus offers a 'single univocal expression...to a group consciousness and to the experience and memory of that group.'⁵¹³ It expresses a truly collective memory as they sing in unison the story of 'how I was destroyed and became a wretched captive of the Argive spear' (*Ἀργείων ὀλόμαν τάλαινα δοριάλωτος*). Similarly, after Hecuba's speeches over the body of Astyanax, the chorus exclaims 'Ah, ah! You have stabbed me, stabbed me to the heart!' (*ἔῃ, φρενῶν / ἔθιγες ἔθιγες*). The inarticulate sounds of grief and the 'sobbing dochmiacs' of the chorus' words here express the fact that they have taken on Hecuba's traumatic grief as their own.⁵¹⁴ Collective memory and collective trauma unites the group in its adversity.

A similar effect might take place in the audience. I have shown that Hecuba's memories, juxtaposed with indications of her present and future suffering, create a community of memory and feeling onstage but they also create one in the theatre. The audience cannot but be moved by her account of the deaths of her numerous children, the butchery of her

⁵¹² As a contrast to this, Croally quotes // 6.490-93 and *Od* 1.356-9 on women's place being inside with their looms: Croally (1994), pp. 201-2.

⁵¹³ *Ibid*, p. 387.

⁵¹⁴ Quotation from Lee (1976), p. 268.

husband at their household altar, the capture of her city and her prognosis—contrasting past and present again—that she will be forced to ‘lay [her] shrivelled body on the ground to sleep, instead of on a queen’s bed’ (*κάν πέδω κοίτας ἔχειν / ῥυσοῖσι νῶτοις, βασιλικῶν ἐκ δεμνίων*).⁵¹⁵ Similarly, the passage regarding Astyanax’s corpse moves us not only as observers but as possible parents. Many in the audience will have been familiar with the childhood traits which she describes—the ‘grand promises’ for example—and many will have experienced the love, trust and intimacy her words convey. Her lament for the loss of ‘all those embraces, all the care with which I nurtured you, all those broken nights’ (*τὰ πόλλ’ ἀσπάσμαθ’ αἶτ’ ἐμαὶ τροφαὶ / ὕπνοι τε κοινοὶ φροῦδά μοι*) may ring true for parents ancient and modern.⁵¹⁶ In addition, many of Euripides’ contemporary audience will have known what it is to bury a child. For these reasons, the passage is calculated to arouse strong emotion.

Clearly the audience does not share Hecuba’s suffering in the same way as the chorus does but it is likely, especially given the context of the play’s first performance, during the Peloponnesian War, that most of the audience’s lives would have been touched by it. Because of this, their empathy may be even stronger than that generated in a modern audience where for most of us, war happens at a distance. As a result of the choral action, and informed by their own extra-theatrical experience, the audience becomes part of a community of feeling in the theatre, what Loraux refers to as a kind of ‘theatrical allegiance.’⁵¹⁷ For her, this is not to be equated with the ‘we’ of the civic body of Athens but rather it is a temporary union of individual humans, united in their shared emotions. I will come to the political ramifications which I see for this ‘temporary union’ below and to the audience’s dual nature as community of feeling and civic community.⁵¹⁸ For now, it is important to recognise that the audience are not merely on the outside of this community, looking in and empathising, but are also invested—through their memories—in the creation of this community. Just as Hecuba’s memories provoke the memories of her onstage audience, so the audience in the theatre remembers and re-members the stories of Troy as Hecuba revisits and reworks them.

⁵¹⁵ Eur. *Tro.* 494-97.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1187-88.

⁵¹⁷ Loraux, p. 88.

⁵¹⁸ See sections 2.4 and 2.5.

In general terms, the audience may reflect back on moments in the *Iliad* which foreshadow the events of the *Trojan Women*: Andromache's forecast, for example, that Astyanax will be thrown to his death.⁵¹⁹ Most significant for this discussion, however, are the ways in which the *Trojan Women* adapts instances in the *Iliad* where characters remember the past, describe their present, and make projections for the future based on their experiences of these. Where these occur around Astyanax, the masculine society in the memories and projections of the *Iliad* sits in stark contrast to the feminine nature of those expressed in the *Trojan Women*. When Andromache imagines Astyanax's future without his father in the *Iliad*, she contrasts his imagined future of deprivation with his past/present of luxury and plenty. She imagines that in the future, he will go 'a needy boy among his father's companions' (δευόμενος δὲ τ' ἄνεισι πάϊς ἐς πατρός ἑταίρους), while now he is accustomed to being fed on his father's lap 'only the marrow or the flesh of sheep that was fattest' (μυελὸν οἶον ἔδεσκε καὶ οἰῶν πίονα δημόν).⁵²⁰ Astyanax's past/present is dependent on his father's status and indulgence of his son, whereas Andromache's imagined future for Astyanax, without Hector, sees him begging in a community of his father's former companions.

When Hecuba receives Astyanax's body in the *Trojan Women*, the imagined future she projects for him is also, like Andromache's in the Iliadic example, one that is tied to the fortunes of his father. In Andromache's example, Astyanax would have been deprived because of the absence of his father, whereas in Hecuba's, he would have inherited his father's wealth and status and died, like his father, for his city. However, in contrasting his past with his present, Hecuba says:

δύστηνε, κρατὸς ὡς σ' ἔκειρεν ἀθλίως
 τείχη πατρῶα, Λοξίου πυργώματα,
 ὄν πόλλ' ἐκήπευσ' ἠ τεκοῦσα βόστρυχον
 φιλήμασιν τ' ἔδωκεν, ἔνθεν ἐκγελαῖ
 ὀστέων ῥαγέντων φόνος...⁵²¹

Poor child, how pitiable have the walls of

⁵¹⁹ *Il.* 24. 734-36.

⁵²⁰ *Il.* 22. 486-507.

⁵²¹ *Eur. Tro.* 173-77.

your father's city, the towers built by Loxias,
shorn the curls from your head which your mother often kissed
and tended like a garden; the blood gurgles out from them
where the bones are smashed...

This is clearly an emotive description, one to which we might surmise any audience reacting with horror and pity but there is also a re-membering here. The walls which are responsible for Astyanax's death are those of his *father's* city. Though it might be overstating the case to say that there is any blame for Hector here, there is the connotation that these walls were part of the city of men, the city ruled by men and destroyed by men. In contrast to this, the luxury which Hecuba associates with Astyanax's past is not that endowed on him by his father's status, but the physical luxury of his mother's love: he is not nurtured with food as in Andromache's words in the *Iliad*, but rather by his mother's kisses. In this feminisation, Hecuba's re-membering is in line with her recreation of a Trojan community outside the city of men. That world is gone now.

The final facet of Hecuba's re-membering of Troy to address here before moving on to discuss the political ramifications of her memories is that Hecuba attempts to fix the memories of her internal and external audiences by embedding them in objects. This is a technique commonly used in epic, especially the *Iliad*, and one treated at length by Elizabeth Minchin in that context.⁵²² Minchin writes that visual imagery is a powerful mnemonic aid for both the poet and the audience of epic.⁵²³ Of 'souvenirs' such as Andromache's headdress or Agamemnon's sceptre in the *Iliad*, Minchin states that '[b]ecause the poet's descriptions of these small treasures render the items themselves memorable, the occasions with which they are associated remain in our memories also.'⁵²⁴ They are reminders of events that pre-date the war.⁵²⁵ I have already mentioned several of these in passing but it is useful to consider them together so as to see them as part of a consistent rhetorical strategy. Hecuba describes how she used to lean on Priam's staff as she led the rituals of Troy.⁵²⁶ Though the staff is absent, the mental image of her with this object is resonant, as I have said, of her former power and indeed, the loss of it.

⁵²² Minchin (2001).

⁵²³ *Ibid*, p. 25.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 100-121; quotation from p. 102.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 121.

⁵²⁶ See this thesis, pp. 132-34.

In receiving Astyanax's body, she focuses in on parts of his body: his head with its former curls, now broken and bleeding and his mouth, once full of 'grand promises,' now silent.⁵²⁷ In so doing, she overlays the image of his broken, bleeding corpse with the image of the laughing, chattering, curly-haired boy of the past, intensifying, for the audience, the affective power of his death.

Perhaps the object with which one can see this most clearly—the object in which most memory is invested—is Hector's shield.⁵²⁸ This is because it carries a two-fold purpose: on the one hand it contains memories of Hector as Troy's defender, while on the other, Astyanax is laid on it for burial. Hecuba twice addresses the shield as she might a person.⁵²⁹ The first time she does this, she describes it as Hector's 'protector': it 'kept safe Hector's arm' (*Ἐκτορος βραχίονα / σῶζους*).⁵³⁰ It is the one, therefore, who protected Troy's protector! For the audience, Hecuba's description of the shield partly re-embodies the Hector of the *Iliad*—drawing on and simultaneously reshaping their cultural memory of him—as she looks at it. It 'kept safe Hector's **arm**,' it bears the 'imprint' (*τύπος*) of his **hand** on the handle and its rim is marked with the **sweat** (*ιδρώς*) 'which so often dripped from Hector's **forehead** as he pressed you against his **beard** amid the toil of battle!' (*ὄν ἐκ μετώπου πολλάκις πόνους ἔχων / ἔσταζεν Ἐκτωρ προστιθεὶς γενειάδι*).⁵³¹ The traces of Hector—the imprint of his hand and the sweat of his brow on the rim—re-embodiment Hector on the battlefield in all his sweaty, bearded physicality, in the imaginations of Hecuba's audience.

When she addresses the shield again a few lines later it is to embed it with memories of Astyanax also and these memories, she implies, will enhance the glory it gained from its association with Hector. With Hector, it was 'the victorious mother of countless trophies' (*μυρίων / μήτηρ τροπαίων*) but Astyanax's corpse is its 'adornment' or 'crown' (*στέφανος*). Though she pictures the personified shield 'dying' with the boy's corpse, she imagines for it a kind of immortal epic fame. She says that 'though dead, dying cannot touch it' (*θανῆ γὰρ οὐ θανοῦσα σὺν νεκρῶ*) since it is 'far more worthy of honour than

⁵²⁷ See this thesis, p. 138.

⁵²⁸ Eur. *Tro.* 1156-225.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1194-99 and 1221-25.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1194-95.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, 1197-99.

the arms carried by that clever villain Odysseus' (*ἐπεὶ σὲ πολλῶ μᾶλλον ἢ τὰ τοῦ σοφοῦ / κακοῦ τ' Ὀδυσσέως ἄξιον τιμᾶν ὄπλα*).⁵³²

This section has suggested that Hecuba's trauma, though it begins as something silent and incommunicable, becomes something powerfully communicative. The rhetoric with which she communicates it is powerfully emotive and has the effect of uniting her audience, both on- and off-stage, in empathy. Her last statement, that Astyanax is more worthy of the shield than Odysseus, 'that monster of cleverness,' at length, brings this chapter around to a discussion of the political import of Hecuba's re-membering. Although her traumatic testimony carries the authenticity and authority of the victim, her memory-narrative is nonetheless creative and highly selective. It is also driven by blame and recrimination. The next section focuses on the political import of collective empathy: to empathise with Hecuba's suffering and to become part of her 'community of feeling' may also be to accept her version of events: that Helen and the cowardly Greeks are responsible for her suffering.

2.4 Using memory to challenge Hecuba's narrative

At the outset of this chapter, I stated that my study of memory would illuminate the ways in which Hecuba's narrative is established and authorised in the play but also the ways in which her narrative might be deconstructed. Up to now, I have focused on the establishment and authorisation of Hecuba's narrative and gestured towards the political import for the audience of being part of an empathic community which re-members the past based on the dominance of one narrative. The rest of the chapter will consider the ways in which Hecuba's narrative might be challenged and the role which memory plays within this. Later, in section 2.6, this will involve an analysis of the ways in which the *Trojan Women* remembers the *Odyssey*. This section, however, uses Hecuba's accusations against the Greeks and Helen as a case study in order to bring out the dangers of making political decisions based on empathic allegiances. The discussion is divided into two subsections, the first addressing Hecuba's accusations against the Greeks and the second, her accusation against Helen. Both will continue to examine the ways in which the play endorses Hecuba's narrative, even when characters appear to dispute it.

⁵³² Ibid, 1223-25.

Before analysing Hecuba's narratives, however, it is worthwhile at this point to bring out an aspect of trauma theory which my earlier discussion passed over. This concerns traumatic testimony and truth. Aleida Assmann writes:

The survivors as witnesses do not, as a rule, add to our knowledge of factual history; their testimonies, in fact, have often proved inaccurate. This, however, does not invalidate them as a unique contribution to our knowledge of the past. Their point is less to tell us what happened than what it felt like to be in the center of those events; they provide very personal views from within.⁵³³

As discussed in the Introduction, some trauma theory has been criticised for sanctifying traumatic memory by modelling it as a 'truthful' or accurate memory, the access to which is blocked because of trauma.⁵³⁴ Assmann suggests here that we should view traumatic memory with the same kind of reservations with which we would view any memory. It might give us a valuable insight but this insight reveals the effects of trauma more than it reveals an accurate account. In addition to detailing her suffering, which may be very real, Hecuba's testimony is insistent and consistent in its appointment of blame and it is this which drives her narrative of, or memorial to, Troy's destruction. Her need to apportion blame may be a symptom of her trauma, but, when the audience empathises with and remembers with Hecuba, they are complicit in re-membering the war in her image.

Testimony, as Jones reminds us, is always a site of conflict.⁵³⁵ The need to state one version of events is always a direct result of needing to counter an alternative version. Hecuba's testimony is explicitly designed to make her listeners feel with her, using the rhetorical strategies described above, against those who might argue to the contrary. Most obviously, those who might argue against Hecuba are the conquering Greeks and Helen, but once one becomes aware of her insistent attempt to dominate the Trojan narrative, one also sees how the play privileges her version over those offered by women in the encampment, notably Cassandra, Andromache and Helen.

Because of this, Loraux's 'theatrical allegiance' is not simply one of feeling, as she suggests, but also one of politics.⁵³⁶ At the very least, empathy blurs the boundary

⁵³³ Assmann (2006), p. 263.

⁵³⁴ See the Introduction to this thesis, pp. 26-27.

⁵³⁵ Jones (2014), p. 25. See Introduction to this thesis, p. 29.

⁵³⁶ For earlier discussion, see this thesis, p. 142.

between these fields. If their empathy with Hecuba leads the audience to become 'unsettled' enough to take her part against the offending Greeks, they have entered into a political allegiance of sorts with her. Although she cannot take political action against them directly, the memorial which the play and, more specifically, her narrative creates of the Trojan War is not one that allows for Greek heroism of any kind. This not only challenges other narratives of Troy, such as the *Iliad*, but also has ramifications for the ways in which the receiving audience might think about the conduct of war more generally, especially pertinent for an audience involved at the time in the protracted war with Sparta.

i) 'An epitaph to bring shame on Hellas!'

I have already commented in some detail on the scene in which Hecuba receives Astyanax's body, on the rhetoric with which she contrasts past, present and future, re-members Iliadic memories and with which she seeks to re-embody the memories of Astyanax and Hector. It is also the moment at which Hecuba crystallises her disdain for the Greeks, a moment which, I suggest, has fuelled much of the 'anti-war' scholarship written about the play. The scene's power comes from its emotional intensity but this subsection will suggest that Hecuba's narrative of grief is a highly crafted piece of rhetorical speech, calculated to evoke pity in her audience rather than an outpouring of grief. Moreover, it will explore the notion that Hecuba's trauma is always inseparable from her sense of blame and that accusations against the Greeks are tightly bound into her rhetorical lament.

Hecuba conveys the enormity of the murder of Astyanax by describing it as *καινός*, sometimes defined as 'new' but here, 'unprecedented.'⁵³⁷ She questions, *μή Τροίαν ποτέ / πεσοῦσαν ὀρθώσειεν;* ('Did you fear that he would someday raise Troy again?') and suggests that their fear of this *βρεφός* ('babe') is contemptible and foolish. Later, at the height of her lament for Astyanax, she says:

τί καί ποτε

⁵³⁷ Lee (1976), p. 259. Torrance (2013), p.222 comments that *kainos* is often used by Euripides in this way and also points to *Tro.* 511-14 (the 'new' song for Troy) and *Hec.* 689 (when Hecuba describes the body of Polydorus). For an extended discussion of *kainos*, see D'Angour (2011).

γράψειεν ἄν σε μουσοποιὸς ἐν τάφῳ;

Τὸν παῖδα τόνδ' ἔκτειναν Ἀργεῖοί ποτε

δείσαντες;—αἰσχρὸν τοῦπίγραμμα γ' Ἑλλάδι.⁵³⁸

What will the poet one day inscribe on your grave?

'The Argives once killed this child

Out of fear'? An epitaph to bring shame on Hellas!

I suggest that this is another metatheatrical moment in which Hecuba consciously shapes the response of her audience. In a similar way to her comment discussed above (see p. 134) that the Trojan suffering ensures that they will be sung of in times to come, there seems to be an awareness here that they will be the subject of poetry. Both examples suggest also that this play *is* that poetic song of 'one day' in the future and if that is the case, then Hecuba herself is writing the script here. She is shaping the epitaph to Astyanax, a facet of her own memorial to Trojan suffering, in such a way as to bring shame on their Greek aggressors who have acted with cowardliness and needless brutality.

Hecuba's words here imply that she is not merely shaping or reshaping the audience's memories of the past according to her version of events, but also their 'future memories.' According to Mark Currie, '[t]he present is the object of a future memory, and we live it as such, in anticipation of the story we will tell later, envisaging the present as past.'⁵³⁹ In this moment of 'prolepsis,' Hecuba anticipates some future moment when her story will be narrated and also, anticipates the shame that those Hellenes of the future—the fifth century BC audience—will feel at the Achaeans' treatment of her family.⁵⁴⁰

Hecuba's words here seem to have shaped the critical response to the play which takes the line that Euripides espouses pacificism. Torrance, for example, also addresses the metatheatrical nature of Hecuba's imagined epigraph for Astyanax but questions, 'Who is the *mousopoios* writing an "epigram" for Astyanax if not Euripides in this tragedy?'⁵⁴¹ She suggests that the *Trojan Women* forces the audience to relive old [i.e. familiar from

⁵³⁸ Eur. *Tro.* 1188-91.

⁵³⁹ Currie (2007), p. 5.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁴¹ Torrance (2013), p. 243.

poetry] events anew, one after another, through the sufferings of its victims,' adding a perspective which was underplayed in epic.⁵⁴² In connection with this, she discusses Euripides' use of *kainos* as ironic, in that most of the things labelled as such are not new at all but familiar from epic, poetry and drama already and she points to this as Euripides' warning that the audience should 'contemplate the destructive nature of repeating the violence of past historical events.'⁵⁴³

I suggest, rather, that Euripides political stance in the play is much harder to identify. I have established already that he seems to privilege Hecuba's words in the drama but these can also be challenged by the audience's memory which after the 'living moment' of watching the play will work independently of Hecuba's narrative again. In the case of Hecuba's vilification of the Greeks, the audience's empathy for Hecuba at this time might lead them to forget the 'truth' that only a matter of a few hundred lines before, she was exhorting Andromache to commit the rest of her life to bringing up this same boy so that his offspring 'might found Ilium anew,' the very thing which the Greeks were anxious to prevent.⁵⁴⁴ Here, the period of reflection, of memory, is instructive both about how Hecuba's rhetoric operates on us emotionally and politically but furthermore, about the possible dangers of emotive, rhetorical public speech more generally.

ii) 'Abhorred' Helen

While the last subsection focused on Hecuba's accusations against the Greeks, this one addresses her vitriol against Helen. That Hecuba also holds Helen to blame for her suffering is evident from the first. In her opening speech, she not only refers to Helen as 'abhorred' (*στυγνός*), 'the dishonour of Castor and the shame of the Eurotas' (*Κάστορι λώβαν τῷ τ' Εύρώτῃ δυσκλείαν*) but also names her as 'the murderer of Priam, the father of fifty children' (*ἃ σφάζει μὲν / τὸν πεντήκοντ' ἄροτῆρα τέκνων / Πριάμον*).⁵⁴⁵ Hecuba names Helen specifically as the reason why she is 'wretched' (*μέλεος*) and 'run aground' (*ἔξοκέλλω*).⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴² Ibid, p. 231.

⁵⁴³ Ibid, p. 233.

⁵⁴⁴ Eur. *Tro.* 703.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid, 132-36.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid, 136-37.

She warms to her theme later. In her first long address to the chorus, after comparing her past with her present and future she concludes that

διὰ γάμον μιᾶς ἕνα

*γυναικὸς οἴων ἔτυχον ὧν τε τεύξομαι.*⁵⁴⁷

because of one woman's marriage

this is what falls to me and what will fall to me.

All the past and future sufferings then, which she has just described—the deaths of her children over whose tombs she has cut her hair, the slaughter of Priam which she saw with her own eyes, her expectation that as a slave she will bake bread, keep keys and lay her shrivelled body of the ground never to see her children again—all of this is the fault of Helen and her marriage.

It is in relation to Astynax's death that Hecuba's blame of Helen, as with her blame for the Greeks, reaches its climax. When Astyanax is taken away, the audience beholds her powerless: as discussed above (p. 138) the only thing she is able to do for him is to strike her head and her chest. However, when his body is returned to her for burial, she says

νῦν δέ σ' ἠ θεοστυγῆς

ἀφείλεθ' Ἑλένη, πρὸς δὲ καὶ ψυχὴν σέθεν

*ἔκτεινε καὶ πάντ' οἶκον ἐξαπώλεσεν.*⁵⁴⁸

now, God-hated Helen

has taken all this away from you, she has destroyed your life

and has brought your entire house to ruin.

Once again, according to Hecuba's version of events, there is no other blame to cast here, no acceptance of a chain of events or that others may be culpable even in small ways. Helen is directly and entirely responsible for all that happened to Astyanax.

It is clear, then, that in Hecuba's memory-narrative of Troy, the war, the death and destruction and the overwhelming suffering of the remaining Trojans, is inseparable from the fact that Helen is to blame. The testimony she gives and the memorial she attempts

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid, 498-99.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid, 1213-15.

to establish thereby in the minds of those listening and watching, is not only of the ruin of Troy but of the gross iniquity of Helen. This is the narrative which is allowed to dominate the play.

Cassandra's is the first narrative offered to counter Hecuba's. Cassandra enters singing, dancing and brandishing torches to celebrate her marriage to Agamemnon. In a way, her narrative is most easily discredited because of her mental instability, to which there are many allusions made, and because of her fantastical, even sophistic, account of the war.⁵⁴⁹ As she enters the stage, Hecuba refers to her as *mainas* ('frenzied'), already an injunction to listen to her words with caution,⁵⁵⁰ while the chorus refers to her frenzied celebration as Bacchic with the word *βακχεύουσιν*. Her version of the war (368-405) posits the Trojans as victors because, while the Greeks died in a foreign land, away from their wives and children, with no one to give them proper burial rites, the Trojans died for and in their fatherland, buried properly by their families. She even goes so far as to say that Hector would not have won fame had the Achaeans not come and that Paris would have been unknown if he had not married Helen. Because Cassandra is so evidently disturbed, Hecuba has no need to offer an alternative argument here but her fall to the ground—possibly in a faint—overwhelmed by her sorrow and grief speaks volumes.

Yet Cassandra's account is not so easily dismissed. While those around her are right to see her 'madness' as connected to possession by a god, it is not Bacchus but Apollo—the god associated with prophecy—who has cursed her, as the cultural memories of the audience will inform them. Furthermore, they will know that her prophecies, while they contain at least an element of truth, must always be disbelieved. Because of this, the audience will realise at once, based on their knowledge of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, that her prophecies of doom for herself and the house of Atreus are all too true. While saying that she will not sing of it, she tells of:

πέλεκυν οὐχ ὑμνήσομεν,

ὄς ἐς τράχηλον τὸν ἐμὸν εἶσι χιτῆρων·

μητροκτόνους τ' ἀγῶνας, οὐς οὐμοὶ γάμοι

⁵⁴⁹ For an extended discussion of Cassandra's rhetoric, see Croally (1994), p. 122f and Goldhill (1986), pp. 165-66.

⁵⁵⁰ Eur. *Tro.* 307.

*θήσουσιν, οἴκων τ' Ἀτρέως ἀνάστασιν.*⁵⁵¹

[I shall not sing of] the axe

which will cut into my neck and others' necks as well,

and the agonies of matricide which my marriage will cause,

and the fall of the house of Atreus.

The narrative of the house of Atreus were so well known that Cassandra's prophecies would have aroused memories of these events with ease and speed: Lee, for example, states that the word *μητροκτόνος* ('matricide') seldom occurs outside tragedy where it always refers to Orestes' murder of Clytemnestra.⁵⁵² Croally extrapolates from this that Cassandra must therefore be speaking the truth for the whole scene, that her account of the war is covered by the same curse and the same truth value as her prophetic utterances.⁵⁵³ And yet her account of the war is memory rather than prophecy and Cassandra specifically states that in giving this account, she 'will, for all [her] frenzy, stand outside [her] daemonic fit' (*ἔνθεος μὲν, ἀλλ' ὅμως / τοσόνδε γ' ἔξω στήσομαι βακχευμάτων*).⁵⁵⁴

So, the audience may be left in some confusion: first, Cassandra is proven to speak the truth but not to be believed; secondly, this curse only applies to her prophecy and not to her memory. Thirdly, one might also question whether speaking 'outside' of her daemonic frenzy makes her more or less believable. The very uncertainty, however, offers a challenge to Hecuba's dominant narrative of suffering and victimhood.

Having said this, in one important respect, Hecuba's narrative is upheld by Cassandra's account, frenzied or otherwise. Just as Hecuba blames Helen for the start of the war, so too does Cassandra. It was, she says 'because of one woman' (*οἱ διὰ μίαν γυναῖκα*) that the Greeks lost countless men.⁵⁵⁵ Because of this, although her narrative differs drastically from Hecuba's in its tone of celebration in contrast to Hecuba's tone of grief and suffering, in its essentials it still supports Hecuba's account.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid, 361-64.

⁵⁵² Lee (1976), p. 136.

⁵⁵³ Croally (1994), p. 126.

⁵⁵⁴ Eur. *Tro.* 366-67.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid, 368.

Andromache's narrative is less easily to differentiate from Hecuba's because both are informed by the same rhetoric of suffering and victimhood. Though Lee views the stichomythic exchange with which it opens as 'a duet lamenting their fate,' one might go so far as to describe it as an example of competitive mourning.⁵⁵⁶ Indeed, Andromache's accusatory question in response to Hecuba's οἴμοι—τί παιᾶν' ἐμὸν στενάζεις; ('Why do you utter a lament that belongs to me?')—seems to support this interpretation.⁵⁵⁷ They often speak across each other rather than in harmony. When, for example, Hecuba says 'Ο Zeus ...' (ὦ Ζεῦ), Andromache continues with her previous utterance, 'and for my ruin!' (καὶ συμφορᾶς) which Hecuba follows (still on her train of thought) with 'my children' (τέκεια), for which Andromache seems to upbraid her with 'we were your children once!' (πρίν ποτ' ἦμεν). Therefore, although this exchange does not conform to the formal description of an *agōn*, it is nonetheless competitive and significant therefore that the passage of stichomythia ends with a longer speech by Hecuba as if to signify her victory. It is the end of their exchange, before Talthebius enters the stage, which marks the terms of the true challenge to Hecuba's narrative. While Andromache argues that Polyxena has a happier fate in her death than she herself does in continuing to live, Hecuba maintains that 'while there is life there is hope.' Her advice to Andromache is pragmatic and shows the same spirit which she attempted to instil in herself at the start of the play. There, she counselled herself to sail with the tide, rather than against it: here she uses the metaphor of a storm at sea to convince Andromache that to struggle is futile. Rather she counsels her to 'suffer' (ἔασσον) Hector's death and to bring up Astyanax that his children might build Ilium again.⁵⁵⁸

However, once again, though the ideological differences between Andromache's and Hecuba's testimonies are great, like Cassandra, Andromache confirms Hecuba in her attribution of blame for their current position. Andromache casts blame three ways: on the Greeks for 'devising atrocities worthy of barbarians,' on the gods 'who are destroying us,' but her most vitriolic and lengthy accusation is reserved for Helen who, she says, is not the daughter of Zeus but rather 'the child of many fathers: the Avenging Spirit first, then of Envy and Murder and Death and all the evils that the earth breeds' (πολλῶν δὲ πατέρων φημί σ' ἐκπεφυκέναι, / Ἄλᾶστορος μὲν πρῶτον, εἶτα δὲ Φθόνου, / Φόνου τε

⁵⁵⁶ Lee (1976), p. 176. Morwood (2000), p. 138 supports the latter argument.

⁵⁵⁷ Eur. *Tro.* 578.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 686-705.

Θανάτου θ' ὅσα τε γῆ τρέφει κακά).⁵⁵⁹ More directly, she accuses her of being 'a goddess of death to many barbarians and Greeks' (πολλοῖσι κῆρα βαρβάροις Ἑλλησί τε)⁵⁶⁰ and of having 'brought, with her lovely eyes, shameful destruction on the famous plains of the Phrygians' (καλλίστων γὰρ ὀμμάτων ἄπο / αἰσχρῶς τὰ κλεινὰ πεδί' ἀπώλεσας Φρυγῶν).⁵⁶¹

So it is that, as this subsection has demonstrated, even where Cassandra's and Andromache's memory-narratives appear to challenge Hecuba's, they actually confirm Hecuba's version of events in the most important respect. What this accumulation and reinforcement of blame for Helen means for the political engagement of the audience, is that by the time we reach the *agōn* scene, the audience is likely not only to be empathically allied to Hecuba in her suffering, but also to be firmly on her side against Helen. Whereas one might expect an *agōn*, in the theatre or in the city, to engage its audience in weighing speech and taking sides accordingly, this *agōn* is set up in such a way that the audience sides with Hecuba from the start. It, therefore, requires us to examine our empathy and where it leads us, and to consider the processes inherent in the institution of the *agōn*—in particular its rhetoric and narratives—and the ways that these shape our political allegiances.

2.5 The *agōn*

In the *Trojan Women*, the *agōn* operates as a case study for how the politics of empathy work in practice. In the introduction to this chapter, I suggested that the *agōn* is often treated in isolation from the rest of the play and that most critical attention is devoted to its rhetoric which scholars have felt to be at odds with Hecuba's emotional speech elsewhere in the play. Here, I suggest that the *agōn* of the *Trojan Women* makes most sense as a practical example of the possible political effects when an audience is drawn into an emotional allegiance with a speaker in the legal and political areas of democratic life. It transposes the 'epic' problems of Hecuba to a fifth-century forensic context, recognisable by its language and practices to all Athenian citizens. In this way, it operates

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid, 767-69.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid, 771.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid, 772-73.

as a kind of climax to Hecuba's insistence on Helen's culpability and provides a continuity in the play that some have found lacking.⁵⁶²

In addition to finding its language jarring with the rest of the play, some scholars have also criticised it as being thematically incongruous. They have criticised the *agōn* scene as 'specious' because Menelaus has already decided, before the start of the speeches, to have Helen killed on his return to Greece and his mind does not change over the course of the scene.⁵⁶³ Because of this, they have argued that the scene merely provides the opportunity to explore, philosophically, themes of responsibility and religion and serves no dramatic purpose.⁵⁶⁴ This section suggests, rather, that Hecuba's personal hatred for Helen and her desire for revenge is what drives the scene and what provides the unity with the rest of the play. My discussion so far has also proposed that Hecuba's use of rhetoric is not limited to the *agōn* as it drives her emotional *rheseis* as much as it does her speech there. Menelaus has already stated, in Hecuba's hearing, that he will kill Helen so the only reason why Hecuba insists to him that Helen's argument should be heard is so that she might also have her say and in so doing, 'stick the knife in' herself. This way, she can feel that Helen's death is, to some extent, attributable to her. Her compulsion is to actively destroy the woman who, she feels, is responsible for her suffering.

I have already discussed the fact that Hecuba's memory-testimonies are dominated by this consuming hatred of Helen but my analysis of the *agōn* highlights the rhetoric by which she seeks to destroy her. It also examines the rhetoric by which Helen seeks to defend herself. The section addresses memory in two different respects. Firstly, it focuses on the ways in which Helen's and Hecuba's memory-testimonies conform to the kind of memory narratives commonly associated with the roles of prosecution and defence in the courts of fifth-century Athens. Secondly, it explores the ways in which the audience's cultural memory of the stories of the Trojan War and of Hecuba herself, outside the world of the *Trojan Women*, might cause them to re-evaluate the testimonies offered here and to reflect on the wider issues of justice and politics in play.

i) Memory testimonies

⁵⁶² C.f. Lloyd (1992), p. 94.

⁵⁶³ Quotation from Croally (1994), p. 137 but see also Lloyd (1992), pp. 110-11.

⁵⁶⁴ See e.g. Lloyd (1992), pp. 108-9; Scodel (1980), p. 81.

According to Johnstone, the kinds of testimonies made by prosecutors and defendants in the courts of the fifth and fourth centuries BC evolved out of the litigation process. As in my earlier analysis of testimony in the *Odyssey*, Johnstone suggests that the issue of ‘truth’ in legal speeches came down to what was plausible or probable. However, what made them so may have had ‘less to do with the kinds of things that actually typically happen than with the kinds of stories that are normally told in a particular context.’⁵⁶⁵ For the prosecutor who brought the proceedings, it made sense to tell a story which focused on a particular incident of transgression against the law: a ‘black and white’ story of a law broken. It was in the defendant’s interests, on the other hand, to rebut that, either with an ‘antinarrative’ – a straight reversal (i.e. the prosecutor actually transgressed against him) – or with a more complex counternarrative, relating a history of mutual hostility which put *the* incident in the context of other transgressions.⁵⁶⁶

The order of the speeches is reversed in this dramatic version of the courtroom: usually the prosecutor would speak first but here it is Helen for the defence. This is so because the audience in the theatre has already heard the many testimonies made against her over the course of the play.⁵⁶⁷ In a sense then, Helen’s speech here operates as her reply to these testimonies and the prosecution then gets a second chance to make its case by picking apart the specifics of hers.

Although the order of speeches is reversed, the pattern of narratives Johnstone describes as given by the prosecution and defence is exactly the pattern we see in the *agōn* of the *Trojan Women*. The memories of the war and its origins to which Helen testifies here anticipate the ways in which Hecuba will attempt to dichotomise the conflict. At every stage in her defence speech, Helen is concerned to spread the blame for the start of the war, showing the involvement of numerous agents, both mortal and divine. In this way, she hopes to demonstrate the complexity of judging who is to be held to account. First, she reverses the blame, naming Hecuba herself, as guilty on account of the fact that she gave birth to Paris; then she blames Priam for failing to kill his son. She also apportions shares of the blame to the goddesses who held the beauty contest; to Paris, who took her from Menelaus’ house; to Aphrodite, whose power even Zeus cannot resist and finally to

⁵⁶⁵ Johnstone (1999), pp. 12-13.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 47-56.

⁵⁶⁷ This is suggested by Lloyd (1992), p. 101.

Deiphobus who took her and kept her by force when Paris had been killed, so preventing her from returning to the Greeks and putting a stop to further slaughter.

As Helen anticipates, Hecuba rebuts her speech by concentrating her blame for the war on her alone and in this Hecuba's speech mirrors the way in which prosecution narratives focus on a single guilty party and a single transgression. Although the charges against Helen are not stated specifically here, they have been stated over the course of the play as discussed above. Helen is personally responsible for the murders of Priam and Astyanax, and for the whole of her own suffering.⁵⁶⁸ To this end, Hecuba's speech is wholly concerned with placing responsibility for the war solely on Helen's shoulders and it is with this in mind that she answers all of Helen's attempts above to spread the blame. She uses the argument of probability to argue that the goddesses would not have been so childish as to hold something as frivolous as a beauty contest and answers Helen's argument regarding Aphrodite's power by saying that 'Aphrodite' is always merely an excuse for mortal folly or sensuality (*ἀφροσύνη*).⁵⁶⁹ She deflects blame from Paris, arguing that Helen could have cried out for help from her brothers but didn't and, in the end, could have killed herself to prevent further bloodshed but chose not to.

Within this over-arching structure of memory-narrative and counternarrative (or vice versa as the case is here) we see other typical legal narrative strategies in play. Johnstone writes that defendants frequently reminded jurors of services they had performed for the good of the *polis*, like acts of charity.⁵⁷⁰ While there is no democratic *polis* onstage, and though Hecuba has now stepped out of the quasi-*polis* of women she created to put herself under the adjudication of a man, some of the comments made by Helen and Hecuba seem to be addressed to a wider political community. Helen states, for example, that Aphrodite's victory in the beauty contest – the incident which sparked the actions leading to her elopement with Paris – saved Greece from military conquest by the Trojans. This was the outcome, according to Helen, which would have resulted had Athene won the contest.⁵⁷¹ For standing as Paris' reward in choosing Aphrodite, Helen says that she should have been awarded a crown by those who now vilify her.⁵⁷² Her words seem calculated to appeal to a Greek audience concerned with the wider

⁵⁶⁸ See this thesis, pp. 150-51.

⁵⁶⁹ Eur. *Tro.* 990.

⁵⁷⁰ Johnstone (1999), pp. 14-15.

⁵⁷¹ Eur. *Tro.* 930-35.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, 937.

ramifications of war and conquest, rather than to Menelaus, concerned only with retrieving his wife. This is particularly so given the frequent analogies in classical Athenian culture between the Trojan War, with its Panhellenic force, and the Persian Wars, in which a similarly unified Greek force fought off a barbarian invader.⁵⁷³

Helen also, as per Johnstone's defendants, uses the 'performative language and gestures' of ritual supplication as she begs Menelaus by his knees to pardon her.⁵⁷⁴ In Johnstone's analysis, such gestures were intended to undercut the fact that litigants were often from the elites of Athens and in prostrating themselves before the citizen jury they reproduced the notion of a democratic consciousness. While there is no jury onstage here and all the protagonists in the scene are members of the elite, the gesture nonetheless recalls the gestures of abasement by defendants with which the audience would have been familiar and to which they would have responded in court. This again is suggestive of the idea that Euripides transplanted the concerns of the play to a familiar forensic context so as to highlight their relevance for his Athenian audience.

Hecuba's response also seems to have this audience in mind. She draws attention to the hypocrisy of Helen's act of abasement, pointing out that Helen has 'decked herself out' (*ἀσκέω*) when she 'should have come humbly, in ragged clothes, shivering with fear' (*ἤνυχρήν ταπεινήν ἐν πέπλων ἐρειπίοις*).⁵⁷⁵ True, as Lloyd says, our only proof that this is so is in Hecuba's words but I do not believe that we can conclude from this that it is untrue:⁵⁷⁶ Helen's suggestion that she deserves a crown certainly does not imply humility and Hecuba's description of Helen here is of a piece with descriptions of her elsewhere in Euripidean tragedy, for example, Electra's vitriolic condemnation of Helen's vanity (in merely snipping the very ends of her hair) in the *Orestes*.⁵⁷⁷ Hecuba's words here may remind fifth-century audiences of their own laws relating to adultery which stated that adulterous women must appear humbly dressed and that should they appear in fine clothes, they could be publicly stripped and beaten.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷³ See e.g. Herodotus, who uses the *Iliad* to ground his narrative of the Persian Wars from the outset (Hdt. 1. 2-5). Note that this is a 5th century Athenian re-remembering of Homer, cast in terms of Greeks and barbarians, where the Homeric texts does not contain the same sense of a clash of cultures.

⁵⁷⁴ Johnstone (1999), p.15; Eur. *Tro.* 1042-43.

⁵⁷⁵ Eur. *Tro.* 1022-23 and 1025-28.

⁵⁷⁶ Lloyd (1984), p. 305.

⁵⁷⁷ It is clearly not consistent with Euripides' portrayal of Helen in the *Helen* but for 'Old Helen' and 'New Helen' see Wright (2006) pp. 33-47; this discussion pp. 35-37. Eur. *Or.* 126-29.

⁵⁷⁸ Aeschines, 1.183.

Hecuba too appeals to Menelaus and the external audience, as Greeks, suggesting that to execute Helen for her crimes would be to 'crown Greece' (στεφάνωσον Ἑλλάδα).⁵⁷⁹ The crown, in her example, would belong to the whole of Greece – that is, Menelaus' actions would be in the public interest as the whole of Greece was wronged by Helen and in executing her, all Greece would be honoured. Here again, Hecuba plays the role of Johnstone's prosecutor, inducing the audience-jury to think of themselves as injured parties in this most personal of cases.⁵⁸⁰

I have shown that Hecuba's prosecutorial speech and Helen's for the defence are conditioned by the rhetorical strategies of the law court. Like the speakers in court, both stress the benefits of their actions for the greater good of a wider community and this seems designed to appeal to the citizenry of the Athenian *polis* in the audience. It is when considering the audience's possible reception of these speeches that the politics of the play emerge and it is in this that the cultural memories of the audience come into play in their judgement of the characters.

ii) Cultural memory

When the bank of Athenian cultural memory—of myth, poetry and other drama—is brought to bear on the *agōn*, adjudication becomes much more complicated. In part, cultural memory works together with the unsympathetic portrayal of Helen to prejudice the audience against her. As Goldhill remarks, 'her speech is constructed as if she had used Gorgias for her rhetoric training' as her arguments are formed point by point from his *Encomium to Helen*.⁵⁸¹ Gorgias himself compares the effect of deceptive persuasion as being akin to the effect of drugs on the body,⁵⁸² and Hesk notes that sophistry is often described in oratory as foreign to 'normative Athenian identity'.⁵⁸³ Scodel goes so far as to say that 'The repellent self-confidence of Helen is a reminder that to accept the Gorgianic defense is virtually to abandon the right to judge any human act whatever.'⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁷⁹ Eur. *Tro.* 1030.

⁵⁸⁰ Johnstone (1999), p. 132.

⁵⁸¹ Goldhill (1986), p. 237, though Lloyd is sceptical of this argument on the grounds that we cannot establish precedence (1992), pp. 100-1.

⁵⁸² One might be reminded here of Helen's drugs of forgetting in *Od.* 4.221.

⁵⁸³ Hesk (2000), p. 215 and discussion of Gorgias pp. 281-82.

⁵⁸⁴ Scodel (1980), p. 99.

Helen clearly does herself no favours with an audience familiar with Gorgias' *Encomium* in adopting such a line of defence.

However, as Hesk points out with regard to Euripides' *Hippolytus* (in the *Hippolytus*), 'Just because someone sounds like a sorcerer-sophist doesn't mean they are lying.'⁵⁸⁵ Cultural memory of the more traditional myths and poetry surrounding the Trojan War should tell the audience that Helen's testimony contains recognisable truths. The beauty contest, for example, is one of the mainstays of the traditional narrative.⁵⁸⁶ Helen's narrative also tells the 'truth' of anthropomorphised gods who control the lives of mortals, something which Hecuba's denies when she speaks of Aphrodite as merely men's excuse for folly. In this, the audience only need think back to the prologue of the play to see the 'truth' of Helen's words: here Poseidon and Athene plot together to punish the Greeks for their sacrilegious attacks on the Trojan temples by raising a storm to wreck the Greek ships on their journey home. Helen's comments that Hecuba and Priam were themselves also partly responsible for the war also gain traction from the audience's memory of the *Alexandros*, the first play in the trilogy. The plot of this fragment can only be speculative but it is expected that here, Hecuba and Priam accept their adult son back into the family in spite of the prophecy that had previously led them to expose him, a prophecy which foretold that Paris would bring Troy's destruction.⁵⁸⁷

In judging Hecuba too, cultural memory brings a different, much darker side to her character and to the audience's empathy with her. I have said that it is revenge that drives Hecuba's behaviour in the *agōn* and in this way, her behaviour here recalls the revenge she exacts on Polymestor in Euripides' *Hecuba*. Although she doesn't commit the actual deed in the *Trojan Women*, she does 'team up' with her Greek oppressors – there Agamemnon and here Menelaus – in order to achieve her goal of vengeance. In the *Hecuba*, as in the *Trojan Women*, Euripides creates a strong bond of empathy between the audience and Hecuba through the prolonged and oppressive representation of her suffering and there, just as here, he tests in dramatic form, just how far that empathy will stretch.⁵⁸⁸ The audience of *Hecuba* must question whether their empathy for Hecuba's

⁵⁸⁵ Hesk (2000), p. 287.

⁵⁸⁶ E.g. *Il.* 24. 25-30.

⁵⁸⁷ Scodel (1980), pp. 20-43.

⁵⁸⁸ For a more detailed discussion of how this operates in the *Hecuba* see Barker (2009), pp. 342-65.

plight is enough to sweep them into condoning the grisly maiming of her enemy and the slaughter of his children.

The *Trojan Women* is less extreme in its demands but nonetheless similar. Whether Helen is eventually killed by Menelaus or not, it is hard to argue that Hecuba does not 'win' the contest of *logos* on stage and, because of the scene's position between hearing the fate of Astyanax and the return of his mutilated body, the scene becomes part of the crescendo of emotion which the audience must feel in empathy for Hecuba.

It is in the period of reflection which follows the 'living moment' that the audience might question where their empathy for Hecuba has taken them. I have said already that it may have induced them to forget the mythic truths of the war but the place to which they are led instead is much darker. To empathise with Hecuba and to cheer her victory is to follow her on a personal, vindictive quest for revenge, dressed up as justice. In this, the audience is required to question their complicity, as they are if, like Eurycleia, they cheer Odysseus in his revenge on the suitors in the *Odyssey*.⁵⁸⁹ Because the *Hecuba* is an earlier play but it takes place after the *Trojan Women* in Hecuba's timeline, it offers a paradoxical view of 'memory of the future' for the audience. It provides foreknowledge of Hecuba's capability for vindictive cruelty and violence culminating in her transformation into a vicious hellhound and it seems likely that this might affect the audience's view of Hecuba here. Her insistent pursuit of Helen may be a step on the ladder to this final depravity.

Cultural memory may also affect the audience's perception of Menelaus and, in particular, his role as judge of this trial. As in my discussion of internal and external audiences in the *Odyssey*, here too the response of the internal judicial audience – Menelaus – is provocative of a political response from its external audience in the theatre. Menelaus' role as internal judge in the *Trojan Women* is similar to the role he plays in the later play, Euripides' *Orestes*. In the *agōn* between Orestes and Tyndareus in the *Orestes*, he acts as judge again and we see him change his mind, influenced by the more powerful Tyndareus. While a contemporary audience clearly will not be aware of this later play, it may shed light on Euripides' portrayal of Menelaus in the *Trojan Women*. In addition, the role is similar to that played by Agamemnon in the *Hecuba* where we

⁵⁸⁹ Barker (2009), p. 127; Barker and Christensen (2013), p. 189, consider this sense of complicity with regard to Odysseus' killing of Eupheithes and the suitors' relatives.

know that he has already promised Hecuba his support against her enemy before the ‘trial’ begins. Menelaus in the *Orestes* and Agamemnon in the *Hecuba* are both imperfect judges and Menelaus is no different in his role here. Not only is he a single man (as opposed to a jury)—highlighting the perils of tyrannical systems of justice—but even before he speaks, the play has shown him to be a weak character. Jon Hesk points to a ‘commonplace’ rhetoric in epic and tragedy in which the cause of the Trojan War is seen to be ‘a quarrel over a woman.’⁵⁹⁰ Kovacs has argued that this is indicative of a ‘grossly exaggerated reaction’ on Menelaus’ part,⁵⁹¹ and one that calls his capacities as a judge into consideration.

Menelaus’ unfitness for the role is not only evinced by his weakness but also by his potential for tyranny. As Lloyd points out, this judge has decided his verdict in advance of the trial, but in addition to this what most affects him about Hecuba’s argument is her concluding statement that Helen’s execution should stand as a legal precedent for other unfaithful wives. He decrees that her death ‘will impress the need for restraint on all women’ (γυναιξί σωφρονεῖν / πάσαισι θήσει) and that it will ‘strike fear into their sexual incontinence’ (ὅμως δ’ ὁ τῆσδ’ ὄλεθρος ἐς φόβον βαλεῖ / τὸ μῶρον αὐτῶν).⁵⁹² In the classical Athenian polis, the extremity of this would not have been lost. Although it had upheld Draco’s law that a man who killed his wife’s lover on catching them *in flagrante* could not be tried for homicide,⁵⁹³ the precedent for killing adulterous wives themselves, in cold blood, could not but be seen as provocative. As Barker suggests, with regard to Agamemnon in the *Hecuba*, ‘The audience must not only assess the *agōn*, but judge the judge.’⁵⁹⁴

However, Menelaus is not the only imperfect judge in the *agōn*. The chorus also represents a jury of sorts and highlights the fact that such collective juridical audiences can also get it wrong. As a collective with whom, as I have discussed above, the audience is already joined in their empathy with Hecuba, the fallibility of the chorus could be even more instructive for the audience, as their empathy ebbs and they remember the play.

⁵⁹⁰ Hesk (2000), p. 79. Hesk also points to Hom. *Od.* 11.438; Aesch. *Ag.* 1455-7; Eur. *Cyc.* 177f. and 280f, *El.* 213, *IT* 525; Gorg. *Hel.* 2.

⁵⁹¹ Kovacs (1980), p. 61.

⁵⁹² Eur. *Tro.* 1056-59. For the translation of τὸ μῶρον as ‘sexual incontinence’ see Lee (1976), p. 238, where he suggests that the phrase is used several times by Euripides to denote this cf. *Tro.* 989, *Ion* 545 and *Hipp.* 966.

⁵⁹³ Demosthenes, 23.53.

⁵⁹⁴ Barker (2009), p. 355.

Like the audience going into this scene, the chorus is no unbiased group of bystanders. They not only empathise with Hecuba but have experienced some of the same suffering so are personally involved in the trial. They champion Hecuba, cheering for her to ‘defend your children and your fatherland’ (*ἄμυνον σοῖς τέκνοισι καὶ πάτρα*) and to ‘destroy [Helen’s] persuasive arguments’ (*πειθῶ διαφθείρουσα τῆσδ’*).⁵⁹⁵ In the end, they even start arguing Hecuba’s cause for her, imploring Menelaus to ‘take vengeance on your wife as is worthy of your house and your ancestors!’ (*προγόνων τ’ ἀξίως δόμων τε σῶν / τεῖσαι δάμαρτα*).⁵⁹⁶ Lee goes so far as to suggest that the chorus ‘voices the opinion which the audience is invited to hold by the dramatist.’⁵⁹⁷ I suggest rather that the scene reveals the chorus’ naïve understanding of rhetorical speech and provides another imperfect juridical audience against whom the audience should measure themselves.

The chorus reflect the Athenian concern over the language of the courts and the assembly and to some extent their reaction to the rhetoric they hear demonstrates an awareness of the ways in which rhetoric operates on its listeners. As Johnstone writes, ‘Because language alone established the relationship between speaker and audience, the uncertainties of this social relationship were expressed as anxieties about language.’⁵⁹⁸ The chorus recognise Helen’s rhetoric as sophistic because of the speciousness of some of her arguments, that, for example, in which she argues that she should receive a crown for her services.

However, Hecuba’s rhetoric, driven as it is by intense emotion—emotion with which they empathise—remains hidden or perhaps unimportant to them because she is on the side of ‘right.’ Her answer to Helen comes in the form of ‘common sense’ or probability, itself a highly effective form of rhetoric.⁵⁹⁹ Her rhetorical questions such as ‘Why should the goddess Hera have so great a desire to be beautiful?’ (*τοῦ φάρ οὔνεκ’ ἄν θεὰ / Ἥρα τοσοῦτον ἔσχ’ ἔρωτα καλλονῆς;*) are designed to highlight the ludicrousness of Helen’s argument.⁶⁰⁰ This is reinforced by her statement, ‘You will never persuade wise people [of

⁵⁹⁵ Eur. *Tro.* 966-68.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 133-34.

⁵⁹⁷ Lee (1976), p. 242.

⁵⁹⁸ Johnstone (1999), p. 2.

⁵⁹⁹ See e.g. Lloyd (1992), p. 106.

⁶⁰⁰ Eur. *Tro.* 976-77.

this],’ (*μη οὐ πείσης σοφούς*) which both flatters those who agree with her and warns that to think otherwise would be foolishness.⁶⁰¹

In this respect, I suggest that Hecuba’s rhetoric shares much in common with Hesk’s ‘rhetoric of anti-rhetoric,’ even though it does not explicitly attack the use of rhetoric in others.⁶⁰² Hesk comments that orators frequently admitted to writing and practising their orations, teaching others how to plead and even to ‘cleverness at speaking’ (*deinotēs legein*) provided that they could draw ‘a contrast between a rhetorical activism which is deceitful and harmful to the polis and the honest, beneficial activism which (of course) he has adhered to.’⁶⁰³ In Hecuba’s speech these traits are present but more implicit and therefore, even more ‘pernicious’ perhaps than the rhetoric which he considers. While Hecuba does not claim to be a ‘clever speaker’ she does lay out her rhetorical tactics. As discussed above, when she starts the chant of mourning for Troy, she states that she will lead the chorus and, indeed, the chorus have followed her lead throughout, not questioning her in anything. She is open about her tactic of contrasting her past with her present so as to evoke compassion and, far from questioning their reactions to this, I have shown that the chorus responds in kind. Also, although she is silent on the subject of her rhetoric in the *agōn*, I have suggested that her prosecutorial narratives underline her supposed commitment to ‘honest, beneficial activism’ for the good of Menelaus and for Greece as a whole, and that these act to counter Helen’s more overtly sophistic rhetorical style.

The chorus is not only persuaded by Hecuba’s speech into remembering with her and biased against Helen by hers but also by their *performance* of these speeches. In this there is a metatheatrical element again, one which draws attention to the similarities between the performance of speech in the theatre and its performance in political and legal contexts. In her abasement at Menelaus’ knees, Hecuba plays the game of courtroom performance better than Helen, who will not abase herself fully and embrace the part of the humble defendant. Hecuba also performs tragedy better than Helen by ‘milking’ her situation for its full pathetic potential with her audiences, both internal and external. While Hecuba wins empathy and so induces her audiences to remember (remember) ‘with’ her, Helen’s performance makes her actively repellent. In this she is

⁶⁰¹ Ibid, 982.

⁶⁰² Hesk (2000), especially pp. 202-41.

⁶⁰³ Ibid, p. 211.

comparable to Euripides' Hippias whose uncompromising pride in his own 'purity,' leads him to offend the equally proud goddess Aphrodite while his overt use of rhetoric in the *agōn* only leads 'Theseus to conclude that his son is indulging in lazy and specious sophistry.'⁶⁰⁴

Therefore, in spite of their fears about 'pernicious' rhetoric, the chorus of the *Trojan Women* is shown to be 'tragically' naïve when it comes to the adjudication of this conflict in the *agōn*. If the audience are, as I have suggested, swept along with the chorus by their empathy for Hecuba, then in the moment of watching the play, the same accusation could be levelled at them, as juridical citizens. Their empathy leads them to remember with Hecuba, seeing the conflict through her eyes. In doing so, affect inhibits cognition and the audience forgets the many memories which should make them question her narrative.

In this way, Euripides dramatises the dangers of empathy in the legal and political arenas, particularly in the context of dichotomised conflicts. Where voting followed immediately on hearing two contrasting speeches, with no time for empathy to wane, miscarriages of justice must have been commonplace. Therefore, by recasting Hecuba's suffering and revenge in the context of the fifth-century courts, Euripides draws attention to the problems inherent in contemporary political and juridical systems and practices. Hesk concludes that 'such stagings surely helped the citizenry to be self-aware and cautious as they listened to litigants or the (anti-) rhetoric of advisers'. I suggest, in addition, that such self-awareness applies, in particular, to empathy and its unsettling effects on memory and cognition.⁶⁰⁵

This section has explored the ways in which memory of the play, the trilogy and of the epic tradition provides a means by which to challenge and deconstruct Hecuba's dominant narrative in the play. It also offers a way to expose the construction and the effects of such affective discourse and highlights the importance for the external audience of taking an active role in judgement here. There is one final element to add to this discussion, which brings together my analysis of the *Odyssey* in Chapter 1 and of Hecuba here. The following exploration of Hecuba and Odysseus analyses the ways in

⁶⁰⁴ Hesk (2000), p. 287.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 288.

which the *Trojan Women* remembers and re-members the *Odyssey* and the impact which this memory might have on the audience's interpretation of both texts.

2.6 Hecuba and Odysseus

I said above that testimony is always a site of conflict but the contests in the *Trojan Women* go beyond the obvious clashes between Hecuba and the Greeks and Hecuba and Helen. A contest for dominance is also played out at the level of cultural memory between the two Homeric epics and this contest is instructive in revealing facets of the arguments discussed at the level of the text already. This chapter has addressed some of the ways in which cultural memory of the *Iliad* affirms and challenges Hecuba's dominant narrative in the play but there is also a strong thread of Odyssean memory. This section will examine the Odyssean connection and will highlight the ways in which, by turns, it enhances and darkens the audience's possible perceptions of Hecuba.

Isabelle Torrance has written persuasively on the way that the *Trojan Women* both recalls and builds on Odysseus' reaction to hearing Demodocus sing about the fall of Troy in Book 8 of the *Odyssey*. He is described as weeping:

ὡς δὲ γυνὴ κλαίησι φίλον πόσιν ἀμφιτεσοῦσα,

ὅς τε ἔῃς πρόσσθεν πόλιος λαῶν τε πέσησιν,

[...]

[...] λίγα κωκύει: οἱ δέ τ' ὀπισθε

κόπτοντες δούρεσσι μετάφρενον ἠδὲ καὶ ὤμους

εἴρερον εἰσανάγουσι, πόνον τ' ἐχέμεν καὶ οἰζύν:

τῆς δ' ἐλεειωτάτῳ ἄχεϊ φθινύθουσι παρειαί.⁶⁰⁶

As a woman weeps, lying over the body

of her dear husband, who fell fighting for her city and people

[...]

[...]she cries high and shrill, while the men behind her,

⁶⁰⁶ *Od.* 8.523-30.

hitting her with their spear butts on the back and the shoulders,
force her up and lead her away into slavery, to have
hard work and sorrow, and her cheeks are wracked with pitiful weeping.

Torrance suggests that, when the chorus calls on the Muse to ‘sing to me a new song about Ilium’ (ἀμφί μοι Ἴλιον, ὦ / Μοῦσα, καινῶν ὕμνων),⁶⁰⁷ this is Euripides offering his own new version of the Troy story based on the experience of the victims rather than on the warrior heroes. While this reading opens a new vista on the *Trojan Women* and its intertextual relationship with the *Odyssey*, I suggest that it is still insufficient. There is a specific relationship between Hecuba and Odysseus that sheds new light on both texts.⁶⁰⁸

When Hecuba hears that she is to be slave to Odysseus, she rails against him as a ‘monster’ (δάκος).⁶⁰⁹ Yet the play itself draws an association between the two through their experience of suffering and their endurance.⁶¹⁰ Hecuba cries out that ‘all I suffer, all I have suffered and all I will suffer’ (πάσχω τε καὶ πεπονθα κάτι πείσομαι)⁶¹¹ make her fit for nothing but to lie on the ground, and yet she endures on her ‘trembling limbs’ (τρομερὰ μέλεα) even as she goes forward with her women into slavery.⁶¹² Because πάσχω is used so often with regard to Odysseus’ suffering in the *Odyssey*, this use of πάσχω in connection with Hecuba may trigger the audience’s memory of the suffering and endurance of Odysseus on his journey homeward.⁶¹³ It is there already in the opening lines of the *Odyssey*, in which we hear that ‘many were the pains he suffered in his spirit on the wide sea’ (πολλὰ δ’ ὅ γ’ ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὄν κατὰ θυμόν).⁶¹⁴ In the ghost-Achilles’ pronouncement that he would ‘rather follow the plow as thrall to another / than be a king over all the perished dead,’⁶¹⁵ the *Odyssey* suggests that a new kind of heroism lies in Odysseus’ endurance of suffering, one which defines him against Achilles’ wartime characteristics lauded in the *Iliad*. Perhaps, then, in recalling these features and

⁶⁰⁷ Eur. *Tro.* 511-12

⁶⁰⁸ Torrance, pp. 220-21.

⁶⁰⁹ Eur. *Tro.* 284.

⁶¹⁰ This is a point which Barker discusses with regard to Hecuba and Odysseus in Euripides’ *Hecuba* (2009), p. 339.

⁶¹¹ Eur. *Tro.* 467-68.

⁶¹² *Ibid.*, 1328.

⁶¹³ E.g. *Od.* 5.362 and 395.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.4. For an extended analysis of the centrality of Odysseus’ ‘many pains’ to the *Odyssey* and the resonance of the phrase in the epic tradition, see Barker and Christensen (2008).

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.489-90.

bestowing them on Hecuba, Euripides offers her as a new kind of hero for his new song of Troy.

If Hecuba's heroism and suffering is related intertextually to that of Odysseus, then there is also a sense in which Hecuba's suffering and endurance prefigure—even condition—that which Odysseus will undergo. The events of the *Odyssey* are, after all, still to come as those of the *Trojan Women* unfold. His suffering on his journey homeward will transform him from the brutal monster who used his twisted rhetoric in arguing that Astyanax must be thrown from the walls, into the man who breaks down in tears of empathy when he hears of the pain of the Trojans in Book 8 of the *Odyssey*. His tears here are all the more poignant for the insight we have gained into this weeping woman's experience and for the transformation we have seen in him.

If Odysseus can be seen more favourably through this memory of the *Odyssey* then the reverse is true for Hecuba. Though, as explored above, it might be seen to enhance her 'heroism,' it also brings out the more unsavoury aspects of Hecuba's character. Just as in the *Odyssey*, our sympathy for Odysseus leads us to not only condone, but also rejoice in the slaughter of the suitors, so our sympathy for Hecuba leads us to be complicit in her actions and arguments against Helen and the Greeks in ways which should make us uncomfortable.⁶¹⁶ Furthermore, Hecuba and Odysseus are connected by their use of linguistic guile which goes alongside this. Hecuba derides Odysseus as:

πολεμίῳ δίκας, παρανόμῳ δάκει,
ὅς πάντα τάκειῖθεν ἐνθάδε στρέφει, τὰ δ'
ἀντίπαλ' αὖθις ἐκεῖσε διπτύχῳ γλώσσῃ
φίλα τὰ πρότερ' ἄφιλα τιθέμενος πάντων.⁶¹⁷

an enemy of justice, a lawless beast

who turns everything from that side to this and then back again

with his double tongue,

changing men to hatred of what they once loved.

⁶¹⁶ See Barker (2009), p. 328 for a similar comparison with regard to the *Hecuba*.

⁶¹⁷ Eur. *Tro.* 284-87.

To an extent, the same could be argued of Hecuba. While it might be impossible to argue that the audience holds Helen dear, the discussion above shows the way in which Hecuba turns back to front Helen's mythologically 'true' arguments about blame for the Trojan War and that the 'justice' she seeks is far from being balanced and objective.

In his chapter on the *Hecuba*, Elton Barker sets up an extended comparison between Hecuba and Odysseus in which he suggests that the *Hecuba* provides a 'radical twist' to the narrative of the protagonist's 'necessary and desirable' pursuit of vengeance.⁶¹⁸ Because Hecuba is not a returning hero 'but a foreign woman turned slave,' her revenge on Polymestor, 'though sympathetically manufactured to a degree comparable to that enjoyed by the epic Odysseus, ultimately represents the revenge of a figure who stands outside, and threatens, the carefully policed Hellenic order.'⁶¹⁹ Because she is not, like Odysseus, a figure of authority, her actions, Barker suggests, provide a way for Euripides to 'explore the possibilities for, and problems of, dissent *outside* a civic institutional framework.'⁶²⁰ Barker further suggests that her revenge, unlike Odysseus' 'cannot be constructed as the reassertion of authority; it is inevitably an act of dissent from the (Greek) occupying powers that control her life, particularly since the object of her fury is their friend and ally.'⁶²¹

While there are clearly similarities here with my argument regarding the *Trojan Women*, I suggest that there are also important differences. For one thing, my notion of a theatrical experience in which an initial empathic response informs a period of memory and reflection is indicative of the way in which tragedy might 'reeducate' the citizen audience, in the manner suggested by LaCapra.⁶²² For another, the process of voting in the moment of empathic unsettlement and 'repenting at leisure' mirrors a process known to have happened in classical Athens. As discussed above, Thucydides account of the Athenian's change of mind over Mytilene suggest something similar.⁶²³

With regard to the specifics of Barker's argument, my reading differs again because the defendants in the two cases are very different. Whereas Polymester is, as Barker states, a friend and ally of the Greeks, Helen is already marked for execution. For this reason,

⁶¹⁸ Barker (2009), p. 327.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid, p. 327.

⁶²⁰ Ibid, pp. 327-28.

⁶²¹ Ibid, p. 247.

⁶²² See Introduction to this thesis, p. 35.

⁶²³ See this thesis, pp. 37 and 122.

Hecuba's revenge cannot be described as an act of dissent against the Greeks. I discussed above the ways in which Hecuba creates her own political group outside the sphere of the Trojan men and the dominant Greeks; in the *agōn*, however, she steps inside this world to argue her case against Helen in the language of the *polis*. Unlike Odysseus, she had no power in this realm to *reassert* but here she demonstrates herself—a woman and a slave—to be capable of standing up with them on their own terms.

In this way, Hecuba achieves her victory in the play. If the sections of the play before and after the *agōn* focus on Hecuba's attempt to memorialise her particular version of events in Troy, the *agōn* shows that she has convinced the Greeks—or at least, one important representative—of her story. If, as Torrance discusses, Troy and its people are only visible through the songs of the Greek victors,⁶²⁴ this is a step towards ensuring that these are songs she would want sung. This is Hecuba's attempt to—Odysseus-like—control the narrative in which she appears by whatever means possible.

The *Trojan Women* wears its Iliadic heritage on its sleeve: it is clear to see in the tropes of mourning and in the characters and content of the play. In this the *Iliad* could be said to inform Hecuba's grief and our memory of it enhances the pity we feel for her. Its Odyssean heritage is, characteristically, disguised and 'forgotten,' overridden by vehement statements in hatred of Odysseus which belie Hecuba's connection to him. Ultimately, what memory of the *Odyssey* brings to the *Trojan Women* is twofold. Firstly, it highlights the ways in which Hecuba attempts to control the narrative of the text. Secondly, this in itself provides additional weight for the idea that the audience must not watch passively but rather take on the responsibility for judgement, measuring themselves against the imperfect juridical audiences represented in the texts.

2.7 Conclusion

I quoted John Gould above as concluding that the plethora of narratives in tragedy enforces 'our acceptance of narrative multiplicity,'⁶²⁵ but suggested then that Hecuba, like Odysseus, 'makes a play for' a 'univocal reading' supported, to an extent, by Euripides. I have shown that many of the narratives which seem to challenge Hecuba's

⁶²⁴ Torrance (2013), p. 244.

⁶²⁵ Gould (2001), p. 334. See also this thesis, p. 124.

version of events actually support it in essentials, while Helen's narrative—the only one to truly offer a different perspective—is highly unattractive in both its performance and its style.

However, whereas the normative thrust of the *Odyssey* is confirmed by the narrator and the gods, the opposite is true of the *Trojan Women*. There is no narrator and the gods actually assert their presence as anthropomorphised beings in direct contravention of Hecuba's words. In addition, although Helen's arguments, like the suitors', are unattractive, the basic facts contained in them are demonstrably 'true' as confirmed by the audience's memory of the play, their memory of the trilogy and their cultural memory. Hecuba is very convincing and her plight is harrowing but her story is not Euripides' story and not the whole story of the play.

Ultimately it is not true to say, with Gould, that the *Trojan Women* offers a 'plethora' of narratives allowing the audience to engage in the issues and to build their own narrative. However, as in the *Odyssey*, where the memory which undercuts the poem's normativity is unauthorised—a facet of the audience's 'unforgetting'—so in the *Trojan Women*, memory allows the audience to question Hecuba's dominant narrative. Furthermore, it encourages them to reflect on their own performance as citizens in a political and legal system which thrives on emotive speech.

The next chapter, on Plato's *Theaetetus*, and by extension, his *Apology*, moves from the quasi-courtroom of the tragic *agōn* to the law court trial of Socrates. It also moves from investigating the reactions of an audience to the response of a reader and the literary craft of a writer. There, I will investigate the importance of memory in the reader's overlapping development as a philosopher and as a citizen.

3 Re-membering Socrates: memory and philosophical citizenship in Plato's *Theaetetus*

3.1 Introduction

My discussions of the *Odyssey* and the *Trojan Women* suggested that a study of memory, or an analysis informed by memory, both reinforced and undermined the dominant political narratives of those texts. Each chapter explored the ways in which particular memory-narratives seemed authorised by their texts but also considered the ways in which memory served to expose the mechanisms by which such narratives dominated. In both cases, memory was seen to be politically effective in its power to arouse strong emotion.

My approach to Plato's *Theaetetus* in this chapter is slightly different. This chapter will continue to study the interrelation of textually represented memory and audience (here, the reader's) memory, but the memory with which it is most concerned is the *Theaetetus*' 'memory of' the *Apology*.⁶²⁶ Although the previous chapters engaged with the idea of such intertextual relationships between texts—Chapter 2, in particular, explored the *Trojan Women*'s relationship with epic and the *Hecuba* in some depth—the sustained attention given to this relationship sets Chapter 3 apart. This chapter suggests that memory of the *Apology* provides a political frame through which the *Theaetetus* might be read. I do not place this frame over the dialogue arbitrarily. Rather, the *Apology* is recalled for the reader by Socrates' words at the end of the dialogue: that he 'must go to the Porch of the King Archon, to meet Meletus' indictment, the one he has brought against me,' the same indictment addressed in the *Apology*. While others have argued that this fleeting reference adds nuance to the more political passages in the *Theaetetus*, such as the Digression which I will address below,⁶²⁷ this chapter suggests something more radical. The reference to the *Apology* acts as a memory trigger for the reader, the effect of which is that the reader's memory of the *Apology* suffuses her/his reading of the *Theaetetus*.

In the *Apology*, Plato's engagement with politics is direct and explicit. It is clear that Socrates was perceived as dangerously political by those who accused and condemned

⁶²⁶ Erll (2011), p. 67. See also Introduction to this thesis p. 44.

⁶²⁷ See this thesis, pp. 189-200.

him: corrupting (*diaphtheirei*, 23d, 24c) the youth—one of the charges brought against him by Meletus—implies corruption not just on an individual level but of a generation on the verge of entering public life. As Euben puts it, ‘Given the force and range of *diaphtheirō* and its cognates—leading astray and seducing, bribing and spoiling, maiming and killing—the charge amounts to the claim that Socrates is destroying the polis.’⁶²⁸ For this reason, Socrates’ defence, as mediated by Plato, justifies his behaviour politically, as he attempts to render their criticisms in a positive light. Because the *Theaetetus* shows Socrates interacting with an actual Athenian youth we might construe the dialogue as a continuation of Plato’s testimony on behalf of Socrates. This chapter suggests, then, that in the *Theaetetus*, we see in practice the theory which Plato’s Socrates argues in the *Apology*, so that, perhaps, this more discerning jury of readers might interpret Socrates’ fame differently from the jury who condemned him in court. Here, then, we have a ‘real’ law court trial, as opposed to the metaphorical or quasi courts of the previous chapters. Here too, the law court is used explicitly as part of a dialogue about memory itself and about the memory of Socrates, or how to remember him.

In the same way as in the previous chapters this analysis sees the reader in the position of juror and the process of reading as one that is also constitutive of juridical capabilities. As in the previous chapters too, the reader’s memory is actively engaged in the interpretive process and indeed, the very act of reading, of engaging with the text, is also an act of learning to read more carefully, more precisely, with greater judgement. However, whereas in the previous chapters my emphasis was on the communal experience of the audience and on the public performance of epic and tragedy, my emphasis here is on the (socially informed) individual reader and on Plato as a writer and a teacher.

i) Chapter overview

As stated above, Chapter 3 will examine the *Theaetetus* through the frame—or with the memory—of the *Apology*. This memory will inform my discussion of the Digression in the *Theaetetus*, the passage in which Socrates contrasts the philosopher to the political man, which is often cited to underline the division Plato sees between politics and philosophy. This discussion will serve to elucidate my conception of Plato’s political philosophy, which

⁶²⁸ Euben (1997), p. 32.

will inform the chapter as a whole. Memory of the *Apology* will also inform my consideration of Socrates' midwife metaphor. By examining the way in which the later text remembers the earlier one, I will assess the political, philosophical and didactic ramifications of this representation of his role, in line with the model of political philosophy drawn from the Digression. Finally, memory of the *Apology* will underpin my examination of the way in which the Wax Tablet image is framed in the *Theaetetus*. Here, memories of Socrates' trial in the *Apology* interrelate with the Jurymen example and the Digression and this serves to cast the Wax Tablet passage—with its emphasis on false belief—in a political light.

In its exploration of the Wax Tablet as a model for memory, the chapter will examine the agonistic relationship which Plato constructs between philosophy and other forms of knowledge, especially poetry. In this, it will draw on the critical conceptions of Plato's use and exploitation of forms of democratic interaction discussed below. In memory terms, it will explore the text's memory of, or re-membering of, tragedy for Plato's own philosophical purposes.

The Wax Tablet also provides an opportunity to explore some of the implications of my argument, set out earlier in the thesis, of philosophical citizenship and of the relationship between reading, writing and memory as construed by Plato's teaching. In doing this, I will dwell on two key terms: *eidōlon* ('phantom') and *exaleiphein* ('to wipe clean' or 'to paint over'). These recur in the text, creating a build-up of significance in the reader's memory and resonate with cultural memory. This discussion will illustrate, on the one hand, Plato's authorial anxiety and on the other, the guidance he gives about reading in order to compensate for this anxiety. As I have partly suggested already, this guidance revolves around reading with an active memory—a memory in which remembering and forgetting are balanced. This becomes political when the discussion encompasses the things which *Theaetetus* and the reader may be obliged to forget in the name of philosophical progress and the political stakes involved in such forgetting.

Finally, from focusing in on these two concepts, I will conclude with a consideration of the dialogue's form as aporetic. In this way, I will pull together the salient points of the chapter, in particular, with regard to my earlier readings of the *Apology* and of the midwife image. I will also examine *aporia* in connection with the ending of the *Odyssey*, a discussion which will send the reader of this thesis, like *Theaetetus* and Plato's readers,

‘back to the beginning.’⁶²⁹ In this way, I will suggest that the placing of the memory trigger for the *Apology* at the *end* of the dialogue goes to the heart of Plato’s didactic purpose in the *Theaetetus*. At various points in the dialogue, Socrates instructs Theaetetus to return to the beginning, to think again armed with the memory of what worked last time and what did not.⁶³⁰ Placing the reference to the *Apology* at the end of the dialogue reinforces these instructions. It sends the reader back to the start armed with the memory—the future memory, perhaps—of Socrates’ demise, requiring her/him to reread in the light of what might be gleaned from that ‘new’ knowledge.

Overall, in the light of my emphasis on Plato as a writer and teacher, I will not grapple much with the main philosophical discussion of the dialogue—the attempt to define knowledge—although my analysis will inevitably engage with this debate in places. Rather, this chapter will examine what reading the *Theaetetus* with the memory of the *Apology* reveals about Plato’s conception of politics in the world of philosophy and vice versa.

In addition, this chapter will suggest not only that memory plays a central thematic role in the *Theaetetus* but also that the dialogue shows Plato investigating the process of memory as an integral part of the philosophy he teaches. As I will show, the dialogue itself is a representation or performance of memory. As discussed in the Introduction, the *Theaetetus* contains the first known attempt to understand the psychological workings of memory: the Wax Tablet passage. This, in itself, builds on a strong cultural memory of tragic drama and the whole dialogue, as much of Plato’s writing, is invested with an anxiety about accurate memory and testimony.⁶³¹ In this way, memory of the *Apology* connects with the theme of memory and its role in philosophical practice which is so important to the dialogue as a whole.

This chapter continues to be informed by the theories of memory, cultural memory and testimony which underpin the thesis as a whole. As the following subsection discusses, there are also some aspects of these theories with which this chapter engages more closely or different nuances which it brings out. These are related to the ‘memory of literature’, to the notion of collective remembering and to philosophical testimony.

⁶²⁹ See, for example, Pl. *Tht.* 187a-b.

⁶³⁰ As discussed later in this thesis at e.g. pp. 233.

⁶³¹ See, for example, Henderson on the ways in which memory is mediated in the *Symposium* (2000), p. 304.

ii) *Memory, testimony and philosophy*

Broadly speaking, in its consideration of Socrates' testimony in the *Apology* and in its wider examination of the *Theaetetus* as testimony, this chapter continues to engage with the memory theory outlined in the Introduction and built on in my discussions of Homer and Euripides. As in the previous chapters, it will explore moments when memory is represented textually, for example, in discussions of memory or in characters' remembering, and their intersection with the audience's cultural memories of poetry and myth. Where cultural memory is discussed in this chapter, it is often, as in Chapter 2, invoked as a tool of interpretation which either adds depth and resonance to words or passages or which suggests an alternative reading. This is not to suggest that it is 'corrective'; on the contrary, it is always used with an understanding that cultural memory is constituted and altered by all those social and cultural factors discussed in the Introduction.⁶³²

Perhaps the most significant form of memory discussed here is the 'memory of literature', a type of cultural memory explored by Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney.⁶³³ Memory of literature is, clearly, a metaphorical term and this has led to it being highly criticised but I still feel that it has much to add to this study of literature. It is most usually and usefully conceived of in terms of intertextuality and while the theory of intertextuality is not couched in terms of memory, Erll characterises it as the means by which literature 'remembers itself.'⁶³⁴ Renate Lachmann discusses the idea of 'memory of literature' in her 1997 study, *Memory and Literature*. She writes that '[l]iterature inscribes itself in a memory space made up of texts and it sketches out a memory space into which earlier texts are gradually absorbed and transformed.'⁶³⁵ Both Erll and Lachmann suggest that the memory of literature is something which accumulates over time and which is formed entirely by reader responses. I don't disagree with this presentation: in Chapter 2, I explored precisely this kind of intertextual memory between the *Trojan Women*, the Hecuba and the Homeric epics. But I suggest here that the intertextual relationship between the *Apology* and the *Theaetetus* is rather more intentional and author-centred,

⁶³² See Introduction to this thesis, pp. 43-45.

⁶³³ Erll (2011), p. 67-74; Erll and Rigney (2006), p. 112.

⁶³⁴ Erll (2011), p. 70.

⁶³⁵ Lachmann (1997), p. 15.

in that Plato provides specific clues in the *Theaetetus* by his use of particular words, phrases and images which direct the reader to points in the *Apology*. There is a close reciprocal relationship established between the two texts: at times, the *Theaetetus* seems to extrapolate ideas which are mentioned in passing in the *Apology*, while at others, the *Apology* adds detail and nuance to ideas arising in the later text.

Furthermore, as Erll discusses, memory theory has seen an increasing emphasis on 'memory genres' and 'genre memories', where intertextuality does not only refer to individual texts but to whole genres.⁶³⁶ This is also something which this chapter will explore in relation to the *Theaetetus*. Erll writes that a reader's memory is a requirement for a genre to be 'realised'. Genres such as comedy and tragedy depend on the author's and the reader's/audience's shared memory of other similar texts. At the same time, certain genres, such as tragedy are charged with ideological meaning and carry the memory of norms, values and world views.⁶³⁷ Where such genres are remembered—as Plato remembers tragedy in the *Theaetetus*—this comes with a range of considerations about all of those 'norms, values and world views.' Below, I consider this theory in the light of Nightingale's work on Plato's 'parodic' engagement with tragedy (p. 184) and it underpins my exploration of the Wax Tablet in the *Theaetetus*.

Unlike the last two chapters, however, which emphasised the collective nature of remembering and forgetting experienced by the audiences of epic and tragedy because of their public, political performance contexts, this chapter emphasises an idea of individual memory which feeds into a collective, or collected consciousness. In the thesis Introduction, I examined Olick's claim that 'It is not just that we remember as members of groups but that we also constitute those groups and their members simultaneously in the act, thus "re-member-ing"' (p. 42). There, as in the thesis so far, I focused on the second aspect of this: the way that 'groups and their members' are reconstituted in the act of collective 're-membering.' This chapter, however, emphasises the first idea, that we remember as individual members of groups. As I will go on to show, Socratic and Platonic philosophy works first and foremost with private individuals, while retaining a sense of these readers as members of political groups and subject to the various influences which that entails. One expressed aim of this philosophy is that those individuals' philosophical

⁶³⁶ Erll (2011), p. 74.

⁶³⁷ Ibid, p. 74.

experiences will be shared, or collected, in such a way as to challenge and improve political society as a whole.

My analysis here will also continue to build on the testimony theory which has informed the thesis so far. My exploration of Socrates' speech in the *Apology* will build on the discussion in Chapter 2 regarding the mediation of Hecuba's memories by the narratives of the Athenian law courts.⁶³⁸ More importantly than this, however, Socrates' memory is also mediated, perhaps entirely reimagined, by Plato.⁶³⁹ In view of this, we might more accurately identify this testimony as Plato's own and led by Hannah Arendt, might view it in the light of testimony to trauma. Arendt described the trial and execution of Socrates as being to the development of western philosophy, what the crucifixion was to Christianity: a moment of foundational trauma. This was, for Plato, the apotheosis of the 'politically decaying society' in which he lived and it became for him a traumatic memory which prompted his despair of radical democracy and infused his philosophy, opening a 'gulf between philosophy and politics' which, she argues, persists to the present day.⁶⁴⁰ According to this reading, all Plato's writing expressed his traumatic memory of the execution of Socrates: a trauma which permanently changed his perception of the way in which philosophy and philosophers could function in political society.

It is equally possible, and I think more convincing, to see Plato in the mould of Aleida Assmann's witness to the religious martyr. The martyr, here Socrates, dies in the act of witnessing his persecution at the hands of an unjust society but 'depends on someone'—Plato—'to witness the suffering, to identify him or her as a martyr (rather than a justly persecuted rebel), and to codify the story for future generations.'⁶⁴¹ In linking the *Apology* to the *Theaetetus* and constructing the later text as his testimony to Socrates' political and philosophical methods, this is precisely the role which Plato plays here. He asks the audience to reconsider the jury's conviction of his teacher by demonstrating the flagrant injustice of the charges brought against him, thereby 'codifying' his story in an alternative way for 'future generations' such as us. In this way, as with the witness to the martyr or the witness testifying to the trauma inflicted on others who can no longer speak for

⁶³⁸ See Chapter 2 of this thesis, pp. 156-60.

⁶³⁹ This is very much Plato's apology for Socrates rather than, say, Xenophon's.

⁶⁴⁰ Arendt (2005), p. 6.

⁶⁴¹ Assmann (2006), p. 268.

themselves, Plato's testimony does not only represent his own memory, but it is also an (eminently successful) attempt to shape the memory of Socrates for all time.

The instability and unreliability of testimony is something to which Plato's Socrates refers explicitly in the *Theaetetus*. In his example of the Jurymen, the jury must decide a case based only on the testimony they hear rather than on the basis of what they themselves have seen, and therefore know, to be true. Clearly this passage becomes strikingly relevant to the above discussion when seen through the frame of the *Apology* and I will address this in more detail later (p. 218). In addition to this, the passage has informed the understanding of and assumptions about testimony in the philosophical tradition, as Anthony Coady has discussed in his ground-breaking philosophical study of testimony. Coady writes that Plato relies 'upon some sort of "obviousness" about testimony's not being a source of knowledge and about its inferiority, in this respect, to perception.' According to Coady, this reliance has informed subsequent thinking and led to the philosophical tradition's neglect of testimony in favour of perception.⁶⁴²

This chapter, however, goes on to suggest Plato's encouragement of another form of philosophical testimony: one that takes place not in the act of writing or speaking but in the act of reading. Many have commented on the fact that Plato himself is an absent figure in his texts.⁶⁴³ In fact, he deliberately writes himself out of some of them, such as the *Phaedo* when he tells us explicitly that 'Plato' was ill and so not among those present with Socrates in his cell. In the *Theaetetus* too, as I will explore further below, Plato would have us believe that the dialogue is a transcription, by Euclides of Megara, of a conversation reported to him by Socrates.⁶⁴⁴ Plato removes himself from the act of testifying altogether. Plato's testimony—his answer in this case to the question 'What is knowledge?'—does not exist. For this reason, we cannot—as in reading or hearing other kinds of witness testimony—look for any kind of truth, subjective or otherwise, in the writer's words. Rather, we must construct our own testimony, our own truth, in our interpretation of the texts. Philosophy is not a testimony which Plato shares with us, but one which his writing 'stings' us to by its difficulty and by our many confusions and frustrations.⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴² Coady (1992), pp. 5-6.

⁶⁴³ See e.g. Goldhill (1993), p.137.

⁶⁴⁴ See discussion in this thesis on pp. 224-26.

⁶⁴⁵ I draw here on Plato's Socrates characterisation of himself as Athens' gadfly in *Pl. Ap.* 30e-31a.

This subsection has focused on the theory which will inform my study of Plato, in particular, on the notion of cultural memory as intertextuality, on a collective memory which is more about *collecting* individual memories and on a philosophical form of testimony. The following subsection surveys the range of Platonic criticism on which this chapter builds or with which intersects, some of it focused on the *Theaetetus* itself and some on Plato more generally. In view of the fact that the chapter concentrates on Plato's politics and his authorship and on the theme of memory, it breaks this body of criticism down into the further subheadings: 'Political Philosophy,' 'Plato as Author' and 'Memory.'

iii) Critical survey

a) Political Philosophy

Where Arendt argued that Socrates' trial and execution led to Plato divorcing politics from philosophy, recent criticism by scholars such as Peter Euben, Vincent Farenga, Sara Monoson and Dana Villa has sought to repoliticise Plato's works.⁶⁴⁶ In arguing that the Platonic practice of philosophy is not divorced from, but still intimately bound up with, Athenian democracy, this chapter will build on this recent scholarship. Euben explores 'the ways in which Socrates expanded a democratic tradition of accountability and self-critique into a way of doing philosophy that remained parasitic upon, if not respectful of, that tradition, even when he found fault with it.'⁶⁴⁷ He also suggests that Socratic insistence on *parrhēsia*, 'free or frank speech,' and his demonstration of a fair process of reasoned deliberation, actually model what democratic politics have the potential to be if freed from the taint of corruption.⁶⁴⁸

Of particular note for this chapter is his gloss of Socrates' claim that 'the unexamined life is not worth living' (*ὁ δὲ ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ*).⁶⁴⁹ He sees this claim as 'a philosophical articulation of democratic practices and a way of making public the thinking process present in the dialogue between me and myself.'⁶⁵⁰ This claim, he explains, implies philosophical dialogue is truly necessary because 'only by examining my

⁶⁴⁶ Euben (1994 and 1997), Monoson (2000), Villa (2001) and Farenga (2006), pp. 471-535.

⁶⁴⁷ Euben (1997), p. xiii.

⁶⁴⁸ Euben (1994), p. 222; see also Monoson (2000), pp. 154-80. For wider discussions of *parrhēsia*, especially in relation to tragedy see Burian (2011), pp. 95-118 and Barker (2011), pp. 154-62.

⁶⁴⁹ Pl. *Ap.* 38a.

⁶⁵⁰ Euben (1997), p. 36.

own life in the context of others will I be able to think at all.’⁶⁵¹ Euben compares this idea to Arendt’s ‘representative thinking.’ According to Arendt’s formulation, political opinions take shape as different viewpoints are considered. This takes place in a process of ‘making present to one’s mind the standpoints of those who are absent.’ Arendt does not imply that one gives up one’s own standpoint in experiencing the issue from the point of view of another but does imply that one’s standpoint might be revised or refined. She concludes that the more standpoints one considers ‘the more valid my final conclusions, my opinion.’⁶⁵² As Euben writes, such ‘representative thinking’ helps us not only to recognise and to respect the plurality of others but also to recognise the plurality of the self. This may feed into our conception of the democratic community in that ‘[o]nce we realize that the thinking self can be more than one without losing its unity, we can better understand how a political community can contain differences and still be a community.’⁶⁵³ Socratic dialogue with interlocutors, with imagined interlocutors and sometimes with himself, not only mirrors and gives voice to the plurality of ‘others’ in the community but envisions an ideal political community in which those voices can exist at once and in opposition and yet remain a community.

Monoson insists on something similar in her statement that:

Plato does not present philosophical practice as a purely other-worldly activity or as a retreat from and opposition to the political world but as a brave and daring effort to call one’s community to its own best possible self without romanticizing what a rigorous pursuit of that best self would entail.⁶⁵⁴

This chapter sees, with her, that Plato’s (and his Socrates’) relationship with democracy cannot be described as straightforwardly negative even though they do not consistently champion democratic ideals. There is a relationship, not simply a rejection, and often this entails an acknowledgement that, while the institutions are faltering, they may yet be turned around by ‘rigorous’ (Platonic/Socratic) philosophical engagement.

Building on Monoson and Euben, I will discuss the idea that for Plato and for those following him, politics and philosophy are inseparable. As I will show, the *Theaetetus* and

⁶⁵¹ Ibid, p. 37.

⁶⁵² Arendt (1977), p. 241; Euben (1997), p. 37.

⁶⁵³ Euben (1997), p. 37.

⁶⁵⁴ Monoson (2000), p. 13.

its wider context demonstrate that political and philosophical concerns are not distinct from each other but are interrelated, the one informing the other in Plato's discussion. This definition of politics is not tied to a support for democracy or otherwise but suggests that any political participation should be predicated on personal integrity.

However, my approach differs from some, such as Villa's, in that the political theorist tends to be less interested in Plato's craft than in Socrates' philosophical citizenship. This is the case in some highly sophisticated readings of Socrates such as Euben's and Farenga's, where, although they acknowledge that Socrates is mainly known to us through Plato's texts, Plato remains almost absent from their analyses. This chapter will focus less on any conception of a historical Socrates and more on 'Socrates' as a figure constantly reinvented by Plato. With Malcolm Schofield and Simon Goldhill the chapter contends that even in the most 'Socratic' of Plato's texts, 'the detailed development ... and its concrete literary and argumentative texture will have been at least as much Platonic as Socratic.'⁶⁵⁵ Socrates is always mediated for us by Plato: he is Plato's Socrates. Where I do not state this explicitly, it is implied. The following subsection explores just this.

b) Plato as Author

My consideration of Socrates as a literary character is informed by scholars such as Ruby Blondell who writes about the changing nature of 'Socrates' as Plato's literary and philosophical creation, and also by Jan Assmann. Assmann does not refer to Socrates explicitly but his conception of the way in which Greek written culture 'absorbed and developed' oral culture was a very influential idea for this chapter. According to Assmann, written culture in ancient Greece differed in key respects from written culture in other ancient cultures such as Israel and Egypt. In these cultures, writing was seen 'as an eternal, unchangeable, sacred counter to the transience of the spoken word.'⁶⁵⁶ Because this kind of cultural memory in Greek societies was contained within oral culture and was sustained within the rituals and practices of social groups, this, according to Assmann, left

⁶⁵⁵ Schofield (2006), p.21; for a similar approach see Goldhill (2002), pp. 80-110.

⁶⁵⁶ Assmann (2011), pp. 241-42.

Greek scribal culture peculiarly open to penetration by oral culture.⁶⁵⁷ In the light of Assmann's writing, this chapter will see Plato's Socrates not merely as a figure who worked in the medium of oral dialectic but as a representative of oral culture—the equivalent, perhaps, of a Homer to Herodotus and Thucydides—one with and against whom, Plato defines the new genre of written philosophy.

In its examination of Plato's philosophy as a genre, the chapter is also heavily influenced by Andrea Nightingale who, in her seminal study *Genres in Dialogue*, suggests that Plato engages parodically with other genres of his time and in this way defines his new genre of philosophical dialogue.⁶⁵⁸ Although Nightingale's work is not conceived of in terms of memory, it clearly bears much in common with the theory on 'memory of literature' and genre discussed above. To engage parodically, in Nightingale's terms, is not always suggestive of comic ridicule but is rather the process of recontextualising an object 'so as to make it serve tasks contrary to its original tasks.'⁶⁵⁹ According to her, Plato uses this kind of engagement with texts from established genres such as oratory, comedy and tragedy to affirm his continuity with established traditions while also distinguishing 'what he was doing from all other discursive practices that laid claim to wisdom.' Of Plato's Socrates' famous assertion in *Republic* 10 about an 'ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry,' Nightingale writes that this may not be historical fact but could rather stand as 'a bold rhetorical strategy designed to define philosophy and invest it with a near-timeless status.'⁶⁶⁰ Although something recognisable as philosophical thought had been around for at least two hundred years (since the Pythagoreans) by the time Plato was writing, philosophy as a formal discipline was in its infancy and Plato a relatively 'unknown stripling measuring himself against a venerable giant' in the form of poetry.⁶⁶¹ For Nightingale, parodic engagement is signalled by a cluster of allusions and it is such a cluster which, I will suggest, we find with regard to tragedy in the Wax Tablet passage.⁶⁶²

For the most part, scholarship on the *Theaetetus* revolves around the philosophical concerns of the dialogue, in particular, the definition of knowledge. This, notably by Burnyeat, Chappell and Fine provides important background for this study, but because of

⁶⁵⁷ An excellent exploration of such repositories of Athenian cultural memory can be found in Steinbock (2013), especially pp. 70-97.

⁶⁵⁸ Nightingale (1995), pp. 1-12.

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 7, paraphrasing Morson (1989), p. 69.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 60.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 60.

⁶⁶² *Ibid*, p. 9.

my particular focus on memory, politics and genre these philosophical concerns are not central to my analysis.⁶⁶³ However, although its primary focus is, like the others, on the subject of knowledge, this chapter builds on Zina Giannopoulou's very thorough reading of the intertextual relationship between the *Apology* and the *Theaetetus*.⁶⁶⁴

Giannopoulou suggests that the

Theaetetus, Plato's most systematic enquiry into the nature of knowledge, is a philosophically sophisticated elaboration of *Apology* that successfully differentiates Socrates from the sophists. In *Apology* Socrates defends his philosophical activity partly by distinguishing it from sophistic practices, and in *Theaetetus* he enacts this distinction.⁶⁶⁵

Like Giannopoulou, I find significance in Plato's attempts to distance Socrates—in both the *Apology* and the *Theaetetus*—from the sophists but my emphasis differs from hers in three important respects. Firstly, whereas Giannopoulou's study is built around the definitions of knowledge which arise in the *Theaetetus* and their intertextual relationship with the arguments presented in the *Apology*, my analysis of this intertextual relationship is part of a wider study of memory and its relationship with political philosophy in the text as a whole. Secondly, and relatedly, while politics plays no part in Giannopoulou's exploration, politics is the very reason why I sought to bring the frame of the *Apology* to the *Theaetetus*. After all, it is in the *Apology* that Socrates' philosophy is seen in its most political setting and where its political effects and possibilities are most obvious. Thirdly, because Giannopoulou is interested in Socratism, albeit mediated by Plato, her study is not concerned with what the relationship of the *Apology* and the *Theaetetus* might reveal about Plato himself as a political philosopher, a teacher and a writer, whereas that forms an important part of my work here, especially towards the end of the chapter. It is worth mentioning here also that this chapter is not concerned with the sophists themselves, however that disparate group might be categorised, but rather with Plato's attempts to demarcate them as a group in opposition to Socrates.⁶⁶⁶

For this study, the most influential scholarship was that which united analyses of form and function in Plato's writing. Ruby Blondell's examination of character and the dialogic

⁶⁶³ Burnyeat (1990), Chappell (2004), Fine (1979).

⁶⁶⁴ Giannopoulou (2013).

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 2.

⁶⁶⁶ Goldhill (1986), pp. 222-33.

form in the *Theaetetus* (among other dialogues) was important in informing my approach. Here, she argues that the artificial boundary traditionally constructed in Platonic criticism leads to reductive analyses. In doing so, she suggests that Plato's use of characterisation 'is integral both to the "literary" enterprise of representing human interaction in spoken dialogue, and the "philosophical" enquiry into the best form of human life and behaviour.'⁶⁶⁷ Also significant was John Henderson's study of the effects of the various framing devices in the *Symposium*, which had specific relevance for thinking through the levels of framing and memory at work in the *Theaetetus*.⁶⁶⁸ Although Henderson's analysis does not address memory and testimony as such, his analysis looks in detail at the ways in which the speakers—Apollodorus in particular—mediates memory, the way that narratives are authorised or not by the text as a whole and the effects that all of this has on the reader.

Also influential were scholarly works addressing the relationship between Socratic and Platonic philosophy, especially with a view to their didactic methods. Foremost among these was David Sedley's extended examination of Socrates' use of the 'midwife' metaphor to describe his teaching. In this, like Blondell, he links the form of the dialogue to its philosophical content. Here the form he discusses is Plato's reversion to an 'early' style of aporetic dialogue with a 'semi-historical' Socrates, while the content is, he suggests, a demonstration of the way in which Socratic philosophy metaphorically gave birth to Platonism.⁶⁶⁹ Christopher Long's analysis of the political practice of reading Plato was also important in thinking about Socratism and Platonism.⁶⁷⁰ Long's approach compares and contrasts the practices of Socratic speaking and Platonic writing and stresses the experience of reading Plato alone and in a group.

c) Memory

Finally, Chapter 3 builds on work in the field relating to memory in Plato's dialogues. Anne Whitehead discusses the Wax Tablet image at some length in her guide to prominent thinkers and ideas in the field of memory studies, while Sophie Grace Chappell has

⁶⁶⁷ Blondell (2002), p. 2. Other important works on the form of the dialogue were: Ford (2008), Frede (1992), Goldhill (2008), Griswold (1988) and Kahn (1996).

⁶⁶⁸ Henderson (2000), pp. 287-324.

⁶⁶⁹ Sedley (2004), for an outline of his approach see pp. 1-37.

⁶⁷⁰ Long (2014).

written on the use of memory in Platonic philosophy specifically, also focusing on the Wax Tablet in the *Theaetetus*. My work departs from both of these studies, however, in seeing memory at the centre of the *Theaetetus* and in tying the image of the Wax Tablet into my analysis of the wider theme. This analysis also encompasses cultural memory, as triggered by the text, rather than focusing purely on the psychological process of remembering and its relationship to false belief, in the context of the passage.

Before moving on from this discussion of Platonic criticism and memory studies, it is necessary to address Plato's theory of recollection and the Forms, which both Whitehead and Chappell also explore in some detail. To do full justice to this subject, I would need to undertake another thesis, but the arguments must be laid out in broad terms as the understanding of memory in this chapter is different from that in the rest of the thesis as a result. Baldly speaking then, scholarship is deeply divided over whether the *Theaetetus* addresses recollection and the Forms or not. Some, such as Cornford, argue that it does. He suggests that Socrates' stance as midwife, which I will discuss more fully below (in section 3.3) draws directly on the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*. In these dialogues, Socrates outlines his theory that all knowledge is recollection of the immortal truths which one's soul sees before it becomes embodied and mortal.⁶⁷¹ MacDowell's sceptical response is that there is nothing in the theory of recollection which corresponds to Socrates' sterility of knowledge, a central part of his pose as midwife, and that the offspring he discusses in the *Theaetetus* are more likely to be 'wind-eggs' than truths.⁶⁷² This debate is clearly important for my thesis as the Forms represent the notion of universal truth at the core of memory, an idea which I have been anxious to disavow.

My own reading of this issue is that the midwife image does indeed gesture towards the theory of recollection and the idea that asking the right questions could eventually yield memory of the 'Truth,' as expressed in the *Meno*. However, I would qualify this reading using the *Phaedrus* and thereby suggest that Plato's theory is closer to modern memory theory than the *Meno* or the *Phaedo* might allow. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates speaks of the immortal soul which flies up into the heavens and while there it:

καθορᾷ μὲν αὐτὴν δικαιοσύνην, καθορᾷ δὲ σωφροσύνην, καθορᾷ δὲ ἐπιστήμην, οὐχ ἧ γένεσις πρόσσεστιν, οὐδ' ἢ ἐστὶν ἕτερα ἐν ἑτέρῳ οὔσα ὧν

⁶⁷¹ Particularly, *Meno* 81c-86b.

⁶⁷² For a useful overview of this debate, see Chappell (2004), p. 46.

ἡμεῖς νῦν ὄντων καλοῦμεν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐν τῷ ὄντι ὅτι ἐστὶν ὄν ὄντως ἐπιστήμην
οὔσαν.⁶⁷³

looks on justice itself, looks on temperance, looks on knowledge, not such knowledge as has a beginning and varies as it is associated with one or another of the things we call realities, but that which abides in the real eternal absolute.⁶⁷⁴

In this the *Phaedrus* is in line with those texts which posit the existence of such absolute truths.

The mortal soul, meanwhile, strives to follow the immortals but although the best of us might raise our heads into the upper region and catch a glimpse of this truth (ἀλήθεια), we cannot rise up properly. So, the mortal soul ‘fails to see, and through some mischance is filled with forgetfulness (λήθη) and evil (κακία) and grows heavy (βαρύνω), and when it has grown heavy, loses its wings and falls to earth ...’⁶⁷⁵ In this way, Socrates suggests that while these absolute truths exist and while it is possible that through his exertions the philosopher *may*, in time, recollect them perfectly, memories of these truths are, for mortals, always unstable, incoherent and inadequate. Our recollections are, therefore, always part of a process of trying to get closer to the original perfection but are always also flawed. To address MacDowell’s doubts: Socrates’ sterility of knowledge lies in his acceptance that this is so, that he has no knowledge of these absolutes. The fact that all the births discussed are ‘phantoms’ comes down to the fact that he, and all of his students, are mortals and while Socratic dialectic may get them closer to the truth, it is inevitably, always a process of refining and of moving slowly towards that truth, rather than grasping it with both hands.

This subsection has established the chapter’s place in the wide sweep of critical writing on Plato and on the *Theaetetus* specifically, at the same time setting out the main critical arguments which underlie my analysis. These are: that Plato’s philosophy engages with Athenian democracy at the levels of both content and form and that reading the *Theaetetus* through the frame of the *Apology* serves to elucidate Plato’s political philosophy and in connection with this, his role as a teacher and a writer. It has established that the chapter will consider the dialogue’s memory of and engagement with

⁶⁷³ Pl. *Phdr.* 247d-e.

⁶⁷⁴ The translation, as all other translations of the *Phaedrus*, is adapted (by me) from Fowler (1925).

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 248c.

not only the *Apology* but also other genres such as tragedy. Finally, it has proposed a more nuanced reading of the Forms which, though tangential to the *Theaetetus* in some ways, will be seen to have a significant impact on this reading.

3.2 Philosopher vs politician

This section focuses on the Digression of the *Theaetetus* as a passage which directly recalls the *Apology* in a number of ways and in so doing, serves to establish Socrates' position with regard to philosophy and politics. In the Digression, Socrates compares the man brought up around politics to the man brought up with philosophy. This passage has been construed by some as representative of Plato's vision of the 'gulf' between politics and philosophy in the wake of Socrates' death, as discussed by Hannah Arendt (see p. 179). Indeed, if this comparison is taken at face value, it is easy to see the divide between politics and philosophy and Socrates' reasons for marking it out. However, some scholars such as Rachel Rue and Avi Mintz, have used the *Apology* to demonstrate the idea that Socrates himself does not correspond to the figure of the philosopher in the Digression.⁶⁷⁶ Rather, he represents a 'middle way' between the two extremes he draws here. This chapter builds on this idea but uses memory of the *Apology* to suggest that Plato is, in the Digression, offering another defence of Socrates' conception of philosophical citizenship. As in the *Apology*, he draws a distinction not just between politics and philosophy but between different philosophical schools, one—sophism—which genuinely corrupts the political landscape and the other—Socratism—which improves it.

In the Digression, Socrates explores the differences between those 'who have knocked around since their youth in the courts and other such places' and those 'brought up on philosophy and similar pursuits' (*οἱ ἐν δικαστηρίοις καὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις ἐκ νέων κυλινδούμενοι* and *τοὺς ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ καὶ τῇ τοιαύτῃ διατριβῇ τετραμμένους*), henceforth, the politician and the philosopher.⁶⁷⁷ In the course of this discussion, he

⁶⁷⁶ Rue (1993), whole article but especially 75-91. and Mintz (2011), pp. 663-64.

⁶⁷⁷ Pl. *Tht.* 172c-d. While Plato's Socrates does refer to the man brought up on philosophy as the 'philosopher', he doesn't ever refer to the other as a 'politician' or any other such neat term. For ease, I will refer to him as the 'politician' here but on the understanding that this is a citizen involved in the public, political life of the city rather than, say, an orator or a sophist. The quotations from Pl. *Tht* are from Duke et al (1995); translations are a synthesis of Levett, revised by Burnyeat (1992) and Rowe (2015) and have been adapted by me.

details the flaws of the former, whom he views as ‘slaves’ (*οϊκέται*),⁶⁷⁸ constantly ‘urged on [in their speech] by the flow of the water [in the clock]’ (*κατεπείγει γὰρ ὕδωρ ρέον*);⁶⁷⁹ they flatter (*θωπεῦσαι*),⁶⁸⁰ use deceit (*ψεῦδος*) and ‘injure each other in retaliation’ (*τὸ ἀλλήλους ἀνταδικεῖν*).⁶⁸¹ The latter, meanwhile, he describes as ‘brought up in freedom and leisure’ (*ὁ μὲν τῷ ὄντι ἐν ἐλευθερίᾳ τε καὶ σχολῇ τετραμμένον*)⁶⁸² and removed from the *polis* in all but body, while his mind ‘flies everywhere’ (*πανταχῇ πέτεται*).⁶⁸³ He is unable to find his way to ‘the assembly ... the law court, the council chamber, or any other of the city’s public meeting places’ (*ἀγορὰν ... δικαστήριον ἢ βουλευτήριον ἢ τι κοινὸν ἄλλο τῆς πόλεως συνέδριον*), the public spaces of the city, where the citizen performs his political duty.⁶⁸⁴ Furthermore, he is uninterested, even in his dreams, in ‘political clubs striving after public office, meetings, dinners’ (*σπουδαὶ δὲ ἑταυριῶν ἐπ’ ἀρχὰς καὶ σύνοδοι καὶ δεῖπνα*), those unofficial, elite settings in the city where connections were made and political knowledge shared.⁶⁸⁵ This philosopher, he says:

*ἰδίᾳ τε συγγιγνόμενος ὁ τοιοῦτος ἐκάστῳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ, ὅπερ ἀρχόμενος ἔλεγον, ὅταν ἐν δικαστηρίῳ ἢ που ἄλλοθι ἀναγκασθῇ περὶ τῶν παρὰ πόδας καὶ τῶν ὀφθαλμοῖς διαλέγεσθαι, γέλωτα παρέχει.*⁶⁸⁶

whether he’s dealing with someone in private or in public, as I said at the beginning, as soon as he is forced, in a law court or somewhere else, to hold a conversation about things by his feet or before his very eyes, makes a laughing stock of himself.

Yet, he seems to laud the figure of the philosopher also, saying that ‘flight [from the *polis*] makes us like god, as far as is possible, and becoming god is to become just and holy with wisdom’ (*φυγὴ δὲ ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν· ὁμοίωσις δὲ δίκαιον καὶ ὄσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γενέσθαι*).⁶⁸⁷

It is possible to take this discussion at face value, arguing that the philosopher’s ineffectiveness at speaking in political situations such as in the law court offers an apology

⁶⁷⁸ Pl. *Tht.* 172d.

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 172e.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 173a.

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 173a.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*, 175d-e.

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*, 173e.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 173d.

⁶⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 173d.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 174b-c.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 176b.

of its own for Socrates' failure to convince the Athenian jury of his innocence. The philosopher is unable to share the concerns or communicate in the language of the city. David Sedley reads the passage as being in this apologist tradition.⁶⁸⁸ He has also seen the philosopher's freedom from the city, his 'flying' mind which maps the earth and the heavens and his closeness to god, as a precursor to Plato's own version of philosophy represented in the *Republic*.⁶⁸⁹ He argues very persuasively that the 'life of pure intellectual endeavour' as more 'godlike' than 'one devoted to civic virtue' was a doctrine to which Plato subscribed. In addition, he suggests that the language relating to the philosopher potentially managing to 'drag someone upwards' with him (*ὅταν δέ γέ τινα αὐτός ... ἐλκύσῃ ἄνω*)⁶⁹⁰ connects the passage directly to the Cave passage in the *Republic*.⁶⁹¹ To summarise rather bluntly, in this, the philosopher frees himself from his shackles, drags himself out of the Cave and travels up to the heavens where he finds the Forms before realising that he must travel back to the Cave in order to be of benefit to its other inhabitants. In this way, according to Sedley, Plato illustrates, for the alert scholar, the extent to which Socrates' philosophy has influenced him and the way that he developed his own philosophy from where Socrates left off.⁶⁹²

However, the pervasiveness of Socratic irony in Plato's characterisation of Socrates, together with the memory of the portrait drawn of Socrates in the *Apology*, makes a wholehearted acceptance of this reading difficult. Unlike the philosopher of the Digression, Socrates is of the city. At the start of the *Apology*, he instructs the jury not to be surprised or to make a disturbance 'if they hear him making [his] defence using the same words with which [he has] been accustomed to speak both in the market place at the money-changers tables, where many of you have heard me and elsewhere' (*ἐὰν διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν λόγων ἀκούητέ μου ἀπολογουμένου δι' ὧν περ εἴωθα λέγειν καὶ ἐν ἀγορᾷ ἐπὶ τῶν τραπεζῶν, ἵνα ὑμῶν πολλοὶ ἀκρήκόασι, δαὶ ἄλλοθι*).⁶⁹³ This suggests that he is a familiar figure in the public spaces of Athens. In the *Theaetetus*, he is at the gymnasium—a civic institution; he is familiar enough with the prominent citizens of Athens to know

⁶⁸⁸ Sedley (2004), p. 66.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 70. It is widely accepted that the *Republic* is the earlier text but as discussed above (p. 186), Sedley suggests that the *Theaetetus* functions as an illustration of where Platonism departs from Socratism.

⁶⁹⁰ Pl. *Tht.* 175b.

⁶⁹¹ Sedley (2004), p. 67 and p. 63 respectively. Pl. *Resp.* VII. 514a-520a.

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*: the whole work details Socrates' influence on Plato and Plato's treatment of this influence in the *Theaetetus*.

⁶⁹³ Pl. *Ap.* 17c. The quotations from Pl. *Ap.* are from Emlyn-Jones and Preddy (2017). Translations are based on the same volume used together with Fowler (1966) and have been adapted by me.

that Theaetetus' father was Euphronius of Sunium, a well-respected man who left a significant legacy; and there is no suggestion that he will not be able to find his way to the law-court from the gymnasium when the dialogue ends.

In spite of this, we know from the *Apology* that while Socrates may be 'of the city', he is not 'of the *polis*' in the conventional sense. Unlike the philosopher of the Digression, we know from other dialogues that he is familiar with elite settings such as symposia yet, in the *Apology*, Socrates must still defend himself against the perception that he takes no role in the active political life of the city. His accusers have some grounds for this perception: while he may know where these institutions are, he does not speak before the assembly and we know from the opening of the dialogue that this is his first time speaking before the law court.⁶⁹⁴ In view of this, Socrates may seem even worse than his philosopher: he is not ignorant of the *polis*, lost in philosophical thought, but deliberately eschews political life. In this, Thucydides' discussion of Antiphon resonates uncomfortably. He too was 'a man who never came before the *dēmos* nor before any other *agōn* if he could help it' (ἐς μὲν δῆμον οὐ παριῶν οὐδ' ἐς ἄλλον ἀγῶρα ἐκούσιος οὐδένα).⁶⁹⁵ As Barker suggests, Thucydides' attitude to Antiphon is reflective of his concern about the suppression of debate under the Four Hundred in Athens.⁶⁹⁶ This resonant comparison is perhaps suggestive of Socrates' own alleged association with the tyrants.⁶⁹⁷

Socrates' defence in the *Apology* goes some way to exculpate him. At first, like the philosopher, Socrates states that his philosophical occupation allows him 'no leisure to attend to any of the affairs of the state worth mentioning, or of my own' (καὶ ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς ἀσχολίας οὔτε τι τῆς πόλεως πρᾶξαί μοι σχολή γέγονεν ἄξιον λόγου οὔτε τῶν οἰκείων).⁶⁹⁸ This is partly interesting because of its wording. While Socrates stresses here that he is without leisure (ἀσχολία), the philosopher's leisure (σχολή) is the very thing which, in the Digression, he seems to prize most. In a way, this seems to confirm the gulf between politics and philosophy in that Socrates prioritises his time to discuss philosophy over time he might spend in political involvement. However, although he seems to put his

⁶⁹⁴ Carter (1986) discusses those apolitical Athenians who abstained from political life but as I suggest here, Socrates did not abstain apolitically but rather practiced politics differently. His use of 'political' rhetoric is discussed in detail below, pp. 197-98.

⁶⁹⁵ Thuc. 8.68.1, trans. Barker (2009), p. 224.

⁶⁹⁶ Barker (2009), pp. 224-25.

⁶⁹⁷ As discussed in Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.29-38.

⁶⁹⁸ Pl. *Ap.* 23b.

failure to speak in the assembly or to hold public office down to the time taken up by his philosophical practice, he states later that ‘if [he] had gone into politics long ago, [he] should, long ago, have been put to death’ (εἰ ἐγὼ πάλαι ἐπεχείρησα πράττειν τὰ πολιτικά πράγματα, πάλαι ἂν ἀπολώλη).⁶⁹⁹ The reason he gives for this is that ‘no man will save his life who nobly opposes you or any other populace and prevents many unjust and illegal things from happening in the state’ (οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ὅστις ἀνθρώπων σωθήσεται οὔτε ὑμῖν οὔτε ἄλλω πλήθει οὐδενὶ γνησίως ἐναντιούμενος καὶ διακωλύων πολλὰ ἄδικα καὶ παράνομα ἐν τῇ πόλει γίνεσθαι).⁷⁰⁰ He holds himself back from the political realm because his opposition to popular policy on the grounds of justice and legality would have got him killed long before now. Therefore, unlike the philosopher in the Digression, the Socrates of the *Apology* is not abstracted from political life, his head filled only with loftier thoughts: he is held back from active participation in the political life of Athens because of his own, more honest, political convictions.

There is also the suggestion that these ‘loftier thoughts’ to which Socrates devotes his time are not themselves totally removed from the political realm and that this discussion of philosophy which he privileges over the practice of politics might be a civic duty of its own. While Plato’s Socrates may not ‘attend to any of the affairs of the state’ in the conventional sense of the political involvement of the Athenian citizen, he appears to practise, in his position as Athens’ gadfly, a kind of philosophical citizenship predicated on the moral foundations of justice and truth to himself.⁷⁰¹ The reason that his philosophy allows him no leisure for his own affairs or those of the city is not that he is sitting chatting idly with friends, but that he is ‘always busy in [their] interest, approaching each of [them] individually like a father or elder brother and persuading [them] to concern [themselves] with virtue’ (τὸ δὲ ὑπέτερον πράττειν ἀεὶ, ἰδίᾳ ἐκάστῳ προσιότα ὥσπερ πατέρα ἢ ἀδελφὸν πρεσβύτερον πείθοντα ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἀρετῆς).⁷⁰² Socrates sees his mission as motivated by a god or spirit which comes to him and he defends his decision to ‘go about and interfere in other people’s affairs to give this advice in private’ (ἐγὼ ἰδίᾳ μὲν ταῦτα συμβουλεύω περιῶν καὶ πολυπραγμονῶ) on these grounds.⁷⁰³ At first, this seems to be his justification for not offering his advice publicly, to the city. However, he

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid, 31d.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid, 31e.

⁷⁰¹ For an excellent discussion of this see Farenga (2006), pp. 471-535. See also Villa (2001).

⁷⁰² Pl. *Ap.* 31b.

⁷⁰³ Ibid, 31c.

goes on to give the additional, rational reason that ‘he who in actual fact fights on behalf of what is just must, if he is going to survive even for a short time, do so in his capacity as a private citizen and not as a public servant’ (ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστι τὸν τῷ ὄντι μαχόμενον ὑπὲρ τοῦ δικαίου, καὶ εἰ μελλεὶ ὀλίγον χρόνον σωθήσεσθαι, ἰδιωτεύειν ἀλλὰ μὴ δημοσιεύειν).⁷⁰⁴ On the one hand, this is clearly critical of the corrupt democratic institutions of Athens because it suggests that for all their supposed celebration of free and frank speech, they cannot brook opposition. On the other, as I will explore below, it illustrates an alternative way of practising politics.

All in all, then, Socrates’ actions here could well be described as political in that they pertain to the enactment of justice in the city. Where they differ from behaviours which the Athenians could accept as ‘political’ is that they are private and happen outside of the institutions of democracy. He depicts himself enacting a kind of philosophical citizenship by stinging Athenian individuals into being their best selves. In so doing, he says that he is attached to the city as a gadfly is to a horse. Just as a gadfly stings a sluggish (νωθῆς) horse which needs to wake up (ἐγείρω), so Socrates ‘urges [them] and reproaches each one of [them] and never stop[s] landing on [them] all day and everywhere’ (πείθων καὶ ὀνειδίζων ἕνα ἕκαστον οὐδὲν παύομαι τὴν ἡμέραν ὅλην πανταχοῦ προσκαθίζων).⁷⁰⁵ He is a constant irritating reminder that their thoughts and behaviours should be informed by truth and justice. What is more interesting here is that he jumps from speaking about himself as a gadfly ‘attached by the god to the **city**’ (ὁ θεὸς ἐμέ τῇ πόλει προστεθηκέναι) to speaking of stinging the people as **individuals** (each one, ἕκαστος).⁷⁰⁶ As discussed above, his mission does not involve working publicly with the people as a whole, but rather with individuals. In this way, he hopes to create an honest *polis* via a collection of honest individuals, empowered to act with integrity for the benefit of the city.⁷⁰⁷

Reading the *Theaetetus* with memory of this part of the *Apology* also brings into doubt the idea, suggested forcefully through the centuries, that Plato and Socrates did not in fact believe in Athenian democracy. The *Republic*—where Plato’s Socrates imagines a world of philosopher kings—is often cited as evidence of this view.⁷⁰⁸ The *Theaetetus*,

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid, 32a.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid, 30e-31a.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid, 30e.

⁷⁰⁷ Long (2014), p. 3.

⁷⁰⁸ Ober, for example, argues that by the time of the *Republic*, Plato has moved from discussing the ‘democratic-polis-as-it-is’ to the ‘polis-as-it-should-be’ (1998), p. 212.

read with memory of the *Apology*, does not bear this reading out for two reasons. On the one hand, when Socrates compares the city to a horse in need of a gadfly, he makes a point of stressing that there is nothing innately wrong with the horse. Indeed, he says that it is 'well-bred' (γενναῖος) and merely 'rather sluggish because of its size' (ὑπὸ μεγέθους δὲ νωθεστέρω).⁷⁰⁹ This suggests also that Socrates sees nothing wrong—and much right—with the *polis*. On the other hand, while it is true that in the Digression, Socrates separates the freedom of the individual mind of the philosopher from the politician who must always flatter and pander to his slave-master, the *Apology* once again offers a way of bringing these poles closer together. In stinging individual citizens with his philosophy, each person who makes up part of the *demos* has the same freedom as the philosopher in the Digression and together—as a collection of self-reflective individuals, rather than a mob—they can act as a more effective political force. This definition of politics is not related to a support for democracy or otherwise but suggests that *any* political participation should be predicated on personal integrity. Philosophy is the means by which the citizen can explore what such integrity means.

There is clearly some overlap here too between the ways in which Socrates and Plato practise philosophy. Just as Socrates approaches individuals and attempts, through dialogue, to bring them to their best selves, so Plato's writing serves a similar purpose with his readers. I will address Plato's teaching in much more detail as the chapter progresses, in the imagery of the midwife (section 3.3) and in my study of how his anxiety about prose as a genre informs his guidance about reading (section 3.5). In brief, though, my argument is that Plato's readers, like Socrates' interlocutors, are individuals and there is a definite sense in which Plato encourages his reader to engage with his text, replicating or improving on his characters' engagement with Socrates. This is especially so in a text like the *Apology* where we know that, in Plato's terms, the (mostly silent) interlocutor failed so dramatically. Long describes this overlap between Socratic and Platonic political didacticism, very usefully, in terms of *topos* and *graphein*.⁷¹⁰ For him, *topos* is the space which opens between Socrates and the interlocutor, a space in which Socratic dialogue is *shown* to have a profound political effect; *graphein* is the space which opens between the Platonic text and the reader, a space in which the reader *experiences*

⁷⁰⁹ Pl. *Ap.* 30e.

⁷¹⁰ Long (2014), p. x.

that transformative political effect. Although my analysis differs from his in its details, this model holds true for my thinking here.

Other evidence from the *Apology* and the Digression suggests that Plato, via Socrates, is not only proposing a new practice of philosophical politics but deliberately setting up this new practice in opposition to a public sphere which he sees as having been dominated by sophism. Plato explicitly addresses this notion in the *Gorgias*, where Socrates describes himself as the only one in the city to conduct ‘true’ politics because he speaks ‘toward the best, not toward the most pleasant’ (πρὸς τὸ βέλτιστον, οὐ πρὸς τὸ ἡδιστον).⁷¹¹ Where Socrates defines himself against the sophists in the *Apology*, his words serve two purposes: they simultaneously blame the sophists for the corruption besetting the Athenian political establishment and demonstrate his remove from the sophistic movement. This is important as in the *Apology*, Socrates blames his detractors for indoctrinating the people of Athens against him by falsely associating him with the sophists, the people popularly held to prioritise rhetorical victories over justice or the good of the city.

In Rachel Rue’s reading of the Digression, she suggests that the politician represents the Protagorean, sophistic orators of the Athenian political world and further, that as such, the Digression is integral to the surrounding discussion about Protagoras and his dictum that man is ‘the measure of all things’ (πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον) in the main dialogue.⁷¹² Undoubtedly, there is much in Socrates’ characterisation of the political men which corresponds to contemporary thinking about the sophists and it seems likely, at least, that they have had some form of sophistic education. Socrates speaks of them as always being bound to speak in ‘contests’ (ἀγῶνες), which leads to their ‘knowing how to wheedle their master with words’ (ἐπιστάμενοι τὸν δεσπότην λόγῳ τε θωπεῦσαι).⁷¹³ They have knowledge of rhetoric and use it to ‘wheedle’ instead of winning their arguments with justice and the truth. Jon Hesk discusses the same kind of commonly held prejudices about sophism in the speeches of Aeschines and Demosthenes, particularly the idea that the ‘rhetorical activism’ of the sophist is ‘deceitful and harmful to the polis.’ This is so because sophistry is perceived as self-serving and as ‘lacking an ideological priority of

⁷¹¹ Pl. *Grg.* 521d-e. For a discussion of this passage in connection with Socrates’ politics see Long (2014), pp. 10-13.

⁷¹² Pl. *Tht.* 152e. Rue (1993), p. 91. This reading that equates Protagoras with all sophists is informed by Kramer (1976) and is equally influential in Mintz (2011), Giannopoulou (2013) and this chapter.

⁷¹³ Pl. *Tht.* 173a.

commitment to the demos.⁷¹⁴ Its commitment is, like the politician's in the Digression, to the argument rather than to any conception of communal benefit.

Rue's discussion still speaks of these Protagoreans as political orators, counterposed to the philosopher. I suggest, rather, that it is important to bear in mind that Protagoras himself was not a politician but a philosopher, a sophist, who offered a sophistic form of philosophical education. The way in which the *Theaetetus* remembers the *Apology* shows that much of Socrates' effort in his defence is directed at distancing himself and his own 'teaching' from sophism—a philosophy which, he implies, corrupts the *polis*—and his own political philosophy which enhances it. Therefore, one might see the Digression as a contrast between two philosophical schools and their relative effects on the *polis*.

That Socrates' accusers in the *Apology* do associate him with sophism and that he does attempt to distance himself from this corruptive philosophy can be seen in his discussion of the 'slander' (*διαβολή*) of his accusers,⁷¹⁵ in his 'rhetoric of anti-rhetoric' and in his characterisation of his own 'teaching,' a term which he disputes.⁷¹⁶ Firstly, most of those who 'slander' him are, he says, unknown, but he refers both implicitly and explicitly to Aristophanes—that 'writer of comedies' (*κωμωδοποιός*)—who characterised Socrates as using just such specious sophistry in his play, *Clouds*.⁷¹⁷ He even goes on to describe the play which has 'someone called Socrates swinging around there claiming that he's treading on air and uttering a lot of other nonsense about which I have no understanding great or small' (*Σωκράτη τινὰ ἐκεῖ περιφερόμενον, φάσκοντά τε ἀεροβατεῖν καὶ ἄλλην πολλὴν φλυαρίαν φλυαροῦντα, ὧν ἐγὼ οὐδεν οὔτε μέγα οὔτε μικρὸν πέρι ἐπαῖω*).⁷¹⁸ Though we cannot take Aristophanes' comic depiction of Socrates at face value there is clearly enough truth to the picture to make it recognisable to its original audience.⁷¹⁹ This is not to say that Socrates behaved like this but that this representation tallied with, or more probably exaggerated, the common perception of him. Layers of Socratic irony also suggest that we cannot completely accept Socrates' denial that the portrait is in any way accurate but what is more important here is that it shows him attempting to mark a

⁷¹⁴ Hesk (2000) pp. 211 and 216.

⁷¹⁵ He uses this word repeatedly: see e.g. *Ap.* 18d, 19b and 23a.

⁷¹⁶ The 'rhetoric of anti-rhetoric' is discussed in Hesk (2000), pp. 202-291.

⁷¹⁷ *Pl. Ap.* 18d.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19c.

⁷¹⁹ This reading of Aristophanes' historical value is influenced by Pelling (2000), pp. 123-40 and Robson (2009), pp. 162-87.

distinct difference between himself and the sophists on the grounds that the evidence uniting the two is both slanderous and ridiculous.

Secondly, Socrates opens his speech in the *Apology* by stressing his own unpolished speech in comparison to the fine words of his prosecutors. However, although Socrates' defence fails to convince the jury, this is demonstrably not because of any rhetorical incompetence on Socrates' part, another factor which differentiates him from the philosopher of the Digression who cannot speak in the language of the *polis*. He ascribes his unpolished speech to this being the 'first time [he has] come before the court' (*νῦν ἐγὼ πρῶτον ἐπὶ δικαστήριον ἀναβέθηκα*), a fact which makes him 'simply a stranger to the manner of speech' (*ἀτεχνῶς οὖν ξένως ἔχω τῆς ἐνθάδε λέξεως*).⁷²⁰ His speeches, he says are not 'made with fine phrases and words' (*καλλιπέομαι*), as his accusers' are;⁷²¹ rather, he says that '[they] will hear from [him] nothing but the truth' (*ὕμεις δέ μου ἀκούσεσθε πᾶσαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν*).⁷²² His testimony begins with a truth-formula similar to those discussed with regard to the *Odyssey* but here, the formula may be disingenuous: Socrates' speech is eloquent and persuasive and far from being the rambling of an amateur.

In Hesk's vocabulary, as discussed with reference to Hecuba in chapter 2, we could see Socrates' speech as epitomising the 'rhetoric of anti-rhetoric' and, indeed, it bears many of the hallmarks Hesk describes. Hesk discusses the idea that the orator often 'foregrounds his opponent as a technologist of performance,' an act which 'has a *strategic* and *antagonistic* quality.'⁷²³ By comparison, 'the forensic orators frequently represent themselves as innocent of various procedures associated with rhetorical training and preparation.'⁷²⁴ Hesk stresses 'that such claims to innocence or ignorance of rhetorical preparation describe a "dramatic fiction".'⁷²⁵ Clearly, a consideration of Socrates' possible disambiguation must weigh with an audience considering Socrates' possible guilt. I suggest, however, that if Plato's other texts serve as further testimony on Socrates' behalf, then this further testimony illustrates in a sustained way that Socratic political philosophy offers something genuinely different from sophism. In contrast to the

⁷²⁰ Pl. *Ap.* 17d.

⁷²¹ *Ibid.*, 17b.

⁷²² *Ibid.*, 17b.

⁷²³ Hesk (2000), p. 208.

⁷²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁷²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 208, quoting Ober (1989).

politician in the Digression, the *Theaetetus* shows Socrates as uninterested in contests of persuasion for their own sake. He does enter into a sort of imagined contest with Protagoras but the purpose is not to win: it is to draw out the repercussions of Protagoras' idea that 'man is the measure.' Socrates uses both competitive argument and collaborative dialogue in his pursuit of the truth.⁷²⁶ As Hesk writes, Plato appropriates rhetoric but subordinates it to his pursuit of 'the good.'⁷²⁷ For this reason, the deceit, flattery and injustice of the sophistic politician of the Digression are far from *this* 'political' being.

Thirdly, Socrates claims that not only does he not teach for money as the sophists such as Gorgias, Prodicus and Hippias do,⁷²⁸ but that the accusation that he teaches is part of the slander levelled against him by his detractors. As part of his exploration into wisdom, he says that he 'still goes around inquiring and seeking, in accordance with the god, who among our citizenry and outsiders I am to consider wise' (*νῦν περιῶν ζητῶ καὶ ἐρευνῶ κατὰ τὸν θεὸν καὶ τῶν ἀστῶν καὶ ξένων ἄν τινα οἶμαι σοφὸν εἶναι*).⁷²⁹ When he finds one who is not wise, he demonstrates that he is not.⁷³⁰ In turn 'the young men who follow [him]' (*οἱ νέοι μοι ἐπακολουθοῦντες*) delight (*χαίρω*) in this and imitate (*μιμέομαι*) him. Socrates denies that this is teaching in three ways. Firstly his whole premise is that he is the wisest of men because he knows nothing (20c-23c) and this implies that he has no wisdom to impart: he cannot teach because he knows nothing. Secondly, he states that these young men follow him of their own accord (*αὐτόματος*). There is no teacher-pupil contract involved, no money and no compulsion of any kind.⁷³¹ Thirdly, he says that the idea that this *is* teaching comes only from the bitterness and humiliation of those whom he and the young men interrogate. He states:

καὶ ἐπειδὴν τις αὐτοὺς ἐρωτᾷ ὅτι ποιῶν καὶ ὅτι διδάσκων, ἔχουσι μὲν οὐδὲν εἰπεῖν ἀλλ' ἀγνοοῦσιν, ἵνα δὲ μὴ δοκῶσιν ἀπορεῖν, τὰ κατὰ πάντων τῶν φιλοσοφούντων πρόχειρα ταῦτα λέγουσιν, ὅτι "τὰ μετέρα καὶ τὰ ὑπὸ γῆς" καὶ "θεοὺς μὴ νομίζειν" καὶ "τὸν ἥττω λόγον κρεῖττω ποιεῖν."⁷³²

⁷²⁶ Arendt, for example, explores this aspect of Socratic dialectic, (2005), pp. 15-18.

⁷²⁷ Hesk (2000), p. 218.

⁷²⁸ Pl. *Ap.* 19d-e.

⁷²⁹ Pl. *Ap.* 23b.

⁷³⁰ *Ibid.*, 23b.

⁷³¹ *Ibid.*, 23c.

⁷³² *Ibid.*, 23d.

And when anyone asks them what it is he does and what it is he teaches, they can't say and don't know, and in order not to appear to be lost for words, they trot out the stuff ready to hand against all philosophers, such as "the things in heaven and the things under the ground," and "not acknowledging the gods," and "he makes the weaker argument the stronger."

These clichés, thrown out by the humiliated in their chagrin, are those same accusations of sophistry which, as discussed above, Socrates claims have been levelled at him for many years by detractors such as Aristophanes. In this way, according to Socrates, these 'vehement slanders' (*σφοδρῶς διαβάλλοντες*) have gained a veneer of truth by the fact that they have 'filled' (*έμπεπλημι*) their listeners since 'long ago' (*πάλαι*).⁷³³

This section has shown, then, that memory of the *Apology* reveals Socrates' belief that the 'stunted and warped' (*σμικροὶ δὲ καὶ οὐκ ὀρθοὶ*) souls of the politicians in the Digression were made so by the influence of sophism. It also reveals the ways in which Plato distances his Socrates from sophism by associating him with a different kind of philosophical practice, one which offers the opportunity to cleanse rather than corrupt the political sphere. There are aspects of this practice represented in the figure of the philosopher of the Digression—his interest in pursuing truth in collaborative discussion, in particular—but Socrates differs from him in marked ways. In a stark contrast to Socrates, this philosopher not only lacks interest in the affairs of his fellow citizens but also lacks self-knowledge—he is not aware of what he does not know.⁷³⁴ As laid out above, Sedley argues that the differences between Socrates and the philosopher of the Digression are symbolic of the differences between Plato and his teacher, that the philosopher represents Platonic rather than Socratic philosophy.⁷³⁵ His reason for this is that the death of Socrates at the hands of political society has predicated the necessity for the removal of philosophy from the political realm. However, it must be hard to argue that lack of self-knowledge is ever a trait to be emulated. If anything, this philosopher reads, as Rue suggests, more like the clichéd figure from Aristophanes from which Socrates distances himself so vociferously in the *Apology*. Socrates even describes the philosopher's mind as flying off 'both under the earth' (*τᾶς τε γᾶς ὑπένερθε*) and 'above the heavens' (*οὐρανοῦ*

⁷³³ Ibid, 23e.

⁷³⁴ Pl. *Tht.* 173d-e: 'He doesn't even know that he doesn't know any of this', *καὶ ταῦτα πάντ' οὐδ' ὅτι οὐκ οἶδεν, οἶδεν.*

⁷³⁵ See discussion in this thesis, pp. 185 and 190.

ὁ ὑπερ) those very clichés which, he claims, the ignorant reach for when embarrassed by him.⁷³⁶

For this reason, I suggest that both the philosopher and the politician of the Digression represent aspects of the corruptive philosophy against which Socrates defends himself in the *Apology*. Platonic philosophy, expressed through the figure of Socrates, does not represent a ‘middle way’ between these two figures, as scholars such as Rue and Mintz suggest, but a totally different alternative.⁷³⁷ As discussed above, this is the mode of philosophical citizenship posited in the *Apology* and predicated on justice and truth to oneself. The *Theaetetus* builds on this idea by suggesting that politics is inseparable from philosophy: that because this philosophy represents the search for truth, it should inform, and will enhance, every part of life, politics included.

This chapter goes on to discuss the ways in which Plato communicates his philosophy in the *Theaetetus*, starting in the next section, with the simile of the midwife. In using this simile, Socrates does not seek to distance himself quite so radically from the figure of the teacher as this section has shown him doing in the *Apology*. He does, however, radically redefine the role of teacher in the light of his continuing assertion that he knows nothing. It is always difficult to guess at where the lines between the historical Socrates and Plato’s creation are drawn but it seems important to consider the fact that Plato was an established teacher in Athens even if Socrates did not classify himself as such. Therefore, the simile may be instructive for thinking about the ways in which Plato characterises his own teaching and for analysing the didacticism of his writing.

3.3 Socrates as Midwife (148e-151d)

In the image of the midwife, which Socrates uses to describe his philosophical dialectic method, Plato develops Socrates’ stance in the *Apology* of someone who knows nothing and teaches no one. In that respect, this section builds on the last, suggesting that memory of the *Apology* reveals the political reason why Socrates might have described himself in this way: again, as a way of creating distance from the sophist teachers of his day. It also suggests that one reason why Plato’s Socrates may have mellowed or nuanced

⁷³⁶ Ibid, 173e.

⁷³⁷ For the ‘middle way’ see Mintz (2011), p. 664 and Rue (1993), p.91.

his stance on teaching here is that while Socrates may or may not have been a teacher himself, Plato clearly was one and political concerns about the corrosive influence of a sophistic education were still rife. In my attempt to understand the ways in which Plato and his Socrates characterise their teaching, this chapter will consider the image of the midwife itself: why Plato may have selected this image; its possible relationship with actual midwifery at the time; and the ways it helps to distance Socrates from sophism.

Socrates' image of the mental midwife may be summarised as follows. Socrates tells us that his mother was a midwife and that he inherited his skill (*technē*) from her but that whereas midwives practice their art with the bodies of women, he acts as midwife to the souls of men.⁷³⁸ He says that his practice as a mental midwife has often been misunderstood and has led to others describing him as strange (*atopos*) and as reducing people to confusion (*aporia*).⁷³⁹ He states that like midwives, who are beyond their childbearing years, he is 'barren of wisdom' (*ἄγονός εἰμι σοφίας*).⁷⁴⁰ Like midwives too, he can recognise those who are pregnant, can bring on or ease labour pains and can induce delivery or abortion if it seems necessary.⁷⁴¹ He also claims that, like midwives, part of his skill is in matchmaking, though midwives fear the association between their matchmaking skill and procuring.⁷⁴² Finally, he claims that unlike midwives who are not required to judge the viability of babies in terms of whether they are true children (*alēthina*) or phantoms (*eidōla*), this is precisely his role with regard to the ideas which his patients deliver. The actual role he plays in Theaetetus' delivery, then, seems to consist of recognising pregnancy, knowing when an idea has come to term, asking questions or setting out options in order to bring on Theaetetus' delivery, and examining the product.⁷⁴³

It is impossible to assess exactly how closely this picture of ancient Greek midwifery conforms to the actual practice at the time because the sources are so elusive on the subject. As Helen King points out, the *Theaetetus* itself is 'the main non-medical source' for midwifery in the Hippocratic age and the medical sources raise more questions than they answer about the *technē* of midwifery or, indeed, whether such a thing even

⁷³⁸ Pl. *Tht.* 149a and 150b.

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.*, 149a.

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 149b-c and 150c.

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 149c-d.

⁷⁴² *Ibid.*, 149d-e.

⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*, 151b-c and 157d.

exists.⁷⁴⁴ With regard to the *Theaetetus* as a source, King suggests that the boy's complete lack of awareness about midwives' skills in matchmaking may indicate that this is a complete fabrication. She also uses Soranus' *Gynaecology* (with caveats about the use of this as a source) to question Socrates' statement that midwives have necessarily had children themselves and are past their childbearing years.⁷⁴⁵ There are three aspects of this thorny issue which, I suggest, are worth exploring further in order to make sense of Socrates' use of this image within my framework of memory and politics. The first is the issue of the midwife's *technē* alongside of Socrates' declared sterility of knowledge. The second is the active role which Socrates plays in the process of delivery and the third is his association of midwifery with the (mis)conception by others that he is *atopos*. In these three areas, I suggest, Socrates either amplifies aspects of actual midwifery or creates them for his own purposes and in each case, memory of the *Apology* and his association with sophistry, discussed above, is instructive for thinking about why he might have done so.

i) The technē of midwifery and Socrates' sterility

As mentioned above, the issue of whether a *technē* of midwifery existed in the fifth and fourth centuries BC has been the subject of much scholarly debate. The word implies a recognisable skillset that could be taught and learned and while some scholars, such as Rebecca Flemming, draw on Soranus' *Gynaecology* to argue that such a thing existed, others, such as King, question his reliability and wonder whether Soranus may have sought to institute such a *technē* himself.⁷⁴⁶ In addition to this, while some suggest that levels of literacy among midwives were good enough that they could have read and learned the theory of their art for themselves—Demand, for example, suggests that the Hippocratic text *Diseases of Women* was aimed at midwives—others are more dubious.⁷⁴⁷ Maurizio Bettini, perhaps most convincingly, speculates that '[t]here was a spectrum of midwifery', with Soranus' 'scientific' professionals at one end and the 'folkloric' old

⁷⁴⁴ King (1998), quotation on p. 177, discussion of medical sources, pp. 177-78.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 181, drawing on Sor. *Gyn.* I.ii (trans. Owsei, 1991). Soranus states that the ideal midwife does not necessarily need to have had children herself whereas Socrates tells us that only women who have experienced childbirth could understand the skills required.

⁷⁴⁶ Flemming (2007), p. 261 and King (1998), p. 176.

⁷⁴⁷ Demand (1994), p. 66 and King (1998), p. 178.

women educated only in traditional practices at the other.⁷⁴⁸ That there was some kind of *technē* seems likely, therefore, but that it was widespread, particularly among the lower classes, seems less so.

Plato's Socrates, however, stresses that his skill in midwifery is a *technē*, using the word in his description at 149a, 149c and 149e. His repeated use of *technē* suggests that whether this aspect of midwifery is factual or not, he amplifies this term and does so because it ties in to both the wider discussion with Theaetetus about the nature of knowledge in this dialogue, and his investigation into knowledge in the *Apology*.

Theaetetus' first answer to Socrates' question 'What is knowledge?' equates knowledge (*epistēmē*) in the abstract with the skills or knowledges (*technai*) of craftsmen. He gives examples of the knowledge of geometry and cobbling, saying that 'the skills that belong to other craftsmen – each one of those is nothing but knowledge' (*αἱ τῶν ἄλλων δημιουργῶν τέχναι, πᾶσαί τε καὶ ἐκάστη τούτῳ, οὐκ ἄλλο τι ἢ ἐπιστήμη εἶναι*).⁷⁴⁹ In addressing Theaetetus' misconception, Socrates draws a distinction between knowledge and skill. He states that 'He who is ignorant of what knowledge is won't understand what cobbling is, or indeed what any other expertise is' (*σκυτικὴν ἄρα οὐ ὃς ἂν ἐπιστήμην ἀγνοῆ, οὐδέ τινα ἄλλην τέχνην*). Cobbling and other forms of *technē* are merely types of knowledge and while the details of their craft can be known and taught, those details do not allow us to understand what knowledge is.⁷⁵⁰ As others have discussed, the distinction between *technē* and *epistēmē* allows Socrates to maintain his stance of one who knows nothing.⁷⁵¹ He has the *technē* of the mental midwife but can still be described as 'barren of wisdom' because his specific skillset does not equate to a wider, more abstract understanding.⁷⁵²

This sterility, associated with age, also seems to be an aspect of the midwife which Plato's Socrates either exaggerates or creates. King suggests that the model of the sterile older

⁷⁴⁸ Bettini (2013), pp. 176-77.

⁷⁴⁹ Pl. *Tht.* 146d.

⁷⁵⁰ In this sense, Socrates' labelling of midwifery as a *technē* alongside crafts such as cobbling very much accords with the positive analyses regarding the *technē* of actual midwives by Flemming and Demand. Flemming specifically classes midwives along with cobblers and shop workers while Demand categorises them as poorer citizens involved in crafts or trades: Flemming (2007), p. 259 and Demand (1994), p. 67. The *technē* of the physician, rather than the midwife, is a feature of the *Symposium*, where Aristophanes compares Apollo healing abilities to those of a cobbler or leatherworker (Pl. *Symp.* 190e-91a). The comparison is also found in the Hippocratic treatise *On Regimen*, 1.15.

⁷⁵¹ E.g. Sedley (2004), pp. 32-35.

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 33.

midwife may have been made up by Socrates to justify his own creation.⁷⁵³ Certainly, there seem to be contradictions in the passage where he explains why Artemis gave the gift of midwifery to older women. He says that Artemis herself was assigned the province of childbirth because she was barren but he goes on to say that mortals cannot acquire skills in things of which we have no experience and that, for this reason, she gives the gift to older women, past their childbearing years. This calls into question Socrates' whole premise of sterility: if Socrates is sterile and always has been so, why does he stress that actual midwives must have given birth in order to be able to learn their craft? In the light of this, some, such as the ancient Anonymous Commentator have suggested that Socrates' barrenness is merely a didactic tool, a pose of sterility designed to draw ideas from his pupils.⁷⁵⁴ Giannopoulou builds on this idea in her interpretation that Socrates' sterility represents 'the suppression of beliefs in the sense of definitions, and of theories for and against other people's definitions and their relevant beliefs.'⁷⁵⁵ For me, as for her, this deliberate suppression of beliefs is a conscious cultivation of openness to uncertainty which stands in stark contrast to the certainties of the sophists as explored in the *Theaetetus* in relation to Protagoras' theorem that man 'is the measure.' Protagorean relativism 'ensures the infallibility of all judgments for those holding them' while throughout the *Theaetetus*, but particularly in the Wax Tablet section which I addressed in the Introduction and will come to again below, Socrates is keen to stress the existence of false belief.⁷⁵⁶

As Giannopoulou also discusses, the passages concerning the differences between *technē* and *epistēmē* and Socrates' sterility clearly recall the *Apology*, where Socrates tells the story of his search for those wiser than himself, a search which includes the craftsmen of Athens. While these craftsmen 'knew a lot that [Socrates] did not' (*ἀλλ' ἠπίσταντο, ἃ ἐγὼ οὐκ ἠπιστάμην*) their expertise (*technē*) in this area led them to think themselves very wise (*σοφωτάτος*) in other respects as well.⁷⁵⁷ Here therefore, Socrates again draws that distinction between craft knowledge and wisdom and this distinction enables him to cast himself as wiser than all others in that he knows that he has no wisdom.

⁷⁵³ King (1998), p. 181.

⁷⁵⁴ PBerol. inv. 9782, LIV, discussed in Giannopoulou (2013), p. 12, citing Tarrant (1983) and Sedley (1996).

⁷⁵⁵ Giannopoulou (2013), p. 41.

⁷⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49. For other discussion of the Wax Tablet in this thesis, see Introduction, pp. 12-15 and below, section 3.4.

⁷⁵⁷ *Pl. Ap.* 22d.

For Giannopoulou, as for this chapter, the distinction which Socrates draws between *technē* and *epistēmē* is part of his attempt to distance himself from the sophists. However, while Giannopoulou's interest in this distinction is philosophical—she is concerned with the impact this has on the definition of knowledge as it evolves in the *Theaetetus*—my interest is primarily in the political ramifications as they relate to Socrates' didacticism. In the *Apology*, Socrates narrates his conversation with Callias, a man who has spent a great deal of money on sophists to educate his sons, about how he chooses a good teacher. Here, Socrates compares the training of horses to the education of men and indicates that the skills needed in each case might be comparable. He questions Callias, 'Who is there who has a knowledge of this kind of virtue, that of the human being and the citizen?' (τίς τῆς τοιαύτης ἀρετῆς, τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης τε καὶ πολιτικῆς, ἐπιστήμων ἐστίν;).⁷⁵⁸ There is more than a suggestion of Socratic irony even here, in the equation of horse training and philosophical education and there is more so when Socrates contemplates Callias' answer. He says to the court, 'I thought Evenus was lucky if he really did have such skill' (καὶ ἐγὼ τὸν Εὐήνον ἐμακάρισα εἰ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἔχοι ταύτην τὴν τέχνην), the implication clearly being that Socrates believed he did not. There also seems some irony in his use of the word *technē* here, as if knowledge of human virtue or excellence could actually be equated with the kind of knowledge needed to train horses. This memory of the *Apology*, recalled by the *Theaetetus*, may once more be seen to inform a reading of the later text. While Socrates distances himself not only from sophistry but also from teaching in the *Apology* (as discussed in section 3.2), the way in which he develops this distance between *technē* and *epistēmē* in the *Theaetetus* allows him to redefine his role slightly. As Blondell writes, it 'enables Socrates to acknowledge some kind of educational involvement with the young of Athens, while denying responsibility for both their ideas and their behaviour'.⁷⁵⁹ He can employ that specific *technē* of midwifery in order to draw out abstract philosophical ideas from others and in this way, cannot be held responsible for those ideas if they do not find favour with the political establishment. The particular way in which he characterises this 'educational involvement' brings me to the second thorny issue: the precise involvement of Socrates' midwife in the process of the birth.

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid, 20a-b; quotation from 20b.

⁷⁵⁹ Blondell (2002), p. 274.

ii) Socrates' role in delivery

What Socrates (or rather, Plato, via his character, Socrates) is at pains to show with the midwife image is that Socrates' input in the education of Athens' youth is at once crucially important and negligible. Memory of the *Apology* provides the political motivation for developing this model and given the continuing mistrust of sophistry into the fourth century BC, it may have been a defence which Plato needed to make on his own behalf also. This section will analyse exactly what Socrates' contribution to the youths' education is and in doing so, it will continue to develop the ideas explored above with regard to the *Apology*.

In thinking about Socrates' actual role in delivery, it is once again, difficult to look to historical midwives. Source information regarding the midwife's part in childbirth—the relative labour put in by gravida, foetus and midwife—is hard to come by and harder to interpret. Possibly, midwives were largely omitted from the Hippocratic corpus because the writers of the corpus were content to leave childbirth to the domain of women. Here, Soranus may be a more useful source than before, however, as in writing about the process of delivery, he is not so much dealing with the realm of ideals as he was in describing 'Who makes the best midwife?' Soranus writes of the midwife not only soothing the gravida with warm oil and reassuring her, he also writes of her gently dilating the cervix with her fingers, of instructing the gravida in how to breathe low into her body, and of gently manoeuvring the foetus in the birth canal with one hand while pushing down on the belly with the other.⁷⁶⁰ How close this may have been to common practice is unclear. In contrast to this image, where the midwife is seen to play a more active role in delivery than the gravida, the Hippocratic texts see the main work being done by the foetus who pecks its way out of the uterus as a chick emerges from an egg.⁷⁶¹ What seems certain is that Socrates, once again, either creates or emphasises an image of the midwife whose involvement in the birth process is greater rather than smaller. The questions he asks and the scenarios which he lays before his labouring youths are designed to tease out the ideas from their minds just as the midwife may have palpated the outside of the womb and gently drawn on the foetus to aid in its delivery.

⁷⁶⁰ Sor, *Gyn.* II.iii.

⁷⁶¹ Littré 7.530-32 as discussed in Hanson (1992).

If the midwife image is seen in the light of my articulation of memory and the Forms in the introduction to this chapter,⁷⁶² it may also be possible to see the relationship between Socrates and the labouring youth as similar to one between the therapist and his patient. According to this analogy, Socrates becomes the mediator of his student's memory of the Forms. He asks the questions which prompt his student's memories and he articulates and tests his answers. However, as discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, there is no such thing as transparent mediation of memory.⁷⁶³ The mediator, as the remembering subject, is always operating within political parameters and, for this reason, the line between the student's and the mediator's roles in the remembering process is blurred. It will always be unclear how far the student's memory is coloured by the mediator's questions and how far the mediator's articulation of that memory is coloured by his own experience as part of the political community. In the case of the therapist and patient, the False Memory hearings are a testament to this.⁷⁶⁴

In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates characterises his relationship with these labouring youths in such a way as to make his politically educative role explicit by using the term *sunousia*. *Sunousia*, or association, functioned as an elite practice in Athens and traditionally involved fathers selecting influential friends of their own for their sons to associate with from whom they would learn about the institutions and practices of the democratic city.⁷⁶⁵ Socrates says that 'those who associate' with him (*οἱ δ' ἐμοὶ συγγιγνώμενοι*) sometimes appear ignorant at first but as they continue to associate with him (*πάντες δὲ προϊούσης τῆς συνουσιας*), they make 'the most amazing progress' (*θαυμαστόν ὅσον ἐπιδιδόντες*), indicating that they learn as a direct result of his involvement in their education.⁷⁶⁶ One of the places with which *sunousia* was commonly associated was the gymnasium, the setting, also, for the *Theaetetus*. A further exploration of this setting illustrates more about the way in which the term *sunousia* is used in the dialogue and what it suggests about the political education of the developing citizen.

In classical Athens there were three gymnasia, all state-owned, which were perceived to play a significant role in the education of hoplites for the Athenian army.⁷⁶⁷ Clearly, this

⁷⁶² See my discussion of the Forms on pp. 187-89.

⁷⁶³ See Introduction to this thesis p. 18.

⁷⁶⁴ For a discussion of the False Memory hearings see Introduction to this thesis, p. 26.

⁷⁶⁵ Robb (1993), pp. 77-106, ref. to p. 82. There was also a sexual aspect to *sunousia* which Plato explores in the gymnasium setting of the *Charmides*. For a discussion see Goldhill (2002), pp. 88-89.

⁷⁶⁶ Pl. *Tht.* 150d.

⁷⁶⁷ Fisher (1998), pp. 84-104; Pappas (2016), p. 16.

education was partly physical but it was also social and political. The *gymnasia* were popular public meeting places where young Athenians associated with older, more experienced citizens who could guide them in the workings of the democratic *polis*. The rise of itinerant sophist teachers, however, led to a new kind of *sunousia*, one by which, as we remember from the *Apology*, Socrates was tainted and which contributed to the charge of corruption against him. Whereas, under the old system, the youths would get their political education from established older citizens of the political community of Athens, the sophists were mainly non-citizens who may not have had the same concern for the city at heart, or so the accusation goes.⁷⁶⁸ For this reason, they were seen to advocate political practices which were considered un-Athenian.⁷⁶⁹

The *Charmides*, also set at a gymnasium, is another text which uses memory of the *Apology* to operate as a sort of 'second apology' for Socrates' type of *sunousia*. In this, he discusses and exhibits *sōphrosunē* (moderation or restraint) in his dialogue with the desirable young athlete, Charmides, and discusses tyranny with Critias, both of whom were prominent among the thirty tyrants in Athens.⁷⁷⁰ Scholarship on the text stresses Plato's familial relationship to both Charmides and Critias, his supposed sympathies with the tyrants and the theory that his philosophy paved the way for later tyrannies.⁷⁷¹ However, although the dialogue ends in *aporia*, with no satisfactory definition reached for *sōphrosunē*, the part of the discussion which encompasses sexual self-restraint serves to distance Socrates from the taint of sexual corruption. Meanwhile, the discussion with Critias about the relationship between *sōphrosunē* and self-knowledge undermines Critias' claim to know the human good sufficiently to establish a tyranny on that basis.⁷⁷² In this way, Plato also distances Socrates from accusations of political corruption in his *sunousia* and underlines the importance of self-knowledge ('the examined life') in all political engagement.

The *Theaetetus*, in contrast, focuses on the metaphorical connection between physical exercise and philosophy, associating it, rather, with the physical training of the hoplite citizen. Theaetetus approaches Socrates fresh from the running track but Socrates makes it clear that wrestling is the sport he equates with philosophy. We might see running as

⁷⁶⁸ Goldhill (1986), p. 226.

⁷⁶⁹ Hesk (2000), p. 211.

⁷⁷⁰ Goldhill (2002), pp. 88-89.

⁷⁷¹ See discussion in Stern (2008), p. 399.

⁷⁷² *Ibid*, p. 399.

an exercise one undertakes solo, albeit in competition with others, whereas in wrestling one must truly grapple with one's opponent. Theodorus accuses Socrates, saying:

*Λακεδαιμόνοι μὲν γὰρ ἀπιέναι ἢ ἀποδύεσθαι κελεύουσι, σὺ δὲ κατ' Ἀνταῖον
τί μοι μᾶλλον δοκεῖς τὸ δρᾶμα δρᾶν· τὸν γὰρ προσελθόντα οὐκ ἀνίης πρὶν
ἂν ἀναγκάσῃς ἀποδύσας ἐν τοῖς λόγοις προσπαλαῖσαι.⁷⁷³*

The Spartans give an option, either to leave or strip, but you seem to me rather to be playing the scene Antaeus-style – if anyone comes near you, you don't let him go until you've forced him to strip and wrestle with you in discussion.

Socrates describes this as 'a first-rate analogy' (*ἄριστά γε ... τὴν νόσον μου ἀπήκασας*)⁷⁷⁴ and goes on to say that he would be no more likely to hold back from an encounter with one such as Heracles or Theseus, even if he knew he would be thrashed because 'so extraordinary is the passion in [him] for working out on these subjects' (*οὕτω τις ἔρωσ δεινὸς ἐνδέδυκε τῆς περὶ ταῦτα γυμνασίας*).⁷⁷⁵ Philosophy, as Socrates sees it, is a workout for the soul, as necessary for the education of the citizen as the real physical exercise undertaken by the hoplite in the gymnasium. Socrates' insistence that those near him 'strip' and show what shape they are in is equivalent to and, as Euben suggests, predicated on Athenian democracy's insistence on accountability, evinced in the practice of *dokimasia*, the process of examination which each citizen had to undergo before being accepted for public office.⁷⁷⁶

Sunousia with Socrates, then, is vigorous and healthy mental exercise for the young citizen. In this way, though Socratic *sunousia* is seen to be different from the practice commonly associated with the elite in democratic Athens, Plato characterises it as 'more democratic' than that traditional elite practice. Socrates is not an itinerant sophist but a citizen who cares deeply about his city and *sunousia* with him not only prepares youths for the duties of citizenship but is itself predicated on democratic practices. Furthermore, according to the midwife image, although Socrates does not himself create the offspring of which the youths are delivered, his input is seen as being essential not only to the delivery of these ideas but also to their successful gestation and to the continued health

⁷⁷³ Pl. *Tht.* 169b.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 169b.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 169c.

⁷⁷⁶ Euben (1997), p. 36.

of their babies. This is a model of teaching in which the teacher is intimately and crucially involved in the educative process but yet does not impart knowledge.

However, in spite of Socrates' stress on the fact that he himself has nothing to contribute, his involvement as midwife in the pregnancies and births of these idea-babies may strike us as being unduly great. While a good midwife may have been able to deliver advice about healthy pregnancy and early childcare and almost certainly had a hand in successful delivery, Socrates claims that, where idea-babies are born healthy and live healthily into childhood, this is entirely because of association with him. While there is no knowledge as such passed down from Socratic midwife to labouring youth, Socrates attributes the youths' progress to prolonged association with himself and says of those, who left him before they should have done, that:

ἀπελθόντες δὲ τὰ τε λοιπὰ ἐξήμβλωσαν διὰ πονηρὰν συνουσίαν καὶ τὰ ὑπ' ἐμοῦ μαιευθέντα κακῶς τρέφοντες ἀπώλεσαν, ψευδῆ καὶ εἰδῶλα περὶ πλείονος ποιησάμενοι τοῦ ἀληθοῦς, τελευτῶντες δ' αὐτοῖς τε καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἔδοξαν ἀμαθεῖς εἶναι.⁷⁷⁷

they not only caused the miscarriage of what was left, by getting into bad company, but even neglected and lost the offspring of theirs that I'd already delivered, because they preferred stupid falsehoods and phantoms to the truth of things, and ended up looking stupid both to themselves and to everybody else.

A cautionary tale! It seems that continued association with Socrates is the only way to deliver ideas successfully and to continue having a fertile intellectual life. Because of this, Blondell's assertion (see p. 206) that the midwife image enables Socrates to disavow responsibility for the youths' ideas and behaviour does not entirely hold true. It seems from this passage that Socrates feels that more credit attaches to him for his midwifery than to the youths for the ideas themselves. In this respect Socrates' analogy seems stretched to breaking point. While it is easy, with actual midwives, to separate their involvement in pregnancy and birth from the genetic material which makes up the foetus, it is not so easy with Socrates' image, as it is not in the therapist/patient relationship discussed above (p. 208). If it is only his involvement which makes these idea-babies viable and healthy and if these youths cannot conceive idea-babies with any other

⁷⁷⁷ Pl. *Tht.* 150e.

teachers, then there must be some 'genetic' input into these ideas from Socrates himself. Even if his role is only to question and to force the youth to refine his idea until there is something viable there, those very questions play an enormous part in the formation and make-up of that idea.

This section has considered the meaning and connotations of Socrates' description of his relationship with the youths in terms of *sunousia* in the light of the accusations which led to his execution. While it seems that the midwife image purports, indeed, to offer a model of education by which Socrates might be closely involved and yet impart no knowledge, the discussion has shown the extent to which image is stretched, possibly to breaking point.

Rather more successfully, however, Plato also uses the image to defend his questioning role against the common misconceptions and mistrust which gave rise to the case against him. The education that Socrates is shown to offer in the *Theaetetus* follows on from the enquiries he undertakes into wisdom in the *Apology*, but offers a more positive gloss. When, in the *Apology*, Socrates visits the series of men whom he might consider to be wise and questions the nature and extent of their wisdom, he exposes their foolishness and humiliates them. His aim, however, is not to humiliate and expose, except where beliefs of wisdom are held arrogantly and mistakenly, but rather to find true wisdom. In the *Theaetetus*, this is transformed into an educative process of questioning the foundations of belief, which seeks to work towards true wisdom or knowledge. As Socrates explains, this exercise is often misunderstood and can appear nihilistic although it is not.⁷⁷⁸ The next section explores the misunderstandings caused by the process in the light of the *Apology* and examines the further reasons why Plato may have chosen the image of the midwife to characterise his teacher.

iii) Socrates' midwife as atopos

In explaining the image of the midwife, Socrates offers a further defence against the charges of moral and political corruption to add to that provided in the *Apology*. When he discloses that he has inherited his mother's skill as a midwife, he says that 'it has escaped others' notice that [he has] this skill' (λέληθα γάρ, ὧ̃ ἐταῖρε, ταύτην ἔχων τὴν τέχνην) and

⁷⁷⁸ See chapter introduction, pp. 187-89.

that because they are not aware of it, they say instead that '[he is] very strange (*atopos*) and reduce[s] people to puzzlement (*aporia*).'⁷⁷⁹ This section suggests that it is this 'strangeness' which may have given rise to the charges against Socrates and examines Socrates' decision to use the midwife image in this light. It also considers the further connotations that image carries for the way in which we might think about his practice of philosophy, again developing the idea of Socrates as a 'teacher', the role that he denied so vehemently in the *Apology*.

Joel Alden Schlosser suggests that through the use of the midwife image, Socrates 'abjures the power of recognized expertise and instead embraces a shared practice among relatively powerless women.'⁷⁸⁰ It is this, he says, which makes Socrates' philosophical practice *atopos* because it transforms *sunousia* from something 'inside' and recognised by the establishment to something 'outside' and strange. I have problems with Schlosser's reading for the reason, already discussed above, that we simply cannot make the assumption that 'the midwife in Athenian society also did not possess a knowledge deemed capable of systemization' simply because she was 'omitted entirely from the Hippocratic corpus.'⁷⁸¹ However, I do find appealing his suggestion that there is a 'strangeness' associated with the image arising from the fact that the midwife operated within the closed world of women in Athenian society. It is this 'strangeness' that gave rise to mistrust and misconceptions about midwives, which Plato, via the midwife image, compares to the mistrust and misconceptions arising around Socratic philosophy. It was these which, he suggests, led to Socrates' trial and execution.

Nancy Demand writes that one of the reasons why men may have wanted male Hippocratic physicians to assist in managing the pregnancies of their wives was '[t]he general suspicion of women's tendency to seek abortions that is expressed by the author of *Diseases of Women*.'⁷⁸² On this subject, she also cites Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousae* in which 'men's complaints about women include their skill with drugs (poisons and abortifacients), their propensity to take lovers, and—the greatest suspicion of all—their willingness to introduce supposititious children into the

⁷⁷⁹ Pl. *Tht.* 149a.

⁷⁸⁰ Schlosser (2014), p. 124.

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁷⁸² Demand (1994), p. 62.

household.⁷⁸³ Maurizio Bettini also explores these fears in his analysis of the midwife's association with cunning, witchcraft and sexual licentiousness, suggesting that her expertise in female anatomy and sexual pleasure led to her association or identification with prostitutes.⁷⁸⁴ This atmosphere of mistrust may have arisen, as Demand suggests, because women 'brought up in seclusion and taught to be ashamed of their bodies' preferred the ministrations of midwives to male doctors and naturally turned to them for medical treatment well beyond the scope which we consider to be the midwife's today. Perhaps this may have involved abortion at times but there is little doubt that this female world must have seemed inaccessible to men, rendering them powerless, and may well have generated a lack of understanding that gave rise to mistrust and mistaken ideas.

This is the kind of atmosphere which Socrates also invokes in relation to his philosophical teaching. It is because others are unaware of what he practices that they do not understand and characterise him as *atopos* and nihilistic, only reducing people to *aporia*. While such accusations of 'reducing people to *aporia*' do not feature explicitly in the *Apology*, what we know of Socrates' practice (and the resulting fury that he faces) from the later dialogues must impact on our reading of his encounters with the supposedly wise people of Athens.⁷⁸⁵ In this way, the *Theaetetus* and those otheraporetic dialogues re-member the *Apology*, explaining the anger directed against Socrates which may have led to the indictment against him.

In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates plays up the 'strange' aspect of midwifery, freely admitting that he causes his patients to miscarry (*ἀμβλίσκω*) when he considers it necessary, and emphasising their real or imagined role as matchmakers, which often leads to their association with procurers.⁷⁸⁶ In this way, Plato stresses that the connection between midwifery and Socrates' art is not simply in the manner by which they tend their patients and deliver offspring of the body or of the soul, but in the misunderstandings that occur around their relative practices. In both cases, these misconceptions involve perceived corruption: sexual and moral corruption in the case of the midwife and moral and political corruption in the case of Socrates.

⁷⁸³ Ar. *Thesm.* 331f. Although the *Woman Herald* blames Euripides for slandering women, the implication is that they are not blameless but annoyed because he has drawn their husbands' attention to their behaviour. Discussed in Demand (1994), p. 68.

⁷⁸⁴ Bettini (2013), pp. 178-97.

⁷⁸⁵ Pl. *Ap.* 21b-24b.

⁷⁸⁶ Pl. *Tht.* 149d and 150a.

It is this corruption which he must address in the *Apology* but here, in the *Theaetetus*, he offers some further explanation of why this misconception arises and of what his practice actually entails. When Socrates first discloses that he is a mental midwife to Theaetetus, he says that others have ‘failed to notice’ (*λανθάνω*) that this is what he does.⁷⁸⁷ He himself tells Theaetetus but, by asking him not to reveal his secret to others, he signals that his teaching is only for the initiated, those whom he considers worthy of his *sunousia*.⁷⁸⁸ Although I suggested above that this Socratic *sunousia* was ‘more democratic’ than the traditional elite conception, there is also the connotation here that Socrates is creating a new elite, one based on intellectual criteria. As with the class elite, this form of *sunousia* excludes others, in this case, those ignorant of Socrates’ skills and it is this exclusion which leads to resentment and misunderstanding.

It is the ignorant and excluded, for example, who see Socrates’ questioning as nihilistic, only reducing people to *aporia*. As Socrates suggests, *aporia* is a misconception based on ignorance. As he develops the concept in the *Meno*, it might more profitably be seen as a stage on the journey towards knowledge: it is necessary to go through puzzlement and confusion on the way to truth.⁷⁸⁹ Socrates’ mother—from whom he inherits his art—was, after all, named Phaenarete, the revealer (*phainein*) of virtue (*arētē*).

In its study of the midwife metaphor, therefore, this section has explored ideas about the ways that discussions of *technē* and *epistēmē*, together with Socrates’ ‘intellectual sterility’ re-member the *Apology*, elucidating his politics and developing his defence against Meletus’ indictment of corruption. Via an analysis of *sunousia*, it has also re-membered the *Apology* by finding a way to characterise his teaching which yet conforms to his picture of himself as lacking wisdom. Finally, it has considered the misconceptions about his practice which led to the indictment—why they might have arisen and where they led—through a study of similar misconceptions surrounding ancient midwifery. It concluded by construing the accusations of *atopia* and *aporia* levelled at Socrates more positively as part of his search for truth. The next section considers the nature of this truth in more detail by examining Plato’s agonistic pitting of philosophical truth against poetic truth in the Wax Tablet passage.

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid, 149a.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid, 149a.

⁷⁸⁹ Pl. *Meno*, 84a-d.

3.4 Electra and the Wax Tablet

I discussed the Wax Tablet in the Introduction to this thesis as the first known model for memory but its significance here is in Socrates' use, and then rejection, of it as a way to explain the existence of false belief.⁷⁹⁰ As I will show, this discussion in the *Theaetetus* addresses and develops the concerns of the *Apology*, recalling Socrates' trial in the way that it is framed. However, in the language of the Wax Tablet image, Plato also examines themes of recognition and false belief in poetry, constructing a competitive dialogue with the poets by which to authorise his own philosophical activity. Furthermore, because Plato has no need to convince the poets themselves of philosophy's supremacy—the three main dramatists were already dead at the time of writing—the poetry he targets takes the form of the reader's cultural memory. It is the reader's relationship with poetry that Plato seeks to challenge. In the first of these analyses, the section draws on Giannopoulou's work on the intertextual relationship between the *Theaetetus* and the *Apology* and also on Stern's discussion of politics in the *Theaetetus*.⁷⁹¹ In the second, it builds on Nightingale's exploration of Plato's parodic engagement with other genres.⁷⁹²

Socrates introduces the Wax Tablet as a metaphorical model for memory as part of exploring Theaetetus' definition of knowledge as true belief. He uses it to explore the idea that false belief exists and might be 'the misalignment of thought with perception.'

Socrates says:

*Δῶρον τοίνυν αὐτὸ φῶμεν εἶναι τῆς τῶν Μουσῶν μητρὸς Μνημοσύνης,
καὶ ἐς τοῦτο, ὃ τι ἄν ἴδωμεν ἢ ἀκούσωμεν ἢ αὐτοὶ ἐννοήσωμεν ὑπέχοντας
αὐτὸ ταῖς αἰσθήσεσι καὶ ἐννοίαις, ἀποτυποῦσθαι, ὥσπερ δακτυλίων
σημεῖα ἐνσημαινομένους.*⁷⁹³

Let us say, therefore, that this [tablet] is a gift from Mnemosyne, mother of the Muses, and whatever we wish to remember from the things we see or hear or which we have in our thoughts, we hold the wax under our

⁷⁹⁰ For the discussion in the Introduction to this thesis see pp. 12-15.

⁷⁹¹ Giannopoulou (2013); Stern (2008) pp. 217-41.

⁷⁹² See the introduction to this chapter, p. 184.

⁷⁹³ Pl. *Tht.* 191d.

perceptions and thoughts and impress them onto it, as if making impressions from signet rings...

When we see people, our perception of them is (or is not) matched with the imprint of them on the Wax Tablet and this is how recognition, or knowledge of the person seen, occurs. In describing how misrecognition happens, for example, he states that in seeing Theodorus and Theaetetus indistinctly, he hastens to match the correct imprint of each of them to their appearance so that he might recognise them (*τὸ οἰκεῖον ἑκατέρου σημεῖον ἀποδοὺς τῇ οἰκείᾳ ὄψει ... ἵνα γένηται ἀναγνώρισις*).⁷⁹⁴ This misalignment of images can occur as a result of thoughtlessness or haste, of lack of knowledge or of defective knowledge resulting in faulty judgement. He also illuminates this idea by saying that if the wax of the soul is too hard or too soft the imprint will not be clear and therefore, our knowledge will be unreliable and so, our memories will not function so well.⁷⁹⁵ However, just at the point when Socrates appears to have perfected the model, he abandons the metaphor as useless because it cannot deal with abstract conceptions. He illustrates this by saying that a person seeing twelve (not people or things but the abstract number) could not mistake it for the eleven in his memory.⁷⁹⁶ For this reason he dismisses the entire premise on which the Wax Tablet is based.⁷⁹⁷

Although this description of the Wax Tablet does not, in itself, appear to have political resonances, the political importance of establishing the existence of false belief is underlined in the framing of the section.⁷⁹⁸ At 187d, Socrates questions whether he should pursue the topic of false belief or leave it to one side. Theaetetus replies that they should definitely pursue it because ‘when discussing leisure just now, you and Theodorus said very truly that in discussing questions like this there is no urgency’ (*ἀρτι γὰρ οὐ κακῶς γε σὺ καὶ Θεόδωρος ἐλέγετε σχολῆς πέρι, ὡς οὐδὲν ἐν τοῖς τοιοῖσδε καταπείγει*). This clearly recalls the Digression, where Socrates suggested that philosophers have time to discuss at their leisure. It also serves as a reminder that Socrates is on his way to be tried for just such discussions, and further, that those discussions are not abstract and irrelevant but vital for the political health of the city.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid, 193c.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid, 194c-d.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid, 195e-196c.

⁷⁹⁷ More detailed descriptions of the working of the Wax Tablet model can be found in Chappell (forthcoming) and Whitehead (2009) pp. 15-17.

⁷⁹⁸ Stern (2008), p. 218.

The specific reason why false belief is so important to Socrates' position is explained by Stern as follows: 'it is the issue of the nature of opinion, especially false opinion, that provides the nexus between Socrates' activity and his fate.'⁷⁹⁹ If, as Protagoras argues, truth is relative and an individual's beliefs cannot be wrong for her/him, then the jurymen in Socrates' own trial cannot have been wrong in their condemnation of Socrates.⁸⁰⁰ This is underlined by the second recollection of Socrates' trial which book-ends his discussion of false belief: the example of the Jurymen.

The Jurymen example contains two claims regarding the false belief of juries, both of which can be illuminated by memory of the *Apology*. Firstly, Socrates claims that because of the time limit imposed by the water clock, juries are persuaded rather than taught.⁸⁰¹ Secondly, he claims that the men of the jury must make their judgement from hearsay, without the knowledge provided by their own perception.⁸⁰² Giannopoulou is convincing in her analysis of the difference between persuasion and teaching here: while persuasion breeds 'intellectual dependence,' imbuing the jury with 'the opinions chosen by the speaker,' teaching 'would enable the jury to make inquiries and demand clarifications.' In this case, dialogue would replace the litigant's monologue.⁸⁰³ Both of Socrates' claims suggest ways in which the *Theaetetus* develops and expands aspects of the *Apology*. In the *Apology*, Socrates has little time to teach the jury but must rely on persuasion. He says to the jury that whereas the prosecution has had a long time (*πολύς χρόνος*) in which to indoctrinate the jury with slander, he has only a short time (*ὀλίγος χρόνος*) in which to remove their prejudice.⁸⁰⁴ In response, the *Theaetetus* reflects a model of Socratic teaching based on dialogue and illustrating its possibilities. Although the dialogue ends inconclusively, it shows the considerable progress interactive association with Socrates can effect in a relatively short time. Furthermore, in its reflection of this model of teaching, the *Theaetetus* provides that very eyewitness evidence for the external jury of readers, which the jury in the court lacks.

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 218.

⁸⁰⁰ That Socrates' digression on false belief is an extended response to Protagorean relativism was first discussed by Proclus (*In Plat. Prm.* 657.5-10) and his argument is discussed in Sedley (1996) and in Giannopoulou (2013), p. 123.

⁸⁰¹ Pl *Tht.* 201a: οὗτοι γὰρ που τῇ ἑαυτῶν τέχνῃ πείθουσιν οὐ διδάσκοντες ἀλλὰ δοξάζειν ποιοῦντες ἃ ἂν βούλωνται, 'For these people don't use their expertise to persuade an audience by teaching it, but rather by making it believe whatever they want it to believe.'

⁸⁰² Ibid, 201b-c.

⁸⁰³ Giannopoulou (2013), p. 151.

⁸⁰⁴ Socrates refers to this at *Ap.* 19a.

Therefore, the Wax Tablet section might be described as political for two reasons. On the one hand, it is political insofar as all philosophical discussion is beneficial for the health of the *polis*; on the other, its specific subject matter bears directly on Plato's extended defence of Socrates' teaching.

In addition to the Hesiodic resonances of this passage discussed in the Introduction (pp. 14-15), the language which Plato uses to detail the image of the Wax Tablet is drawn from tragedy, a point which has received little critical attention but which, I suggest, could be fundamental to its interpretation. The Introduction discussed the idea that Socrates' description of the Tablet as a gift from the mother of the Muses introduces a poetic dimension to the image.⁸⁰⁵ Chappell also suggests that Plato's inspiration for the image of memories being imprinted on the soul may have come from tragedy.⁸⁰⁶ Though she says that this kind of image could have been widespread, she cites Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*:

γράφον δι' ὠτων δὲ συν –

τέτραινε μῦθοι ἡσύχω φρενῶν βάθει.⁸⁰⁷

Yes, record it, and let the words pierce

right through your ears to the quiet depths of your mind.

While there may be other iterations of this image in the tragic corpus, it seems no accident that the other images which Socrates draws on in the details of the Wax Tablet come from the three plays featuring Electra's recognition of her brother, Orestes, and that he engages with Euripides' *Electra* in particular.

In describing the process of recognition or knowledge of the person perceived, Plato's Socrates speaks of matching the perceived object to its 'footprint' (ἵχνος) in the soul,⁸⁰⁸ a reference perhaps to Electra in the *Libation Bearers* who recognises her brother by matching her footprint to his. However, this detail in the *Theaetetus* comes up in an exploration of false opinion or false recognition, where the footprints do not in fact match up and the person is misrecognised. This seems to draw on Euripides' *Electra* where

⁸⁰⁵ Paul Stern makes this link between memory, poetry and Mnemosyne (2008) p. 241. His reading, though, focuses on the role of memory in poetic (mis)interpretation of Homer and to me, seems like an over-reading given the slim evidence.

⁸⁰⁶ Chappell (forthcoming).

⁸⁰⁷ Aesch. *Cho.* 451-52. Citation and trans. from Sommerstein (2008).

⁸⁰⁸ Pl. *Tht.* 193c.

Electra argues that matching footprints is not a reliable way in which to recognise someone as there is no reason why her footprint should match up with her brother's:

δυοῖν ἀδελφοῖν ποὺς ἂν οὐ γένοιτ' ἴσος
ἀνδρός τε καὶ γυναικός, ἀλλ' ἄρσην κρατεῖ.⁸⁰⁹

how could the foot of a brother and sister be the same size? The man's is bigger.

Furthermore, just as Socrates states 'those in whom the wax is shaggy, jagged and stony, mixed with earth and excrement, receive only indistinct impressions' (οἱ δὲ δὴ λάσιον καὶ τραχὺ λιθῶδές τι ἢ γῆς ἢ κόπρου συμμιγείσης ἔμπλεων ἔχοντες ἀσαφῆ τὰ ἐκμαγεῖα ἴσχουσιν),⁸¹⁰ so too Euripides' Electra questions 'How could a clear imprint of feet be made on stony ground?' (πῶς δ' ἂν γένοιτ' ἂν ἐν κραταιλέω πέδω / γαίας ποδῶν ἔκμακτρον;).⁸¹¹

This scene in Euripides' *Electra* is riddled with 'imprints' in connection with true and false recognition. In addition to the footprints, when realisation about Orestes' identity dawns on the Old Man, Orestes questions

τί μ' ἐσδέδορκεν ὥσπερ ἀργύρου σκοπῶν
λαμπρὸν χαρακτῆρ'; ἧ προσεικάζει μέ τω,⁸¹²

Why is he looking at me as if he were looking at the hallmark on silver?

Does he think I look like someone else?

Here the word *χαρακτῆρ* literally means a mark engraved or impressed upon silver, in the manner of the impression upon the Wax Tablet, and Orestes reacts as if there is such a mark on him which has caused the Old Man's recognition. Like the Wax Tablet passage too, this extract plays with ideas of true and false recognition: Orestes' first reaction is to question whether the Old Man has mistaken him for someone else. There is, in fact, such an imprint on him which makes him unmistakable to those who know him: his scar.

Plato's use of this imagery, of footprints and of imprints, from tragedy might be compared to the way in which the poets used 'souvenirs,' as discussed in Chapter 2 with

⁸⁰⁹ Eur. *El.* 535-7.

⁸¹⁰ Pl. *Tht.* 194e.

⁸¹¹ Eur. *El.* 534-35.

⁸¹² *Ibid.*, 558-59.

regard to Hector's shield.⁸¹³ Such images signify a wealth of memory which deepens and enhances the significance of the image itself. This becomes particularly evident if one considers Orestes' scar. The scar is a kind of indelible imprint on the skin. In this case, it is not a pictorial representation of the memory itself, as the sight-perception imprints on the Wax Tablet are, but a sign which stands in for a narrative. When Socrates introduces the idea of the Wax Tablet, he says specifically that we imprint on it our perceptions and the thoughts (*ennoein*) we have. The examples which he discusses are all of perceptions, particularly sight-perceptions, but this cultural memory of recognition and misrecognition in tragedy shows the possibilities of the model for dealing with imprints of thoughts and narratives. In addition, this imprint, or sign, signifies differently for different viewers, depending on their memories. For Orestes, it signifies the actual occurrence which caused it. For Electra, the sign is part of the whole perception that matches the man in front of her with her memory of Orestes. In addition to this, however, it signifies the return of the hero for whom she has been waiting. For the audience, there is yet a further level of signification which cultural memory brings. The scar recalls the episode in the *Odyssey* when Eurycleia recognises Odysseus by his scar, a sign which symbolises, as with Orestes, the return of a longed-for hero. The audience must judge whether the Orestes before them matches up to the epic heroic ideal. In a further twist, however, because the memory of Orestes is evoked by Homer as an heroic ideal to which Telemachus should aspire, the audience must also judge whether this Orestes matches up to his own epic reputation.

Plato's engagement with poetry in the Wax Tablet image goes beyond this thematic level to address what he sees as the essences of poetry and philosophy. His use of poetry in the images of the Wax Tablet gives the model a vivid immediacy for the reader. The allusions to Euripides and Homer are bolstered by the overarching Hesiodic sense that the Wax Tablet is a gift from the mother of the Muses and, in this spirit of poetic inspiration, the whole passage is infused with striking metaphors:⁸¹⁴ the quality of the wax, for example, can 'have the smoothness that comes from proper kneading' (*λεῖος καὶ μετρίως ὠργασμένος ἦ*)⁸¹⁵ or it can 'have a stony element, or with lots of earth or filth mixed up in it' (*οἱ δὲ δὴ λασιον καὶ τραχὺ λιθῶδές τι ἢ γῆς ἢ κόπρου συμμιγείσης ἔμπλεων*

⁸¹³ See Chapter 2 of this thesis, pp. 144-45.

⁸¹⁴ Hes. *Theog.* 53-55 and 98-103.

⁸¹⁵ Pl. *Tht.* 194c.

ἔχοντες).⁸¹⁶ By contrast, when he decides that the model will not stand, the images he uses (in line with the problems of the model as he sees them) are abstract and difficult to grasp. From being in the dynamic, tangible world of people and wax that we can imagine before our eyes, we find ourselves, with a jolt, in a world of abstract numbers—eleven and twelve, seven and five—which Socrates says explicitly do not represent ‘seven and five people’ (*ἀνθρώπους ἑπτὰ πέντε*).⁸¹⁷

In this way, although the Wax Tablet model is seen to offer enticing potential for thinking about false belief, and although the cultural memory on which the image is built, only adds to that potential, Plato ultimately characterises poetry as something dangerously seductive and misleading. If we accept, as is widely the case in the scholarly tradition, that Socrates’ interlocutors function in the texts as internal readers, Theaetetus’ reaction to the image may be illustrative of our own. We can see our gratification with the image, our satisfaction with its explanation and our thrill at the vivid poetic evocation, mirrored in him. He agrees with Socrates’ description emphatically and believes that ‘It wouldn’t be humanly possible to put it better’ (*ὀρθότατα ἀνθρώπων λέγεις*).⁸¹⁸ When Socrates questions the model, Theaetetus does not understand why at first, questioning, ‘What makes you say that?’ (*πρὸς τί τοῦτ’ εἶπες;*) and continuing to state that to him, there ‘seems nothing to be ashamed of’ in the image (*ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ, ὦ Σώκρατες, οὐκ αἰσχρὸν εἶναι τὸ ωῦν ἀποδεδειγμένον*).⁸¹⁹

The destabilising effect of Socrates’ switch to numerical examples may potentially make us long for the concrete, vivid world of the Wax Tablet and I suggest that this is part of the episode’s generic dialogue with poetry. Nightingale says, summarising Socrates’ conclusion in *Republic* 6, ‘if the poet is explicitly defined as ignorant, as imitating appearances, as gratifying the multitude, as fostering the inferior part of the soul, then the philosopher is implicitly defined as the diametrical opposite.’⁸²⁰ In the Wax Tablet passage we can see this borne out. The poetic imagery of the Wax Tablet passage is vivid—‘imitating appearances’—and it clearly gratifies its audience, Theaetetus. Though

⁸¹⁶ Ibid, 194e.

⁸¹⁷ Ibid, 196a.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid, 194d and 195b.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid, 195b and 195d.

⁸²⁰ Nightingale (1995), p. 67.

the poet is not 'explicitly' defined as ignorant, he is implicitly described as such by the fact that poetry's model of false belief—the gift of Mnemosyne—is dismissed as inadequate.

While poetry offers the potential to think about false belief, or mismatching perceptions, in a much more multi-faceted way than Socrates' imagery of mis-firing an arrow or putting shoes on the wrong feet, it still does not provide an account for false belief in abstract ideas. By basing the images of the Wax Tablet on poetry, Plato draws the reader in, seducing us with vivid imagery before pulling the rug from under us. Just as Hesiod's Mnemosyne is shown to offer forgetting, so Plato shows poetry as a distraction which can lead the philosopher to forget what is really important. In this way, he shows the dangerous attraction of poetry, dangerous because it is not based on truth, or on the whole truth. He does not disguise the fact—rather he emphasises it—that philosophy is difficult but in the competitive sphere of claims to authoritative *logos*, Plato shows Socrates as committed to a search for that truth.

In a way, as with 'the rhetoric of anti-rhetoric' discussed above,⁸²¹ there may seem something disingenuous about Plato's dismissal of poetry. His very next strategy for illuminating false belief is to reach for another image, this time the Aviary, where birds represent pieces of knowledge for us to grasp and hold. However, while this image is vivid and useful in some ways it does not come with the weight of cultural memory—of poetry—which is attached to the Wax Tablet. Poetry, like sophistic rhetoric, has the power to entice us away from what is important because, as Chapter 2 demonstrated, it is persuasive. Both Euripides and Plato draw attention to the idea that in watching drama or listening to epic, the emotions can overpower the intellect and for this reason it is dangerous for the citizen. Where, however, Euripides merely highlights the problem, signalling a need for awareness of the ways in which rhetoric operates on the emotions and the cognitive faculties, Plato offers a solution in the form of philosophy. While he continues to employ aspects of poetry which make his writing immediate and make his philosophical ideas easier to grasp, he subordinates it to the pursuit of philosophical truth, deliberately distancing Socrates and himself from those aspects which seduce and mislead.

⁸²¹ See earlier discussion, pp. 197-99.

This section has discussed the Wax Tablet metaphor as a whole. In so doing, it has brought out the political resonances of its context which focused on the importance of the existence of false belief to the outcome of Socrates' trial. It has also explored the agonistic relationship between philosophy and poetry, highlighted by the way in which the Wax Tablet passage remembers tragic drama. The following section focuses on the prologue of the *Theaetetus* and then on two words which are intrinsic to the ideas expressed in the Wax Tablet passage in order, firstly, to set up Plato's problems with written philosophy as a genre and secondly, to offer a memory-based solution to those problems for the reader of philosophy.

3.5 Memory, Philosophy and Writing

As discussed at the start of the chapter, the Wax Tablet as a model for memory occurs in a dialogue which has memory at its core. This section discusses Plato's concern for memory as evinced in the careful framing of the *Theaetetus*, in the Prologue, as a written version of a remembered conversation. It also addresses the tension in Plato's work between writing and speech/memory through an analysis of Plato's use of the word *eidōlon*. My discussion of this word as it occurs and recurs in the text builds a sense of its resonance and serves to illuminate the problems which Plato explores with regard to the medium of written philosophy. In the final part of the section, I build a similar network around the word *exaleiphein* in order to explore Plato's answer to these problems. In view of this, the section on the *eidōlon* does not refer explicitly to memory and politics in itself but rather identifies the problem to which memory is the solution. The political ramifications of *exaleiphein* become clear in Plato's attention to what should be remembered and forgotten and, once again, in the effects of practising these philosophical methods as revealed by the *Apology*.

i) The prologue

I stated in the introduction to this chapter, in the brief discussion of the Forms, that the understanding of memory which underlies Plato's philosophy is one which is informed by belief in an absolute truth. This holds firm whether it be the truth of the Forms, seen by the immortal soul, or the truth of an experience which can be accurately recalled. He is,

however, concerned by the unreliability of human memory and by the ways in which memory is preserved and communicated.

This is evident from the very beginning of the *Theaetetus* where Plato establishes the frame for the dialogue. Here, the Megarian, Euclides, tells a friend, Terpsion, that he has just seen Theaetetus being carried back to Athens from the army camp at Corinth, dying of dysentery. This, he tells Terpsion, reminded him of a conversation which Socrates had once relayed to him between Theaetetus and Socrates himself. He was so struck by this conversation that he wrote it down, checking with Socrates about passages that he could not remember clearly. In this way, as Giannopoulou writes, 'Socrates and Euclides are the text's efficient cause: they perform mimetically Plato's role as author and writer of *Theaetetus*. Qua immaterial entity, the dialogue is the product of Socrates' recollection cast in speech, and qua material entity, it is a written text, Euclides' record.'⁸²² The text is presented not so much as a written dialogue as a transcript based on Socrates' memory of the event, a memory which he was able to relay verbatim, without notes, to Euclides. The writing of it is seen as passive and entirely transparent, an act of recording rather than an act of creation.

Giannopoulou goes on to question whether 'the prologue foregrounds memory in order to question the reliability of the written text.'⁸²³ She decides that it does not but I suggest that this tension between memory and writing is one of the key concerns of the dialogue, although it is not, as in the *Phaedrus*, something which is explicitly discussed. This discussion in the *Phaedrus* provides a useful starting point for thinking about issues surrounding memory and writing as they occur in the *Theaetetus*.

When Socrates relates the story of Theuth and Thamus, he tells that Theuth, the Egyptian Hermes, god of memory (amongst other things) declares to Thamus that his discovery of writing 'is an elixir of memory and wisdom' (*μνήμης τε γὰρ καὶ σοφίας φάρμακον ηὐρέθη*).⁸²⁴ Thamus replies:

τοῦτο γὰρ τῶν μαθόντων λήθη μὲν ἐν ψυχαῖς παρέξει μνήμης ἀμελετησία,
ἄτε διὰ πίστιν γραφῆς ἔξωθεν ὑπ' ἄλλοτριῶν τύπων, οὐκ ἔνδοθεν αὐτοὺς
ὑφ' αὐτῶν ἀωαμιμνησκομένους: οὐκ οὐκ μνήμης ἀλλὰ ὑπομνήσεως

⁸²² Giannopoulou (2013), p. 22.

⁸²³ Ibid, p. 24.

⁸²⁴ Pl. *Phdr.* 274e.

φάρμακον ἡῦρες. σοφίας δὲ τοῖς μαθηταῖς δόξαν, οὐκ ἀλήθειαν πορίζεις:
πολυήκοοι γὰρ σοι γενόμενοι ἄνευ διδαχῆς πολυγνώμονες εἶναι δόξουσιν,
ἀγνώμονες ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλῆθος ὄντες, καὶ χαλεποὶ συνεῖναι, δοξόσοφοι
γεγονότες ἀντὶ σοφῶν.⁸²⁵

this invention will produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use it, because they will not practise their memory. Their trust in writing, produced by external characters which are no part of themselves, will discourage the use of their own memory within them. You have invented an elixir not of memory, but of reminding; and you offer your pupils the appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom.

Socrates confirms his belief in this, saying:

οὐκοῦν ὁ τέχνην οἰόμενος ἐν γράμμασι καταλιπεῖν, καὶ αὖ ὁ παραδεχόμενος
ὥς τι σαφές καὶ βέβαιον ἐκ γραμμάτων ἐσόμενον, πολλῆς ἂν εὐηθείας
γέμοι ... πλέον τι οἰόμενος εἶναι λόγους γεγραμμένους τοῦ τὸν εἰδοῦτα
ὑπομῆσαι περὶ ὧν ἂν ᾗ τὰ γεγραμμένα.⁸²⁶

He who thinks, then, that he has left behind him any art in writing, and he who receives it in the belief that anything in writing will be clear and certain, would be an utterly simple person ... if he thinks written words are of any use except to remind him who knows the matter about which they are written.'

His reservations about the written text concern the fact that the text, unlike the speaker, addresses its recipients indiscriminately and that if the recipient wishes to question the text, 'it always answers the same thing' (ἐν τι σημαίνει ταυτόν ἀεί).⁸²⁷

The model of writing and reading presented in the *Theaetetus* seems to confirm this belief further. Euclides evidently uses writing here as an aid to memory. He, unlike Socrates, cannot remember the conversation perfectly. When Terpsion asks him if he could 'give a report of it,' Euclides replies, 'Zeus, no! Or at any rate not just like that, off the cuff' (οὐ μὰ τὸν Δία, οὐκουν οὕτω γε ἀπὸ στόματος).⁸²⁸ Rather, he says, he made notes on the conversation when he returned home and wrote them up into the version

⁸²⁵ Ibid, 275a-b.

⁸²⁶ Ibid, 275c-d.

⁸²⁷ Ibid, 275d.

⁸²⁸ Pl. *Tht.* 142d.

presented here, questioning Socrates ‘about anything [he] had not remembered’ (ἐπανηρώτων τὸν Σωκράτη ὃ μὴ εμεμνήμην).⁸²⁹ In addition to this, as Paul Stern writes, the manner in which Euclides and Terpsion simply lie back and listen to the slave reading the dialogue, without interjection, without discussion or without any further engagement at all, suggests that ‘Euclides and Terpsion seem to embody Socrates’ worries about writing, presenting as they do a picture of ossified philosophy.’⁸³⁰ They are the ‘utterly simple (εὐήθεια)’ people who sit back and listen passively to the dialogue, as if it presents a ‘clear and simple (σαφές καὶ βέβαιον)’ message.⁸³¹

As Ferrari points out with regard to the passage from the *Phaedrus*, the ‘standard’ (as opposed to the ‘ironic’ or the ‘Derridean’) critical interpretation of this passage from the *Phaedrus* takes it as a serious expression of Plato’s own ‘distrust of the written word, his own writing included, and as an attempt nevertheless to annex a zone—legitimate, but of secondary value to that of the living word—in which to exercise his continuing urge to write.’⁸³² Ferrari fundamentally agrees with this interpretation but qualifies it in several ways. Firstly, he points out that Socrates himself does not see all speech as equal, something I have explored above in relation to the Digression in the *Theaetetus*, where the philosopher’s speech differs from the speech of the politician.⁸³³ Secondly, in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates twice ‘conveys the advantages of oral communication through the metaphor of its contrary, saying that it gets itself “written” on the soul of the hearer.’⁸³⁴ One of these occurs when Socrates describes the instruction of the philosopher as ‘really written in a soul’ (γραφομένοις ἐν ψυχῇ): these written words are of ‘clearness and perfection and serious value’ (ἐναργές εἶναι καὶ τέλεον καὶ ἄξιον σπουδῆς).⁸³⁵ Both of Ferrari’s qualifications reveal the same kind of irony at play and it is the same irony too that I discussed in relation to poetry and the Wax Tablet. Socrates dismisses rhetoric (and writing/poetry) only then to use it himself for philosophical ends. In all these cases

⁸²⁹ Ibid, 142d-143a.

⁸³⁰ Stern (2008), p. 16.

⁸³¹ Similar anxieties are explored in the opening frame of the *Symposium* where, through Apollodorus, Plato warns his readers of the implications of reading a mediated dialogue. Apollodorus states that the speeches of the symposium will not be recalled fully because they were not recalled fully by his own informant but that they will hear what the mediator felt worth preserving and sharing (Pl. *Symp.* 178a), discussed in Henderson (2000), p. 304.

⁸³² Ferrari (1987), pp. 206-7.

⁸³³ Ibid, p. 207.

⁸³⁴ Ibid, p. 213. The examples he cites are at 276a and 278a.

⁸³⁵ Pl. *Phdr.* 278a.

though, as the *Apology* shows, the actions of the philosopher remain dangerously open to misinterpretation.

For Ferrari, ‘none of this implies that philosophy should not be written; only that it should not be written (nor read) without awareness of the dangers of writing.’⁸³⁶ For him, as for me (as I will go on to show), the absence of an authorial voice in Plato’s dialogues encourages active participation from the reader and ultimately, our voice—‘the voice of the interpretive performer’—becomes the ‘missing’ voice with which the text answers.⁸³⁷ For Ferrari also, the writing in the soul suggests that ‘what ultimately matters is *neither* writing *nor* speaking but the way of life in which they can find a worthy place.’⁸³⁸ ‘Writing in the soul,’ for him, implies that the ‘fixity’ of the written word is only achievable when graven on the soul as ‘the unshakable conviction of a certain kind of life.’⁸³⁹ For me, however, writing on the soul recalls the Wax Tablet and a further study of the language of imprinting on the soul here adds nuance to our understanding of Plato as a writer and will inform my discussion below regarding the guidelines he offers for his readers.

The prologue, therefore, sets out Plato’s concerns regarding memory and written dialogue from the very start. While some have suggested that the writing of the ‘true’ philosopher might offer something more trustworthy, I propose that in Plato’s use of the word *eidōlon* in the *Theaetetus*, he continues to question the fixity or truth value of the written word. This is a problem which, as I will go on to argue, can only be solved by a process of reading with memory.

ii) *The eidōlon*

In Socrates’ initial outline of the Wax Tablet, he refers to the image imprinted onto the wax as an *eidōlon*—an image or a phantom—saying that ‘whatever is imprinted on the block, we remember and know for as long as its image is in the wax’ (*μνηομεύειν τε καὶ ἐπίστασθαι ἕως ἂν ἐνῆ τὸ εἶδωλον αὐτοῦ*).⁸⁴⁰ This is also the word which Socrates uses to describe the written word of the philosopher in the *Phaedrus*, saying ‘You mean the living and breathing word of him who knows, of which the written word may justly be called the

⁸³⁶ Ferrari (1987), p. 221.

⁸³⁷ Ferrari (1987) p. 211.

⁸³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 221.

⁸³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 221.

⁸⁴⁰ Pl. *Tht.* 191d.

image' (τὸν τοῦ εἰδοτος λόγον λέγεις ζῶντα καὶ ἔμψυχον, οὐ ὁ γεγραμμένος εἶδολον ἄν τι λέγοιτο δικάως).⁸⁴¹ In both of these examples, the *eidōlon* is a representation, or sign, of something which exists as real. It is, in linguistic terms, the sign. However, in addition to these examples, Socrates uses the word *eidōlon* to refer to the phantasmic false births with which his students often labour.⁸⁴² In this case, the sign is separate from a reality or a truth. It signifies something false.

In a similar vein, the word *eidōlon* resonates in cultural memory as marking a false version or a replacement for characters in poetry and drama. It is the word used by Homer, in the *Iliad*, when Apollo fashions an image of Aeneas to replace the real hero on the battlefield and in the *Odyssey* when Athena creates an image of Penelope's sister to comfort her in her grief.⁸⁴³ It is further used in the *Odyssey* to describe the shades in the Underworld, those beings no longer animated by life's breath, existing now as images or shadows. They are 'imprints' without corresponding objects in the real world. Finally and perhaps most significantly, it is the word used repeatedly in Euripides' *Helen*—and reportedly, in Stesichorus' *Palinode*—to describe the phantom Helen, created by the gods, who went to Troy with Paris and so brought grief upon the world while the real Helen was transported to Egypt.⁸⁴⁴

In Homer and Euripides (and presumably, in Stesichorus), though the *eidōla* may vanish into the wind when they no longer serve the purposes of the gods, for the time that they are in service they look and function as 'living and breathing' people. As in the examples above, they are entirely convincing to everyone around them, for better and for worse. This is also the case with the true philosopher's written word, as represented by Socrates, in the *Phaedrus*: it is the physical, permanent manifestation of the word of truth, a reminder to the philosopher in his age of what he already knows or a guide for his followers. In this sense, it is possible to see that Plato's whole oeuvre exists in the capacity of an *eidōlon*, the sign which signifies his philosophical system. If so, the memory of those other *eidōla* might function as a built in caution. Not only do they suggest that the philosopher's word might be misleading or impermanent in itself but, as *eidōla* of the

⁸⁴¹ Pl. *Phdr.* 276d.

⁸⁴² Pl. *Tht.* 150c: βασιανίζειν δυνατὸν εἶναι παντὶ τρόπῳ πότερον εἶδωλον καὶ ψεῦδος ἀποτίκει τοῦ νέου ἢ διάνοια ἢ γόνιμόν τε καὶ ἀληθές ('to test, in this way and that, whether the mind of the young person is engendering a phantom, a falsehood, or something fertile and true').

⁸⁴³ *Il.* 5.449 and 451; *Od.* 4.796; *Od.* 11. 84ff.

⁸⁴⁴ At, e.g. Eur. *Hel.* 34 and 582. Reports of Stesichorus' use of the word *eidolon* occur in P. *Resp.* 9.586c; Aristid. *Or.* 2. 234 and Dio Chrys. *Or.* 11. 40s, as cited in Campbell (1991), p. 95.

cultural memory, they are always underscored by notions of impermanence and transience.

Given the repeated use of the word *eidōlon* in the *Helen* and the play's evident notoriety in the period following its first performance it may not even be much of a leap to speculate that Plato may have been drawing on a cultural association of the word with Euripides' play.⁸⁴⁵ Wohl suggests a similar reading of Thucydides' version of the attempted Athenian conquest of Sicily. Here she comments that Thucydides characterises the Athenians as chasing an *eidōlon* in their invasion attempt and thereby signals, in the recollection of Euripides' *Helen*, the catastrophic effects of their actions.⁸⁴⁶ Alternatively, given his supposed quotation from the *Palinode* in the *Phaedrus*, it is possible that Plato was more familiar with Stesichorus' version of this story.⁸⁴⁷ Whichever may have been the case, reading Plato's use of the word *eidolon* with the cultural memory of Helen's substitution is interesting and instructive.

A reading of Plato based on cultural memory illustrates that what all the poetic *eidōla* have in common is that they are false. Whether used with kind or malicious intent, they represent a real person but are not that real person. In the case of the *Helen*, in particular, belief in the reality of an *eidōlon* led to the deaths of many and, significantly for thinking about Plato's politics, the destruction of a city. Plato's Socrates in the *Phaedrus* cautions that the written word should always be accompanied by discussion; that the written words are, in themselves, useless and that a serious pursuit of truth underlies them. In writing his dialogues, Plato knew that they would be disconnected from his own spoken words and so everything in them suggests the need for engaged reading. If belief in writing is belief in an *eidōlon*, one moreover that seduces men into destroying whole cultures, then the truth of the written word can never be approached as transparent and must always be actively questioned. This is even more the case when thinking about the interpretation of the Forms as discussed in the introduction to this chapter.⁸⁴⁸ If the memory of the philosopher is not of a whole truth but of a truth partially glimpsed and imperfectly remembered, then philosophy is always a process of striving, of questioning and of moving toward, rather than of holding onto, or absorbing, an absolute.

⁸⁴⁵ For *Helen*'s notoriety see e.g. Wright (2006), pp. 33-47; this analysis on p. 36.

⁸⁴⁶ Wohl (2015), pp. 110-16.

⁸⁴⁷ Pl. *Phdr.* 243a.

⁸⁴⁸ See earlier discussion pp. 187-89.

What we see in Plato's writing is an ambivalence to the written word that embodies itself in the very fabric of his dialogues. He integrates the oral tradition into the form of the dialogue and also in the form of Socrates himself as a representative of that tradition; but at the same time he seeks to find a new authority for his form of philosophic practice. Therefore, on the one hand, 'Socrates' insists on the authority of spoken dialectic over the written word, while on the other hand, this Socrates is a literary creation, whose words in the dialogue are given weight and privilege by the author behind them.

Whether authority lies in the spoken or the written word, however, the manner in which Plato incorporates the oral tradition is significant. Many have written about how Plato's use of the dialogue form mirrors or adopts the political practice of democratic Athens in that it puts the responsibility for judgement on the shoulders of the reader, but reading Plato's philosophy is not the equivalent of judging an agonistic debate, at least not in the case of the *Theaetetus*. Socrates does have adversaries in some of the dialogues with whom Plato makes it difficult for his readers to sympathise but *Theaetetus* is not one of them.⁸⁴⁹ The engagement of the reader in the text rests not in judgement between two opposing arguments, but rather in the interpretation of oblique metaphors, such as the Socratic midwife or of passages such as the Digression. With regard to both of these, the array of scholarly interpretations argues for their difficulty. The problems of interpretation that these passages present are not caused by the persuasive rhetoric of the orator (as they might be in the political sphere in or in tragedy) but by the disconnect between words and speaker: the problems bring us, once again, to an anxiety about the written text and our inability to ask questions of the absent author.

In this respect, Plato seems to offer us some guidance with regard to interpretation not in terms of what we should think but in terms of the process of working through the problems. In his guise as midwife, Socrates warns *Theaetetus* that he may need to 'dispose of' (*ἀποβάλλω*) anything *Theaetetus* delivers which may be an *eidōlon* and 'not true' (*μὴ ἀληθές*).⁸⁵⁰ In the context of philosophical practice, this entails a form of forgetting. *Theaetetus* must let the child go and not, possessively, 'get angry like a mother over her firstborn child-' (*μὴ ἀγρίαινε ὡσπερ αἱ πρωτοτόκοι περὶ τὰ παιδιά*). In terms of

⁸⁴⁹ Though the imaginary Protagoras might be.

⁸⁵⁰ Pl. *Tht.* 151c.

reading philosophy, this process entails a form of active reading—reading which balances remembering and forgetting—and this is the subject of the rest of this section.

iii) Reading with memory: exaleiphein and Plato's political philosophy

If Plato's dialogues stimulate active, engaged reading, there is also a sense in which this process relies on an active, engaged memory and there are political ramifications which come with adopting this method. By analysing Plato's use of the word *exaleiphen*, this subsection explores the kind of remembering and forgetting which he proposes for the reader of philosophical writing. Although the Wax Tablet is dismissed as a model to represent false belief, it does illustrate a link, as Plato sees it, between memory and knowledge. Here, Socrates says that those with deep, smooth wax make imprints which are deep and lasting and that such people 'are not only quick to learn but have good memories and instead of misaligning imprints with perceptions they believe what is true. ... these are the people who are called wise' (*εἰσὶν οἱ πρῶτον μὲν εὐμαθεῖς, ἔπειτα μνήμονες, εἶτα οὐ παραλλάττουσι τῶν αἰσθήσεων τὰ σημεῖα ἀλλὰ δοξάζουσιν ἀληθῆ. ... καὶ σοφοὶ δὴ οὗτοι καλοῦνται*).⁸⁵¹ This is similar to his treatment of memory and knowledge in the *Republic*, Book 6, where Socrates states that 'The forgetful soul, then, we must not list in the roll of competent lovers of wisdom, but we require a good memory' (*ἐπιλήσμονα ἄρα ψυχὴν ἐν ταῖς ἰκανῶς φιλοσόφοις μὴ ποτε ἐγκρίνωμεν, ἀλλὰ μνημονικὴν αὐτὴν ζητῶμεν δεῖν εἶναι*).⁸⁵² As important, or even more so, than good memory, however, is the ability to forget, not in a careless, haphazard way, but in the sense of a willingness to let go of ideas which are no longer useful or relevant. The Wax Tablet is a useful place from which to begin this exploration.

As I discussed above, Socrates dismisses the model of the Wax Tablet because it cannot account for the false belief in abstract terms, but only with concrete perceptions.

Whether he dismisses the Wax Tablet completely or only partially is, however, a matter of scholarly contention. F. M. Cornford suggests, on the one hand, that the model works '*in its own domain*,' that is, as a model for memory and false belief that does not involve abstract thought.⁸⁵³ Chappell, on the other hand, argues that 'Plato's intention is to show

⁸⁵¹ Pl. *Tht.* 194d.

⁸⁵² Pl. *Resp.* VI.486d

⁸⁵³ Cornford (1935,), pp. 129-30.

that it is *completely* inadequate.⁸⁵⁴ Certainly, in the context of the dialogue, as this section will make clear, a model of memory which cannot cope with abstract thoughts and ideas is not a useful one. And yet, the image of ‘wiping clean’ (*exaleiphein*), used here and elsewhere in the dialogue, suggests that perhaps the model *can* support such things after all.

The Wax Tablet image is foreshadowed in the *Theaetetus* when Socrates dismisses Theaetetus’ first hypothesis, that knowledge is perception. He says that they need to ‘go back to the beginning, wiping out everything from before’ (*καὶ ὄρα δὴ νῦν πάλιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς, πάντα τὰ πρόσθεν ἐξαλείψας*).⁸⁵⁵ Here the image of ‘wiping clean’ (*exaleiphein*) clearly refers metaphorically to some sort of metaphorical block or tablet in the/as the memory which is inscribed on in order that we might remember and which is wiped clean when we must forget. This idea also arises specifically in the Wax Tablet passage itself when Socrates says that ‘whatever is wiped or proves incapable of being imprinted we have forgotten and do not know’ (*ὃ δ’ ἂν ἐξαλειφθῆ ἢ μὴ οἶόν τε γέωηται ἐκμαγῆναι, ἐπιλελῆσθαι τε καὶ μὴ ἐπιστασθαι*).⁸⁵⁶ *Exaleiphein* can be translated variously as to plaster or wash over, to wipe out and to obliterate. Although there are clearly differences between a gesture which obliterates and a gesture which whitewashes, there is also a striking overlap when thinking about inscriptions on stone or wax.

Loraux, in her study of political forgetting following the oligarchy of 403 in Athens (the period in which the *Theaetetus* is set) comments on *exaleiphein* as an explicitly political term in that its main use was in the context of whitewashing the inscribed tablets which held the Athenian laws. In her terms, ‘Effacer, en sens grec, c’est détruire par surcharge’ (‘To erase in the Greek sense is to destroy by additional covering’).⁸⁵⁷ Painting over those inscriptions which prescribed animosity between Athenian citizens during the period of *stasis* in Athens was a way of forgetting, politically, of ensuring that grievances could not be remembered in an official or litigious capacity which might incite further conflict. Loraux goes so far as to say that ‘la politique, c’est faire comme si de rien n’était’ (‘politics means acting as if everything were fine’).⁸⁵⁸ In Loraux’s formulation, the person who is

⁸⁵⁴ Chappell (2004), p. 181.

⁸⁵⁵ Pl. *Tht.* 187a-b.

⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 191d.

⁸⁵⁷ Loraux (1997), pp. 152. Loraux uses an example from Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 40.2 and it is used in the same sense in Hdt. 7.69.

⁸⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

capable of seeming to ‘forget’ is the most ‘political’ of people. As with the *eklēsis* at the end of the *Odyssey*, there is once more a balancing act to be managed between useful memory which encourages productive debate—such as the audience’s memory of Odysseus’ slaughter of the suitors—and harmful memory, like *penthos alastōn* which halts social progress and threatens civil war. Whereas in Chapter 1, my stress was on useful memory, here the focus is political forgetting.

Although, with a wax tablet, the act is one of subtraction rather than addition, it serves equally as an act of erasure. Just as the Athenians would paint over the text of an inscription on stone so as to be able to inscribe a correction to the law, so they would scrape the top layer of wax from a tablet in order to make a correction or to start afresh. Evidence suggests that wax tablets were used mainly for impermanent forms of writing—in the way that we now use notebooks. They were less expensive than papyrus and parchment and easily reusable to boot.⁸⁵⁹

The political forgetting, as described by Loraux, is clearly not true forgetting as we understand it. The events and laws are still present in the memory, under the layer of whitewash, but memory of them is not permitted to hamper progress. It is this ‘political’ kind of forgetting which Plato’s Socrates invokes with his use of the word *exaleiphein*: the philosopher must be able to move forward without being held back by a commitment to or an investment in ideas which are proven to be worthless or to ingrained truths or assumptions. In view of this, it seems that Plato elides these two senses of *exaleiphein*, of ‘painting over’ and ‘scraping off.’ He preserves the political, pragmatic sense of whitewashing while also making use of the sense of ease and disposability associated with the wax tablet.

While this analysis preserves the political sense of Loraux’s definition of *exaleiphein*, my interpretation differs in tone from hers. In his study, ‘Seven Types of Forgetting’, Paul Connerton characterises the amnesty of 403 BC as ‘prescriptive forgetting’.⁸⁶⁰ This is a kind of ‘repressive forgetting,’ mandated not to subdue a potentially revolutionary populace as in a totalitarian regime, but because it is seen to be in the interests of all parties concerned. The kind of forgetting which I propose that Plato advocates bears more in common with Connerton’s ‘Forgetting that is constituted in the formation of a

⁸⁵⁹ Tsuneishi (2014); Urry (2013).

⁸⁶⁰ Connerton (2008) pp. 61-62.

new identity'. Connerton describes this type of forgetting as one which emphasises not the 'loss' of forgetting but 'the gain that accrues to those who know how to discard memories that serve no practicable purpose in the management of one's current identity and ongoing purposes.'⁸⁶¹ Aleida Assmann returns to this idea with a political slant, construing it 'Constructive forgetting – a tabula rasa for a new political biographical beginning.'⁸⁶² She, again, stresses the 'hopeful' aspect of this forgetting 'which supports a break and lays the ground' for a fresh start.⁸⁶³

As a brief aside, this model for memory clearly has some problems – problems which Freud addressed in his recasting of the Wax Tablet as the Mystic Writing Pad. As discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, Freud's model consists of a wax sheet overlaid by a double sheet of celluloid.⁸⁶⁴ According to him, one wrote on the top layer and could erase one's writing by lifting the celluloid, but the impressions would be retained on the wax. Clearly, this operates more like 'whitewashing' in that the memory trace remains but is covered and written over. Plato's model, does however, emphasise the idea that we should be able to move on from ideas which are no longer useful with the same ease with which we might scrape clean a wax tablet.

In part, the ideas which Socrates suggests we must leave behind are academic. In the example above, the idea from which Theaetetus must move on is his definition that knowledge is perception. At other times, though, Socrates explicitly draws attention to commonly held truths about the political life of the city, specifically democratic Athens. While refuting Protagorean relativism Socrates asks Theaetetus and Theodorus to consider whether 'anything a city thought was advantageous to itself and laid down as such would with absolute certainty turn out to be so' (*ἂν θῆται πόλις συμφέροντα οἰηθεῖσα αὐτῇ, παντός μᾶλλον ταῦτα καὶ συνοίσειν*).⁸⁶⁵ He also points the spotlight at the Protagorean, relativist view that there is no such thing as justice in itself but rather whatever seems to be just 'to people collectively comes to be true at the moment it seems so to them and for as long a time as it seems so' (*τὸ κοινῇ δόξαν τοῦτο γίγνεται ἀληθές τότε, ὅταν δόξη καὶ ὅσον ἂν δοκῇ χρόνον*).⁸⁶⁶ As Euben writes, drawing on Ober,

⁸⁶¹ Ibid, pp. 62-63.

⁸⁶² Assmann (2014), p. 7, categorises the amnesty of 403 BC under this heading but I am more inclined to agree with Connerton's definition in that the amnesty was imposed on the populace.

⁸⁶³ Ibid, p. 7.

⁸⁶⁴ See Introduction to this thesis, p. 13-14.

⁸⁶⁵ Pl. *Tht.* 172a.

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid, 172b.

such ideas represent “democratic knowledge” as exemplified by the enactment of the formula of the Athenian Assembly—*edoxe tōi dēmōi* (it appeared right to the people),’ and so to let go of, or move on from, such ideas represented a big and potentially dangerous step. This is so even if, like Euben, one emphasises ‘the degree to which Athenians institutionalized self-reflection and self-critique.’⁸⁶⁷

The language of ‘wiping clean,’ though not the specific term *exaleiphein* is also used in an explicitly political context in the *Republic*, Book 6. Here, in speaking of philosopher kings as the rulers of the ideal city, Socrates states that

λαβόντες, ἧν δ’ ἐγώ, ὡσπερ πίνακα πόλιν τε καὶ ἦθη ἀνθρωπων, πρῶτον
μὲν καθαρὰν ποιήσειαν ἄν, ὃ οὐ ῥάδιον... τῷ μῆτε ιδιώτου μῆτε πόλεως
ἐθελῆσαι ἄν ἄψασθαι μηδὲ γράφειν νόμους, πρὶν ἢ παραλαβεῖν καθαρὰν ἢ
αὐτοὶ ποιῆσαν.⁸⁶⁸

They will take the city and the characters of men, as they might a tablet, and first wipe it clean – no easy task... They would refuse to take in hand either individual or state or to legislate before they either received a clean slate or themselves made it clean.

Although, this is a *pinaka*, a ‘slate,’ rather than a *κήρινος ἐκμαγεῖον*, ‘wax tablet,’ and although Socrates speaks of *καθαρὰν ποιήσειαν* to describe wiping clean, the similarity is clear. Here, the use of *catharos* (clean or purify) rather than *exaleiphein* has more to do with the writing being on a slate than with a difference in meaning. Just as a stone inscription was whitewashed and a wax tablet scraped away, the writing on a slate is cleaned off. Therefore, we may trace a continuity in Plato’s use of this image philosophically and politically. This states in bald, political terms what Plato suggests in the *Theaetetus*: that the current systems are not working and need to be jettisoned, or forgotten, with the same lack of sentimentality with which one might wipe clean a slate. Unlike in the *Theaetetus* though, there is not the same sense of preserving what is good and worthwhile. This is forgetting which is not held in balance by its counterpoint: remembering.

In the ways detailed above, Plato’s Socrates counsels Theaetetus and, by extension, his reader, to let go of, or to forget, the hold of these ingrained political ‘truths.’ As an

⁸⁶⁷ Euben (1997), p. 92, drawing on Ober (1994), pp. 102-6; (1994b), pp. 149-71) and (1994c), pp. 85-108.

⁸⁶⁸ Pl. *Resp.* 6. 501a.

internal representation of Plato's reader, Theaetetus' success or otherwise in this is a matter of some contention. Some, such as Paul Stern, have held that the Wax Tablet model 'provides all [Theaetetus] yearns for. He longs himself to be the knower with the gift of fine wax.'⁸⁶⁹ He even goes so far as to say that Theaetetus' reluctance to let go of the Wax Tablet is representative of his unquestioning acceptance of all that society tells us is 'beautiful and good' and that this continues to prevent his development into a true Socratic thinker until his death in battle, fighting for his city.⁸⁷⁰ Textual evidence suggests, rather, that Blondell's opposite stance is more convincing. She argues that throughout the dialogue, Theaetetus actually represents Socrates' ideal pupil and part of her reason for this is that he moves with Socrates at all times, never holding on for long to theories which Socrates has shown to be faulty and always willing to come up with alternatives.⁸⁷¹ With regard to the Wax Tablet, Theaetetus questions Socrates' reasons for his change of mind but he does not seek to hold onto the image beyond its usefulness. It may be that, in the end, Stern's reading of Theaetetus is borne out by his dying for Athens in war. He has not, after all distanced himself from the political life of the city. This is not, perhaps, conclusive evidence though: we know from the *Apology* that Socrates also fought for Athens and 'ran the risk of death' (*ἐκινδύνευον ἀποθανεῖν*), albeit as a younger man.⁸⁷²

If Socratic philosophical practice can be defined as a questioning of certain assumptions, including those most fundamental to political society, so Platonic writing encourages the very same thing, not only through its representation of Socrates' words, but through its imperative to call into question even these words themselves.⁸⁷³ As discussed above, Socratic dialogue showcases a didactic relationship based on interaction and collaboration rather than on persuasion and this is the kind of relationship which Plato encourages with the text.⁸⁷⁴ Although the words of the text will always remain the same, as Socrates states in the *Phaedrus*, our relationship with them and our interpretation of them will change. This is because the answers to the questions posed by the texts are not supplied in the words themselves but are generated inside of its readers. These answers will change as we change, as we question further and refine our ideas. Both Socrates and

⁸⁶⁹ Stern (2008), p. 240.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 255.

⁸⁷¹ Blondell (2002), pp. 256-60.

⁸⁷² Pl. *Ap.* 28e.

⁸⁷³ The connection between the oral philosophy of Plato's Socrates and the written philosophy of Plato, as well as the intrinsic politics of both is explored in Long (2014).

⁸⁷⁴ See earlier discussion in this chapter, pp. 199.

Plato, challenge their pupils on an individual level, rather than in a public forum, and in both, the individual is encouraged to cultivate a higher moral standard by which to reflect on and renegotiate, in her or his own terms, the laws and customs of the prevailing culture.

In order to read actively, in an engaged way, the reader must always hold remembering and forgetting in tension. In this, the reader of Plato is akin to the audience of the *Odyssey* who must 'forget' for political unity and progress and yet, must also remember for those very same reasons. Plato's reader must remember words, theories, practices, stories and poetry but must also be prepared to forget these if philosophical progress so demands it. This seems brutal and Plato's record of Socrates' life does not suggest otherwise. He lived and died according to his beliefs, demonstrating the high stakes involved in a commitment to the philosophical life. However, as in the conception of the Forms discussed above, it is also possible to see in the *Theaetetus* at least, an understanding that even the philosopher is human and fallible and the best we can ever do is to strive to be our best selves.

The final section of this chapter considers an aspect of this in greater detail. I have already discussed *aporia* in connection with the midwife image. In this, Socrates suggested that *aporia* was a term given to the effect of his philosophical practice by the ignorant and that it might more usefully and positively be construed as a stage on the path to enlightenment. To conclude, I would like to consider *aporia* in greater detail alongside the ending of the *Odyssey*, sending this thesis 'back to the beginning.'

3.6 *Aporia*: a conclusion about the inconclusive

The aporetic ending of the *Theaetetus* is an aspect of the dialogue which has received a lot of scholarly attention. *Aporia*, in general, tends to be construed as a didactic tool used in the early dialogues by Socrates and, it may be inferred, by Plato, 'with the presumed intention of eliciting an active intellectual response, as opposed to passive learning.'⁸⁷⁵ Because the *Theaetetus* is thought to have been written after dialogues such as the *Republic*, which do not end in *aporia* but offer positive and detailed philosophical theories, the return to *aporia* in the *Theaetetus* is marked out for special attention. This

⁸⁷⁵ Blondell (2002), p. 42.

thesis has already alluded to some of these interpretations as they affect readings of the midwife and Wax Tablet images, but opinions are divided as to whether the *Theaetetus* is genuinely aporetic or not. Those who seek a Unitarian reading of Plato see the Forms as providing a resolution to the aporetic ending: they, rather than any of the definitions discussed in the dialogue, represent the true definition of knowledge. Revisionists are more inclined to see the ending as suggestive of the fact that Plato has moved on from the theory he presents in the *Republic*.⁸⁷⁶ This thesis, while it does not speak of the Platonic corpus as a whole, sees an intertextual relationship between the Platonic texts and views the *Theaetetus* as refining and nuancing some of the theories found elsewhere. So it is with *aporia*.

Progress, in Platonic terms, is in the eye of the beholder. The *Theaetetus* appears to end in *aporia* but we know from the midwife metaphor that reducing those around him to confusion is something which Socrates' critics attribute to him because they do not understand his methods. With this in mind, whether, like Sedley, we see the progress of the *Theaetetus* as being out of Socratism and towards the Platonism of the Forms, or not, we might see Theaetetus' progress in his increasing awareness of what he does not know. *Aporia* is, therefore, a negative way of construing something which Plato casts as positive. In the Cave of the *Republic*, when the prisoner becomes free of his fetters and is able to look up and see the sun, he initially feels pain (*ἀλγέω*) because of the dazzling (*μαρμαρυγή*) light and is unable to 'discern the objects whose shadows he formerly saw.' However, this state of helplessness is shown to be the first stage of his journey into freedom.⁸⁷⁷ So it is with the Socratic encounter: when our preconceptions are broken down, there will at first be confusion and intellectual pain. If we do not give up here but pursue the subject, holding remembering and forgetting in balance, then from this state of confusion we might move towards true knowledge.

In casting himself as Athens' gadfly, Socrates implies that acknowledgement of this state of *aporia*, in its true sense, represents an engaged political, as well as philosophical, consciousness. It suggests questioning and striving to be better, to find the best political solutions and practices, rather than blindly accepting convention and looking for lazy or self-serving shortcuts. As readers of Plato, we are challenged in the same way as the

⁸⁷⁶ As useful overview is provided by Chappell (2004), pp. 22-24.

⁸⁷⁷ Pl. *Resp.* VII. 515c.

Athenians were by Socrates, to be a Theaetetus, pushing through our uncertainty and confusion, rather than a silent spectator like Euclides, or a Theodorus, refusing to strip down and fully engage.

In this way, *aporia* is a term which accrues meaning in Plato's texts. The early dialogues show the frustration associated with it and the Cave metaphor illustrates, through imagery, the sense of helplessness and pain at not being able to see, or know, anything clearly. Its imagery also suggests that this state is the first stage in a journey to true knowledge or freedom, something the *Theaetetus* claims more literally, in Socrates' statement that *aporia* is the term bestowed by those ignorant of his methods. Though it is generally accepted that the *Theaetetus* follows the *Republic*, I suggest an intertextual relationship which adds depth or nuance to our understanding of the terms used and do not try to pass comment on the order or dating of the texts. Memory of the way that *aporia* occurs across the texts adds to our understanding of the term in each specific instance.

One of the effects of *aporia* is that the lack of resolution sends the reader back to the beginning to read and think through the ideas again, this time with a balance of remembering and forgetting. This is also the effect of concluding this chapter with *aporia*. In a forthcoming work, Joel Christensen suggests that the forced *eklēsis* at the end of the *Odyssey* works in the same way as Socratic *aporia*. He argues that an aporetic ending requires 'group intellectual and emotional work' in 'shaping its own and each other's perception of and response to the narrative,' a process which 'invites us to go back to the beginning and examine the problem again.' It is this 'jarring finish,' he writes, which 'may just be the thing to shift us out of a passive, paradigmatic mindset,' inviting us to ask questions such as 'If revenge is wrong for Eupheides, was it wrong for Odysseus?'⁸⁷⁸ The similarities here are clear but I suggest that there are fundamental differences too.

As Chapter 1 suggested, the forced ending of the *Odyssey* does raise questions which the community of the audience must discuss and address for the benefit of their own political well-being.⁸⁷⁹ Memory of earlier episodes in the poem is one of their interpretive tools here, especially where they can remember details to which those in the poem were not privy or which they had been forced to forget. So far, Christensen's theory holds true.

⁸⁷⁸ Christensen (forthcoming).

⁸⁷⁹ See discussion in Chapter 1, pp. 102-04.

However, as Elton Barker suggests in his reading of Euripides' *Orestes*, the *eklēsis* functions in a similar way to the *deus ex machina* of tragedy: at the moment of crisis, a god steps in to bring a wayward myth back in line with tradition.⁸⁸⁰ This moment is, in one way, reassuring, in that it re-establishes order on chaos and soothes us with familiar narratives, even happy endings. Simultaneously, however, it asks us to question whether those feelings of reassurance are entirely appropriate. In this way, the *eklēsis*, like the *deus ex machina*, breaks that immersive experience of listening or watching which I discussed at length in connection with the *Trojan Women* in Chapter 2. For this reason, I suggest that the *eklēsis* and the *deus ex machina* are particularly suited to poetic genres which engage the audience's emotions, immersing them in another world and involving them in empathic relationships which unsettle their own identities and from which they need to be 'woken.'

Aporia functions differently in the Platonic dialogues because Socrates and Plato deliberately distance themselves from such seductive, poetic techniques, as I showed in my analysis of the Wax Tablet passage.⁸⁸¹ Although they do, as I suggested there, preserve aspects of poetry which serve their philosophical endeavours—Socrates' use of imagery, for example, or Plato's use of characterisation—there is nothing reassuring about *aporia*: it is utterly disorientating. Philosophical thought is deliberately presented as something which is painful and difficult, like childbirth, and when it becomes attractive or immersive, it is usually because we are being lulled into a false sense of security and are falling into mental traps.

Finally, I suggest that *aporia* and the *eklēsis* function differently because of their respective contexts of performance/reading. Chapter 1 discussed the idea that the *Odyssey* was performed publicly in classical Athens, as part of an institutionalised ritual replaying constantly the founding moment of the *polis*. Because of this performance context, it invited its audience to remember and reflect *as a group* on that foundation and on their own political institutions and practices. Plato, however, operates outside any political institution. His texts were either read privately, by individuals, or read aloud in front of small, select groups of students. While Socrates declares his practice to be beneficial to the *polis*, he, like Plato, engages with individual, private citizens outside of its

⁸⁸⁰ Barker (2017), p. 404.

⁸⁸¹ See earlier discussion in this chapter, pp. 221-23.

institutional forms. The main concern of the *Theaetetus* is not the political health of the community but the philosophical health of the individual. As a consequence, while the *eklēsis* is put upon and negotiated by the group, the remembering and forgetting stimulated by *aporia* is experienced by the individual. In this way, as stated in the introduction to this chapter, the political effect of memory associated with epic reflects a model of memory which is based on the *collective*: it is experienced together with the effect that it reconstitutes the participating group. The political effect of memory associated with Platonic philosophy, reflects a model of *collected* memory. By this, the group is reconstituted or re-membered, but by collected individuals, whose personal experience of philosophy becomes shared and subsequently, informs, challenges and shapes the make-up of the political community. In the end, however, whether memory is experienced individually or as a collective, these differences of context and semantics do not detract from the central idea here. In all three cases—*eklēsis*, *deus ex machina* and *aporia*—the act of balancing remembering and forgetting is configured as the foundation of responsible citizenship.

Conclusion

This thesis has set out to explore the role played by memory—with its twin facets of remembering and forgetting—in the establishment and development of the political group in ancient Greece. In order to do this, it has examined three texts across three genres and asked the same three questions of those texts. These were: How do literary representations of memory shape and reshape the internal communities of the texts? How might the audience's memory of earlier moments, other texts, myths or historical events affect their interpretations of the texts? How might those memories affect the audience's own experience and performance of politics? In order to make the idea of represented memory more tangible, the thesis has focused on testimony as a narrative expression of memory and it has taken the (sometimes notional, sometimes actual) frame of the trial as a starting point.

My analysis has been underpinned at all times by modern theories of memory, trauma and testimony. This theory was drawn from a variety of disciplines, but the most important for this thesis were Olick's theory of social memory, the Assmanns' theory of cultural memory and LaCapra's theory of 'empathic unsettlement.' My investigation of memory in the texts and my conclusions about the receiving audiences have borne out Olick's notion that the act of remembering as a group reshapes that group. The idea of cultural memory I have used as a kind of interpretive tool: a shifting, impermanent resource signalled by the author and brought to realisation by the audience or reader. 'Empathic unsettlement' has proven particularly useful for thinking about the emotional effect of a text on an audience as a political stimulus. These are all ways of integrating the theory of memory into the study of classical literature which have been used relatively little until now.

In my investigation of the *Odyssey*, I discussed the idea that remembering is often represented in epic as an infusion or absorption and that this is both transformative and effective of action. When Telemachus was infused with the *menos* of Odysseus, he began to act as a leader and called his first assembly. Because the people were not similarly infused with this memory, their political allegiances were seen as fluid at best: at one moment they wept with Telemachus while at the next, they were silently complicit with the suitors. In this way, I demonstrated that memory not only stimulated political action—the refounding of the Ithacan assembly—but was also indicative of the political

make-up of the community. That is to say, who and what the people remembered and how strongly they remembered them/it, determined their political allegiances on Ithaca. The collapse of the first Ithacan assembly was shown to stimulate the audience's memory too. Had they remembered Athena's instructions to Telemachus, they would have known that the assembly was never meant to succeed. The promise of a political solution was raised so as to be dismissed and because of this, the audience was provoked to reflect on the performance of politics in their own community: what success or failure of the assembly consists of and what it rests on.

In order to examine the power dynamics which operate in the play of memory and politics in the poem, I adapted Farenga's model of the trial as a useful frame. Within this, I suggested that memory narratives acted as testimonies which revealed the poem's desire to control its own interpretation. Zeus' paradigmatic memory narrative, regarding Aegisthus and the foolishness of mortals like him, was seen to establish the normative message of the poem and many of the other memory narratives shared in the poem added authority to this message. Other memories, such as Amphimedon's and Eupheithes', were discredited by association with the suitors and because they disputed a version of events authorised by the triumvirate of Odysseus, the narrator and Zeus. The trial metaphor drew attention not only to the political power play at work in the authorization (or otherwise) of these narratives but also to the audience's political role in listening to and judging them.

The chapter concluded that the audience's memories of the mythic tradition and of resonant details from the poem itself made alternative readings of the poem possible. The *eklēsis*—Zeus' imposition of complete forgetting on the Ithacans—provided a moment which categorically differentiated the internal and external audiences of the poem. Whereas the internal audience were subject to Zeus' decree, the audience were not and were, therefore, encouraged both to remember and to question. In this way, although Zeus remains the ultimate authority in the poem and his testimony strengthens the poem's dominant, normative narrative, the audience's memory provides a way to challenge this reading. The *eklēsis* provides an incitement not just to remember passively but to be infused with the memory, as Telemachus was. Just as Telemachus embodies the memory of his father and this represents a political awakening on his part, so memory of the slaughter may be embodied by the audience, prompting them to retell the story and

to discuss the political values of society in order to prevent a recurrence of such violence and collective trauma. The *eklēsis* draws attention to the importance of balancing remembering and forgetting in political life. On the one hand, it shows the importance of jettisoning *alaston penthos*—Loraux’s ‘unforgetting’ grief which never gives way to amnesty—as represented by characters such as Aegyptus in the first Ithacan assembly and by Eupeithes in the last. This is the kind of unhealthy remembering which leads to irresolvable conflict. On the other hand, it holds out still for a kind of intellectual, political remembering, one which leads the individual within the collective to question and to debate the norms and values of her/his society. The chapter concluded with the idea that poem’s public re-performance in the Athenian ritual of the Panathenaea, a festival which celebrated the re-founding of the city every four years, was central to this idea.

Chapter 2, on Euripides’ *Trojan Women*, picked up from this point, focusing on the public and political experience of re-remembering at the City Dionysia. It explored the ways in which tragedy was the successor of epic not only in an aesthetic sense but also in terms of the institutional embedding of its foundational narrative. It analysed the differences for the audience between hearing poem with an omniscient narrator and viewing a tragedy with no omniscient voice. It also continued to view the audience as a collective which responds politically to the actions it witnesses. In this sense, the quasi-trial, represented by the *agōn* scene, adds a political context and once again, puts the audience members into the position of citizen jurors.

Whereas in the *Odyssey*, where memory was seen to authorise but also to challenge the normative thrust of the poem, here I demonstrated the ways in which memory was used and manipulated to establish and sanction Hecuba’s narrative of the war. In this, I mobilised the theory of trauma, articulated by Aleida Assmann, in order to analyse Hecuba’s authority as the traumatised victim. I also considered the way in which the play’s remembering of the *Iliad* served to support this version of her and of the war. This chapter also showed Hecuba making the personal political in her performance and harnessing tropes of trauma in order to create a community of feeling on stage and in the theatre.

In the course of this investigation, Chapter 2 used work by Johnstone and Hesk to identify Hecuba’s memory narratives, especially the speech which she delivers in the *agōn*, as examples of the kind of persuasive political speech prevalent in democratic Athens. In this

way, the chapter suggested that this ‘community of feeling’ was also a political community, not just in that it was literally made up of the citizens of Athens, but also in the sense that it forged a political allegiance with Hecuba against Helen and the Greeks. The chapter explored the construction of this allegiance using LaCapra’s ‘empathic unsettlement’, alongside Hoffman’s articulation of cognitive dissociation in listening to trauma theory. It suggested that the cognition of the audience may be ‘unsettled’ not just by the immersive experience of theatre but also by affective nature of traumatic testimony. In discussing the audience’s role in judging the *agōn*, it further suggested that for the political and juridical citizen, caution was needed in situations where empathy may have been aroused by emotive political speech.

Just as in the *Odyssey* chapter, I also showed the ways in which audience memory—of the play and their cultural memory—served as an interpretive tool and a means of breaking the immersive ‘bubble’ created by the theatrical experience. As part of this, I examined the less immediately obvious ways in which the play remembered the *Odyssey*, especially the epic’s similar attempt to control narrative and its interpretation. Here the chapter concluded that the absence of a narrator in the *Trojan Women* was an important generic difference between tragedy and epic, underlining the idea that Hecuba’s story was not the whole story of the play. To an extent, that absence of narrator could be seen to make interpreting the drama more challenging for the audience because Hecuba’s narratives are so dominant in the play that she acts as a kind of playwright or orchestrator herself. Both of these contribute to the difficulty for the audience in creating cognitive distance from her testimony.

Like the *Odyssey* chapter too, this chapter concluded that ultimate responsibility for judgement rested with the audience of the play who must measure themselves against the inadequate judges onstage. In this case, Menelaus in the *agōn* stands out in particular. The analysis of the *agōn* drew attention to the uncomfortable moral ground onto which empathy with Hecuba could lead the audience. Others had already commented in depth on Hecuba’s use of rhetoric in the *agōn*, but in so doing, had identified it as cold and emotionally detached. My analysis, however, found continuity in her use of rhetoric across the play and also in the strong emotion which drove it. Memory was seen to provide the means by which to question Hecuba’s dominant narrative of the

Trojan War and to encourage the audience to reflect collectively on their own performance as citizens in a political society which thrived on such persuasive speech.

This last idea also became a prominent strand in Chapter 3. Here, I explored the idea that the *Theaetetus* triggers a memory of the *Apology* which suffuses the text and transforms it into a kind of prequel. It simultaneously sets up the events of the *Apology* as Socrates is on his way to meet the charges brought against him, and extrapolates ideas from the *Apology*, providing a greater depth of evidence for the jury of readers to reach a more informed verdict than that reached in court. I suggested that this memory of the *Apology* functioned as the 'memory of literature', a kind of intertextuality. Here though, the memory was author-centred, triggered by Plato intentionally, but requiring the reader to realise the intertextual relationship.

One of the main effects of reading the *Theaetetus* with memory of the *Apology* was that it added a political nuance to Plato's conception of philosophy as explored in the Digression, the midwife image and the Wax Tablet. In the case of the Digression, I examined the way in which memory of the *Apology* allowed Plato to develop arguments to further distance Socrates from allegations of sophism. I suggested that both the philosopher and the politician represented aspects of corruptive sophistic philosophy and that Socratic practice served, rather, to the benefit of Athenian political society.

The midwife image addressed this also but from the point of view of Socrates as a teacher of philosophical citizenship. Whereas in the *Apology* he had taken the stance that he was categorically not a teacher because he had no wisdom to impart, the midwife image allowed him to develop a different model of teaching predicated not on imparting information but on drawing knowledge from those with whom he associated. I proposed that the midwife/patient relationship which Plato's Socrates constructs is similar to that between a therapist and her/his patients. S/he is a mediator of their memories. As such, Socrates' involvement in his students' knowledge production could be read as far greater than acknowledged by the midwife image. Finally, I suggested that the midwife image served to explain some of the misconceptions surrounding Socrates' practice of philosophy which led to his conviction for corrupting Athens' youth. In this way, the text offered a version of Socrates' practice which construed strangeness and confusion as positive attributes and encouraged the reader to judge Socrates differently from the actual jury of his peers in the light of these.

The Wax Tablet model for memory, meanwhile, focused on false belief, a central concern for Plato's case for Socratic 'truth' versus sophistic relativism, given that 'false belief' needed to exist in order to show that Socrates' jury was mistaken. In addition to offering further comment on Socrates' relationship with sophism, I suggested that the Wax Tablet image exemplified the competitive relationship Plato constructed between philosophy and poetry and the agonistic language which underlay that connection. Also, in its analysis of the terms *eidōlon* ('phantom') and *exaleiphein* ('to wipe clean' or 'to paint over'), occurring particularly in that passage, the chapter found that the process of reading and thinking with increasing precision and focus was constitutive of abilities associated with ideal citizenship. It explored the connections between wiping clean and forgetting and concluded that the ideal reader of philosophy, as well as the ideal citizen, needs to learn to hold remembering and forgetting in balance. Philosophical reading and thinking require the reader to forget ideas which are no longer useful. At times, Plato proposes that these ideas might include things considered sacred to Athenian democracy, such as the notion that what appeared right to the people was, indeed, right. In this way, philosophy and political citizenship were identified as being inextricably linked. This kind of forgetting was construed positively, as a way of moving forward and constructing something new: focusing on the future rather than on the past.

Finally, the chapter brought the thesis full circle by considering the notion of *aporia* in connection with the Odyssean *eklēsis* and the tragic *deus ex machina*. Even though the gods feature at the beginning of the *Trojan Women* rather than at the end as is more usual in tragedy, all three techniques have a similar impact in that they require the audience to engage, or re-engage, with the text, bringing a new understanding, awareness or context. Where the *eklēsis* leaves the external audience with their memory, prompting them to use it in order to judge the events of the poem, the *deus ex machina* asks the audience to read this version of myth against the broader mythical backdrop or tradition. *Aporia*, meanwhile, requires the reader to re-evaluate her/his philosophical reading based on what has worked in the process of reasoning and what has not. The chapter concluded that *aporia* and *eklēsis* function differently because of their different generic contexts. Because the *eklēsis* was part of a poem delivered in a public, political setting, it was more likely to generate collective debate and focus the audience on the concerns of the city as a political entity. In contrast, because philosophy was read by private individuals and focused on the philosophical health of the individual, its political

effect on the city would only be felt if those individual philosophers saw fit to come together, as in Plato's vision of the ideal state presented in the *Republic*.

This investigation has found many continuities in the use of memory across the genres. All three texts were seen to interact with a body of cultural memory—of other texts or of a mythic tradition—on which their audiences might reasonably draw. These memories seemed to be deliberately invoked, at times, to serve a range of purposes. Like the Iliadic references in the *Trojan Women*, they sometimes served to add resonance to moments and ideas or to suggest the authority of particular characters or versions of events. At other times, like the intratextual recollection of slaughter in the *Odyssey*, such memories seemed to prompt the audience to question the narrative and their own feelings about it.

Like the memories of tragedy in the *Theaetetus*, memories were seen to be invoked to highlight innovations in the form of departures from tradition. In the *Trojan Women*, for example, Hecuba's recollection of moments from the *Iliad* concerning Astyanax's projected and actual death, recast his life and death in terms of the women around him rather than the men. This mirrored the way in which the play as a whole focused on the plight of the women of Troy, a result of the actions of men, rather than those actions of the men themselves. In nearly all cases, such departures were seen, simultaneously, as positive, progressive moves and questionable, not to be taken entirely at face value. In all cases, these memories were affective—altering the audience's, or reader's, emotional relationship to the text—and effective of political action. In the *Odyssey*, for example, when Eupheithes was able to communicate his *penthos alaston* ('unforgettable grief') and to cultivate, thereby, a sense of cultural trauma, forces mobilised against the house of Odysseus. Though the reactions of external audiences could only be speculated upon, the actions and reactions of internal audiences suggested the active role of memory in remembering political groups.

Where differences occurred in the use of memory, they mainly did so around the purposes and performance contexts of the texts. In all cases, these differences proved to be integral to the genres themselves and in this way, the study of memory also added nuance to our understanding of the composition of texts in different genres. The text which proved most different from the others—Plato's *Theaetetus*—was particularly difficult to address within the confines of this thesis because its conception of memory was so different from the one that informed this thesis as a whole. However, as my

introduction to Chapter 3 suggested, my memory-centred reading of the *Theaetetus* alongside the *Meno*, the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus* opens up new possibilities for thinking about recollection and the Forms and this in turn could feed into thinking further about Platonic politics.

In that introduction, I gestured to the idea that while Plato's Socrates professes a belief in absolutes such as the Forms, as opposed to relativistic truths, he cannot 'remember' them, cannot grasp them and know them. For this reason, while the notion of absolute truth holds in the abstract, in practice it is completely destabilised, and knowledge, like memory, becomes shifting and rootless. The most that the philosopher can do is test, refine and move towards something which seems more weighty and solid. Clearly, there remains much work to be done here on the relationship between Socratic and Platonic philosophy and on dialogues such as the *Republic* where these ideas are worked through much more fully but I believe this study has demonstrated the potential of such research.

Given the current interest in the representation of trauma in ancient Greek literature, this thesis has also shown the potential for thinking through performances of trauma in epic and particularly, tragedy in a more nuanced way. It is in its treatment of trauma theory that the thesis really makes an impact. My consideration of Hecuba and less centrally, Eupheithes in the *Odyssey*, aimed to avoid simplistic, familiar definitions of trauma as something which is only individual, isolating and incommunicable. It has focused instead on the specific behaviour of individuals in the context of the texts and their performance. This investigation found that in these cases, trauma was not silent and insular but prompted the individual to communicate, share and build supportive, vengeful communities. In so doing, it has questioned clichéd notions of victimhood, building on work by Jeffrey Alexander, Barbara Biesecker and Mitchum Huehls and has offered a productive alternative to the more traditional, individual-focused study of trauma in literature.

Chapter 2 has provided a theoretical framework and an example for working through these ideas in tragedy more widely, especially in other Euripidean tragedies where the roles of victim and perpetrator are so often conflated, the *Hecuba*, for example, *Medea* or *Electra*. It has also shown the potential for thinking about audience receptions of tragedy and the literature of trauma more generally, in the light of immersive theatre, postmemory and 'empathic unsettlement.' The study of Hecuba has underlined the

importance of interrogating our prescribed emotional reaction to traumatised testimony, of ensuring that the cognitive response is not lost and of exploring the political dimensions of the relationship which testimony constructs.

My reading of the *eklēsis* in the *Odyssey* was the stimulus for this thesis and its ideas underpin the whole project. The notion that memory divides internal and external audiences, offers a way of reading that upholds or authenticates normative interpretations but simultaneously challenges them. In the case of the *Odyssey* this provides a means by which the audience can read 'past' the authority of Zeus, remembering what 'should' have been forgotten. The thesis has demonstrated the promise of such a mode of interpretation across a variety of texts. In this, it has laid the groundwork for thinking about the ways in which political society is established and re-established by memory, across the genres and through the ages.

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