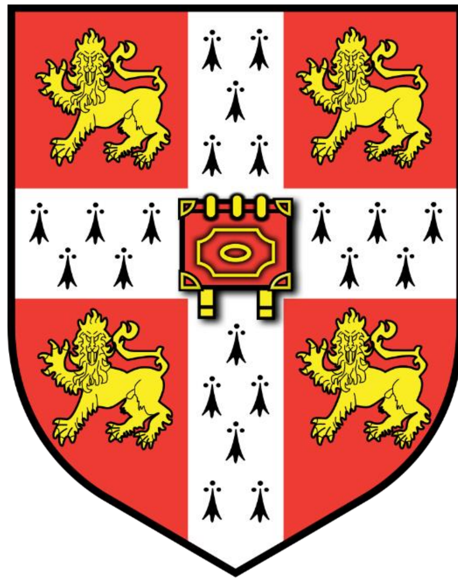
Memory in Roman Oratory: Theory and Practice



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This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.

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Joe Grimwade

This thesis is a study of the role of memory in Roman rhetorical theory, pedagogic practice, and oratorical performance, with a particular focus on the forensic oratory of the late Republic. It investigates the various ways in which a speaker's mnemonic capacity – conceptualised as *memoria naturalis* and/or *memoria artificiosa* – was understood to enhance his oratorical ability. In doing so, the study reconsiders our understanding of how the typical Roman speaker 'trained' and utilised his memory, inside and outside of the forum.

Chapter I explains the rationale underlying my reinterpretation of *memoria artificiosa* (a.k.a. the *ars memoriae* or the 'method of *loci*'), in terms of its design, purpose, didactic dissemination, and practical application. The evidence is drawn primarily from the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Cicero's *De oratore*; it is supplemented by Quintilian's later discussion of *memoria* and by experimental studies from modern cognitive science. I show that *memoria artificiosa* was developed not to facilitate the verbatim memorisation of written texts, but to enable the encoding and retention of smaller units of highly-structured information. The technique was not used by poets, but by speakers who memorised the main talking points of their orations and delivered largely improvised performances.

Chapter II reconsiders the historical development of mnemonic techniques. I present evidence for a new chronology that removes the poet Simonides of Ceos from his position as the inventor of the *ars memoriae* and questions Aristotle's involvement in the method's evolution. Instead, I focus on the nexus of philosophers, rhetoricians, and expert mnemonists who populated the Sceptical Academy of the second century BCE, positing that it may have been here, among numerous variant *artes memoriae*, where the *ars memoriae* as we know it emerged.

Chapter III moves on to reappraise *memoria* as a performative discipline. I examine how orators relied upon and utilised their mnemonic skills (natural and artificial) at different stages of the 'forensic process' – that is to say, as they progressed through the various stages of a typical (late-republican) trial, from preparing to delivering a speech. Highlighting the role that *memoria* played at each of these stages helps us interpret references to the content of

lost oratorical *commentarii* and offers novel insights into how some orators might have used mnemonic techniques in real time, during a trial while their opponents were speaking.

Chapter IV examines how our perception of the role of *memoria* in Roman life has been skewed by Cicero's discourse and influence on the subsequent rhetorical tradition. I investigate the surprisingly large group of individuals whom Cicero praises for possessing superior mnemonic ability – a group that includes not just orators and intellectuals, but several high-profile statesmen and generals. The emphasis Cicero places on *memoria* can be explained partly by his own philosophy of leadership and partly by the importance wider Roman society attached to the social practice of *nomenclatio*. Later sources indicate that Cicero's 'memory men' exerted a lasting influence on the portrayal of exemplary mnemonic ability, such that *memoria* became a rare topos of imperial praise.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, my heartfelt thanks go to Ingo Gildenhard, my principal supervisor, who has stuck by me through two research degrees and a global pandemic, celebrating the highs and helping to navigate the lows. His timely questions, percipient observations, and pacific presence of mind have shaped my research and enhanced it immeasurably. I am enormously grateful for his generosity and support. Likewise, Myrto Hatzimichali, my secondary supervisor, has been generous with her time and incisive with her input throughout. She has helped especially with the interdisciplinary aspects of this thesis, providing sagacious guidance on matters philosophical.

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the various travails of graduate life on countless occasions with ever-patient ear; and my mother, who selflessly took on the unenviable task of proofreading this thesis. The corrections are hers; the remaining errors, my own.

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Abbreviations

MOL = 'method of *loci*'

OCD^5 = Whitmarsh, T. (ed.) *Oxford Classical Dictionary, 5th edition*. Oxford: available at https://oxfordre.com/classics

ORF^3 = Malcovati, H. (1966, 3rd ed.) *Oratorum Romanorum Fragmenta Liberae Rei Publicae*. Turin.

TLL = *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (1900 –). Munich.

All Greek and Latin texts are abbreviated according to the conventions of the OCD^5, which can be found here: https://oxfordre.com/classics/page/ocdabbreviations

If the OCD^5 does not list an abbreviation for a given text, it is either abbreviated according to the conventions of the TLL, or the title is supplied in full.

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All figures are my own. The 'anchor' and 'cup' images in Fig. 2 are in the public domain.

Note on texts and translations

The relevant edition of a quoted Greek or Latin text is generally only cited once, at the point when that text is quoted at length for the first time. Thereafter, the reader may refer to the list of 'Cited editions of ancient works' in the bibliography for the relevant author and text.

All translations are my own unless stated otherwise.

Introduction

The modern term 'memory' is notoriously slippery, used to denote a wealth of interrelated but distinct concepts in a plethora of differing settings. Likewise, the Roman term *memoria* was Teflon-coated, its usage and meaning gliding from one context to another, through everyday idiom, into history, poetry, philosophy – pervading all areas of life.[1] This thesis deals with conceptualisations of *memoria* in rhetoric and oratory, two closely associated disciplines in which the individual's memory, defined as his personal mnemonic capacity, took on special importance. The reason is readily apparent: in a forensic environment where professional speakers handled dozens of cases, where scripts were anathema and what mattered most was "delivery, delivery, delivery", memory acted as the mediator between a speaker's premeditated ideas and the articulation of those ideas in fluent speech.[2] Memory was the orator's treasury; the treasured wealth within, his memories. Memory protected the orator as the orator protected his client. Memory, on the forensic battlefield, was the orator's mightiest defence, securing the bulwarks whence his garrulous battalions advanced.

I shall stop before the analogies turn an even deeper shade of purple – although, as this thesis will testify, memory and metaphor are difficult to divide. Each analogy I invoked above has ancient precedent in the oratorical context; each serves a function in the lexicon of *memoria*. Any study of this part of the mind, the ineffable mental processes we necessarily and unsatisfactorily abstract away under the label 'memory', must engage with exegetic figurative speech. 'I witness with pleasure the supreme achievement of memory, which is the masterly use it makes of innate harmonies when gathering to its fold the suspended and wandering tonalities of the past': so said Nabokov, and if there was anyone who could express the ineffable, it was he.[3] Yet the ultimate inadequacy of language – modern or ancient – to grasp the essence of memory and remembering is, at heart, the reason I have long been preoccupied by the phenomenon. Two major works of the twentieth century, Yates' *The Art of Memory* (1966) and Small's *Wax Tablets of the Mind* (1997), inspired the 'big' questions that underlie the specific concerns of this thesis: the question of whether writing and literacy changed individuals' experiences of memory and remembering; the question of

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[1] As explicated by Walter (2004) 26-41; for the modern taxonomy of memory (revised periodically), see Michaelian and Sutton (2017).

[2] For the famous Demosthenic "delivery" tricolon, Cic. *De or.* 3.213, *Orat.* 56, *Brut.* 142; cf. *Rhet. Her.* 3.19 for a more nuanced approach. For the absence of scripts, see Ch. III, p. 125-30.

[3] Nabokov (1967) 170.

whether esoteric ancient theories of memory bore any relation to quotidian practice; the question of whether we, today, engage with the act of remembering in a fundamentally different way from, say, a Roman orator trained in the mnemonic arts.

These questions are inherently nebulous – inscrutable, even. While this thesis touches upon them, it does so in a discipline-specific fashion. My intention is to help the Classicist understand why ancient Greek and Roman authors talk about memory in the ways that they do – why, for example, they so readily reach for the metaphor of memory as a wax tablet, impressed with mnemonic traces like letters inscribed by a stylus. Does the wax/writing analogy reveal something fundamental about the way literate individuals experienced memory? Or is it simply another attempt to understand the processes of memory via metaphor, and more specifically, via *technological* metaphor? Taking the long view, we see that memory-as-technology analogies are commonplace. In the medieval period, memory becomes a bookcase; in the nineteenth century, a camera obscura; in the 1920s, a gramophone; and from the 1960s onwards, a computer, replete with CPU, hard drives, and RAM.[4] Societal and cultural contexts shape individual expressions of universal phenomena. More specifically, when it comes to expressions of mnemonic phenomena, comparisons with contemporaneous technologies abound. There is a recurring desire to conceptualise memory as we might a machine, each unseen process geared towards a result, a memory successfully encoded, stored, modified, and/or retrieved. Memory is not a manmade tool, however; it is natural, fickle, sometimes uncontrollable. This tension, between the natural processes of memory and the desire to control those processes, is ever-present in ancient texts dealing with memory, from the earliest expositions onwards. The question is pivotal: how much artifice can there be in memory?

"As much as you like." That, *prima facie*, appears to have been the answer for rhetoricians of the first century BCE and, appropriately enough, it provides the starting point for this thesis. The prefaced summary has already supplied an overview of the structure; moreover, each chapter contains its own introduction. Here, I shall simply define the overall scope. Although my historical focus is the late Republic, my analysis incorporates relevant sources spanning from Plato to Pacatus.[5] In particular, the works of the elder Seneca and Quintilian sometimes throw additional light on the mnemonic theories and practices detailed

[4] John of Salisbury (12th century) *Metalogicon* 1.2.49-50; Beets (1839), the analogy features in a quote opposite the frontispiece; Pear (1922) 3; Atkinson and Shriffin (1968) 90.

[5] Pacatus Drepanius, 4th century CE, see Ch. IV, p. 183-4.

in republican rhetorical texts. The earliest surviving treatments of rhetorical memory, in the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Cicero's *De oratore*, are examined in depth in Chapter I, which analyses memory as a rhetorical subdiscipline, delineating the easily-blurred bounds between natural and artificial, that is, between *memoria naturalis* and *memoria artificiosa*. Chapter II develops the focus on ancient theories of artificial mnemonics, tracing their roots in Greek philosophical theories of memory while revising the developmental chronologies presented by Yates and Small. Chapter III aligns itself with a recent and productive trend, exemplified by numerous papers in Castagnoli's and Ceccarelli's collaborative *Greek Memories: Theories and Practices*, by examining real-world scenarios in which mnemonic theory was put into practice.[6] My analysis demonstrates that scrutinising how Roman orators utilised memory (natural and/or artificial) can improve our understanding of the practical business of forensic speechmaking. Chapter IV continues to develop this theme, investigating Cicero's portrayals of mnemonic ability by juxtaposing the realities of various Roman mnemonic practices against Ciceronian exemplary fictions.

Finally, in my Concluding Remarks, I address certain conceptualisations of memory that are outside of this thesis' scope, to which my findings nevertheless pertain. My study does not, for instance, concern itself with collective or cultural memory, as so many projects have done in recent years – Galinsky's *Memoria Romana* being the most prominent example.[7] Yet we must be mindful of ancient concepts of individual memory when dealing with modern concepts of the collective, to avoid conceptual slippage and unwarranted conflation of terms. My study glosses certain Roman authors' desires for *memoria sempiterna*, achieved via self-memorialisation in text, although this is an interesting and popular field, to which my findings concerning Cicero are relevant.[8] My study has too little space for a proper treatment of Roman mnemonic practices outside of the oratorical sphere – but this too is a field rich with future possibility. In sum, while the central focus of the thesis is narrow, the periphery is wide.

Conversely, that periphery necessarily impinges upon the central focus. We cannot fully understand the place of memory in late-republican oratory without acknowledging, to a

[6] Castagnoli and Ceccarelli (2019); see also review by Pagkalos (2021), who observes (fairly) that some papers achieve the mission statement more successfully than others.

[7] See Galinsky (2014) and (2016), plus Galinsky and Lapatin (2015). I assume the reader's familiarity with the theory of Memory Studies – the seminal text is Assmann (1992) (= Assmann (2011)).

[8] See e.g. Bishop (2019), La Bua (2019).

greater or lesser extent, the discourse surrounding memory in other areas of Greek and Roman literature and thought – most notably, in poetry and philosophy. The trained Classicist is equipped to tackle such subjects well enough. Memory, however, knows no disciplinary bounds. My studies have taken me outside of the Classicist's comfort zone, away from safely-dead authors to the rehearsal rooms of very-much-alive actors, the inboxes of memory athletes, and the labs of cognitive scientists. Modern insights into memory have helped me draw conclusions from limited ancient evidence; I have been guided by the precept, however, that for any such conclusions to be sound, the application of modern findings must be confirmed valid by those with the relevant expertise.

That precept may seem obvious, but the overly liberal application of findings from cognitive science to the humanities is far from uncommon. A cautionary example will illustrate this important methodological point: I have selected (more or less at random) Hughes' analysis of the Arch of Constantine.[9] Hughes begins with a summary of modern cognitive studies conducted by Tulving on the cued retrieval of keywords.[10] She then hypothesises an analogy between the presentation of images to the Roman Arch-viewer and the presentation of keywords to Tulving's test subjects, before raising the possibility that 'contemporary viewers who examined the imagery on the Arch of Constantine and then went on to encounter other images of Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius on display elsewhere in the city might be cued automatically to recall their own emperor' (p. 113). I pass no judgement on the plausibility of such a hypothesis: my point is that the original analogy is flawed. A review of the scientific literature quickly reveals that human memory is extremely task-specific.[11] We cannot take a study on the cued recall of keywords and assume that the results will hold valid for the cued recall of images (let alone for the complex variety of images on the Arch). The results *may* indeed be similar – but it is unsound to cite a study involving memory for keywords as grounds for a hypothesis involving memory for complex images. This error, typical of its kind, highlights the issues that can arise through the misapplication of scientific results. Readers will note, therefore, that where I have invoked modern parallels in this thesis, I have invoked them in strictly-defined instances, which should not be generalised.

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[9] Hughes (2014) 112-4.

[10] See Tulving and Pearlstone (1966) 381-91; Tulving and Osler (1968) 593-601.

[11] For the task-specific nature of memory, see Ch. I, p. 25-7.

1. Rhetoric at Rome in the first century BCE

The remainder of this Introduction presents the social and historical backdrop that frames the stage upon which late-republican rhetoricians and orators, the protagonists of this thesis, performed. The early first century BCE was, for both rhetorical memory and rhetoric in general, a period of transition: Greek treatments of the art of speaking were becoming increasingly influential in the Roman world and, alongside a transition from teaching rhetoric exclusively in Greek to teaching it in Latin as well, instructional approaches were being developed that would remain a feature of pedagogic programmes for centuries to come.[12]

Already in the second century, acquiring rhetorical skills was an important part of the education of the elite Roman male, since the ability to speak well in public was tied to status and power.[13] Somewhat counterintuitively, young Roman men, native Latin speakers, conducted their rhetorical education largely in Greek: tutors, often enslaved, would be brought from Greece to teach in elite households; students might also, when they reached an appropriate age, travel to the schools of Greek experts.[14] Practical experience was highly prized in Roman education and more advanced oratorical training consisted of students shadowing advocates and observing them at work in the forum (the so-called *tirocinium fori*).[15] Latin-medium rhetorical pedagogy does not, however, seem to have been common and we must suppose that students took the techniques they had acquired from their Greek tutors and simply applied them to their Latin speechmaking.[16]

As the influence of the Greek East on Rome grew, certain members of the Roman elite perceived that the traditional approaches to Latin oratory were under threat. The elder Cato, for instance, began to assert his vision of the 'ideal' Roman orator, the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, while promoting a traditionally plain-spoken approach to speechmaking with

[12] Classical mnemonic rules were adopted and adapted enthusiastically throughout the mediaeval and renaissance periods. Yates (1966) still provides a decent introduction to the history of mnemonics from classical times to the dawn of the scientific method. Ch. 1 in Worthen and Hunt (2011) continues this survey up to the modern day.

[13] See Morgan (1998) 234-9.

[14] For enslaved *grammatici*, see Rawson (1985) 66-76. Cicero himself explains why he travelled to the Greek East to improve his skills at *Brut.* 314-6.

[15] See David (1992) 332-41, Richlin (1997) 92-3.

[16] Rawson concludes that the second-century elite commanded Latin speaking skills 'by mere birth and upbringing': Rawson (1985) 119-21. See also McNelis (2007) 292-3.

maxims such as *rem tene, verba sequentur*, an advocation, in essence, of substance over rhetorical artificiality.[17] These traditionalist objections to Greek rhetorical methods ran much deeper than a difference of opinion over speaking technique, however. A senatorial decree of 161 BCE (reproduced by Suetonius) gets to the heart of the matter: it orders the praetor to see to it that there be no philosophers and rhetoricians allowed at Rome, in a declaration Morgan describes as a classic case of Roman consuls experiencing a 'fit of anti-Hellenism'.[18] It has been suggested that this banning order may have originated from a perceived threat to the traditional *tirocinium fori*, the sophistication of Greek rhetoric, or the use of rhetoric in public at Rome by non-elite outsiders.[19]

In my view, we might do best to think about the *philosophi et rhetores* targeted by the decree in the context of the Roman reaction to Carneades, Diogenes, and Critolaus, the philosophers who made such an impression at Rome with their virtuoso sophistic and rhetorical performances when they arrived as ambassadors from Athens some five years later, in 156.[20] Many Romans apparently admired them; the elder Cato did not. His response to Carneades' *dissoi logoi* on justice was, according to Plutarch, one of condemnation: he was afraid such rhetoric would entice Rome's youth to ignore the magistrates, the laws, and their practical duties in favour of what he characterised as useless studying.[21] If this view represents the attitude of an elite minority accurately, we should understand the slightly earlier decree of 161 as a reaction to a new and potentially destabilising cultural phenomenon, rather than as the suppression of Greek methods of education per se.[22] It was persuasive and politically-provocative epideictic display – often designed to be deliberately contrarian – that threatened deeply-held Roman moral beliefs and the long-established hierarchies of power underlying the rights to public speech.[23] Perhaps Cato and his ilk were

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[17] Cato's writings are fragmentary. For these maxims, see Sen. *Contr.* 1. pr. 9 (*vir bonus*…); Iul. Vict. *Rhet.* I (*rem tene*…) = Halm (1863) p. 374, ln. 17. For Cato and his attitude towards Hellenistic rhetoric, see Sciarrino (2007) 55-60, Dominik (2017) 160-2.

[18] Suet. *Gramm. et rhet.* 25; Morgan (1998) 27.

[19] See Bonner (1977) 65-6, Dominik (2017) 161-2.

[20] The famous embassy is a frequent reference point for Cicero: e.g. *De or.* 2.155, *Tusc.* 4.5, *Luc.* 2.137. For details, see Habicht (1997) 264-6.

[21] Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 22-3; discussed in Biesinger (2016) 79-92.

[22] Note that *grammatici*, whom the elite employed for their sons' basic education, were not targeted.

[23] Perceived, even, as a risk to military and governmental institutions: Steel (2017) 205-6.

as much opposed to a class of up-and-coming Romans with access to philosophy and rhetoric as they were to the *philosophi et rhetores* themselves.

The early decades of the first century BCE saw increasing numbers of rhetorical schools being established in and around Rome. Significantly, these schools were run by independent professionals who taught rhetoric in Latin as well as Greek. This change in pedagogic practice prompted the Roman censors to issue a notorious edict in 92 (again preserved by Suetonius), condemning any teachers who called themselves *Latini rhetores* in the harshest terms: these teachers, their *novum genus disciplinae*, and the young men who attended their *ludi* were, in the eyes of the censors, committing sacrilege against the *mos maiorum*.[24] The censorial edict is of great significance, although not as a banning order akin to the decree of 161 but, rather, as an expression of outrage from the foremost moral authorities in Rome. It seems highly unlikely that it led to anyone being punished and there is no need to conclude that any rhetorical schools were shut down.[25] Nevertheless, the edict is a remarkable instance of unified intervention in education (a sphere of life upon which the Romans imposed little regulation) from two censors, Crassus and Domitius, who were notorious for not being able to agree upon anything.[26] The censors' concerns are, in fact, those hardy perennials of modern educational debates: that the wrong sort of things are being taught to the wrong sort of people, by the wrong sort of people, in the wrong sort of way.

Corbeill's influential studies of the edict construe it as a regressive measure against the democratisation of education, focussing (to use my own phrasing) on the idea that 'the wrong sort of things' were being taught to 'the wrong sort of people'.[27] Latin-medium schools that anyone could attend, run by professionals for profit, posed a threat to the established senatorial elite – a threat that they were ultimately unable to contain as more schools sprang up. In turn, greater accessibility to rhetorical education allowed well-off but non-aristocratic Romans to attain greater status and power through public speaking.

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[24] Suet. *Gramm. et rhet.* 25 (text: Kaster (2016)); also reproduced by Gellius *NA* 15.11.1.

[25] Although a number of scholars have concluded otherwise, e.g. Bonner (1977) 71, Luzzatto (2002) 301-46. Such conclusions are based on later renderings of the edict by Cicero, who has Crassus say that he 'removed' (*sustuleram*) the *Latini rhetores*, *De or.* 2.93, and Tacitus, who takes this one step further, asserting that Crassus had their schools 'shut down' (*cludere*), *Dial.* 35. The fact that Latin-medium *ludi* were flourishing only a few years later suggests that, even if sanctions were attached to the edict, they were inconsequential. For other possible repercussions, see Corbeill (2001) 273.

[26] Gruen (1990) 182-4.

[27] Corbeill (2001) 261-88, (2007) 67-82; see also Dominik (2017) 163. Older ideas view the decree as a partisan political intervention between the Marians and anti-Marians, but the evidence is flimsy: see Bonner (1977) 71-2, Gruen (1990) 180-4.

Gradually, rhetorical schools were institutionalised and, by the turn of the millennium, it was no longer necessary for Romans to go abroad to get a 'proper' education.[28] Thus, despite the opposition of certain conservative elements, the 90s and 80s saw the incipient creation of fresh opportunities, educational and social, for men such as the *Latini rhetores* and their students.

It was in this environment that Cicero, despite ostensibly heeding the advice of his more conservative elders and pursuing his rhetorical training in Greek, produced the Latin rhetorical treatise *De inventione*, which deals exclusively with the first subdiscipline of rhetoric.[29] Likewise, in or around the 80s BCE, an anonymous author embarked upon the composition of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, a comprehensive treatment of every element of Greek rhetorical theory in Latin.[30] The anonymous author (hereafter simply 'the Auctor') provides our earliest and most complete exposition of the rhetorical theory of memory. Consequently, his text is one of the two main reference points in Chapter I, the other being Cicero's treatment of memory in *De oratore*.

Cicero needs no introduction. As for the Auctor, his expansive rhetorical treatise has recently received even more expansive exegesis in the form of Calboli's three-volume commentary.[31] In his introduction, Calboli asserts that the Auctor must be one Cornificius (a name mentioned repeatedly and disparagingly by Quintilian), while admitting that the identification remains ultimately (strong) conjecture (p. 19-37). With my use of 'the Auctor', I have already sided with the majority: authorship cannot be demonstrated conclusively and the work should remain unassigned.[32] Likewise, we can glean only a small amount about Herennius, the Auctor's addressee. The Auctor professes that his undertaking was prompted by Herennius' desire for the fruits of Latin rhetoric and, in this respect, Herennius represents

[28] The elder Seneca, for instance, chose to bring his sons to Rome for their education: Griffin (1976) 32, n. 6.

[29] Cicero later considered *De inventione* (composed circa 89) part of his unsophisticated 'juvenilia', *De or.* 1.5. In a letter to M. Titinnius (quoted by Suetonius at *Gramm. et rhet.* 26), Cicero confesses his youthful enthusiasm for the *Latinus rhetor* Lucius Plotius, saying that he was only persuaded by the *auctoritas* of certain learned men to train in Greek instead. Calboli raises the possibility that Plotius influenced the codifications of rhetoric presented in *De inventione* and *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, while highlighting the apparently eclectic nature of the original Greek source material: Calboli (2020) 64-72.

[30] It is worth noting here the issues surrounding the dating of the *Rhetorica*, which seems to have been composed after Cicero's *De inventione* and, based on mentions of recent historical events, somewhere in the region of 86-82, although considerably later dates have been proposed. I follow Calboli (2020) 8-12. Some scholars advocate more extreme dates: e.g. Douglas (1960) 65-78 (circa 50s BCE) and Herrmann (1980) 149-51 (circa 50s CE).

[31] Calboli (2020).

[32] For a concise exposition of the debate, along with a list of proponents on either side, see Gaines (2007) 170.

the Auctor's intended audience – ambitious young Romans, eager to learn the art of speaking.[33] The Auctor also mentions that he and Herennius practise rhetoric together as friends, that they are related, and that they have studied philosophy together.[34] The last point is the most pertinent to this study, since the Auctor's attitude towards philosophy takes on particular significance when it comes to his presentation of mnemonic theory.

In short, these new-wave Latin-medium versions of Greek rhetorical manuals were designed to appeal to aspiring *novi homines*, students of private means who wanted to equip themselves with the skills necessary to speak in the forum and desired more than the traditional grounding in Greek letters and techniques on which previous generations of Roman aristocrats relied – they wanted an education in Latin. Writers such as the Auctor and Cicero produced and circulated instructional handbooks in response to these developments. In the context of Rome's evolving (and traditionally aristocratic) literary culture, however, it is possible that they were motivated less by notions of democratising access to education than by the tangible opportunities for self-promotion that compositions on such a popular subject could afford.

[33] *Rhet. Her.* 1.1.

[34] *Rhet. Her.* 4.69.

I

Rhetorical memory in theory and practice

This chapter redefines the roles and functions of the *ars memoriae*, reassessing extreme exaggerations of both its useless- and usefulness in the Roman world. It is all too easy to dismiss the *ars memoriae* as some utilitarian debasement of earlier Greek theorising, a party trick used by rhetoricians to recite long texts.[1] At the other extreme, the prominence of *memoria* in surviving rhetorical texts has led some modern scholars to conflate different conceptualisations of *memoria*, blurring the boundaries between *lieux de mémoire* and the *loci* utilised in ancient mnemotechnics (that is, between concepts of collective/cultural memory and the artificial techniques utilised by individual Roman orators). I postpone full discussion of these issues until my 'Concluding remarks'.[2] For now, I highlight only that the Romans who 'trained' their memories were but a small subset of wider society. The *ars memoriae* was not utilised in all spheres of everyday Roman life and we should maintain clear divisions between the rhetorical theory of memory (*memoria artificiosa*) and other conceptualisations, such as *memoria* as posthumous reputation, or the role of *memoria* in the transmission of history.

With that tenet in mind, throughout this thesis, I confine myself almost exclusively to the mnemonic capacities of the individual. Even with such a restriction in place, we must nevertheless confront another Greco-Roman distinction, between 'natural' memory and 'artificial' memory – the difference (and the very existence of the latter) was not always clear-cut and appears to have been contested by philosophers, if not by rhetoricians.[3] The principal aim of this first chapter is, therefore, a careful delineation of the terms *memoria naturalis* and *memoria artificiosa* as they appear in the ancient sources, defining not only the boundaries and areas of overlap between these two forms of *memoria*, but also the circumstances and contexts in which each type of *memoria* operated.

In delineating conceptualisations of 'natural' and 'artificial' memory, I also address modern perceptions of *memoria artificiosa*. Current scholarship generally posits two practical

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[1] A view illustrated starkly by Pruchnic and Lacey (2011) 474, who assert that rhetorical memory itself, compared with its golden Greek origins, was 'already an impoverished concept' by the time the Romans came along.

[2] See p. 187-91.

[3] See p. 38-9 below, and Ch. II, p. 96-7.

uses for the mnemonic technique: the verbatim memorisation of prose and the partial memorisation of speeches (their structure and itemised content).[4] I show that the first belief (that *memoria artificiosa* was routinely applied to verbatim memorisation) is unsound, drawing my conclusions from three main strands of evidence: late-republican works on mnemonic theory; modern scientific studies concerning the efficacy of *memoria artificiosa* in different scenarios; and an analysis of the most common scenario in which we know verbatim memorisation was required, namely, when young Roman students were instructed to memorise by rote. Based on this evidence, I argue that *memoria artificiosa* was principally intended not to facilitate an orator's ability to memorise scripts verbatim but to free him from the need for scripts at all – a conclusion developed fully in Chapter III, which is devoted to the practical application of *memoria artificiosa* in the forensic fora of late-republican Rome.

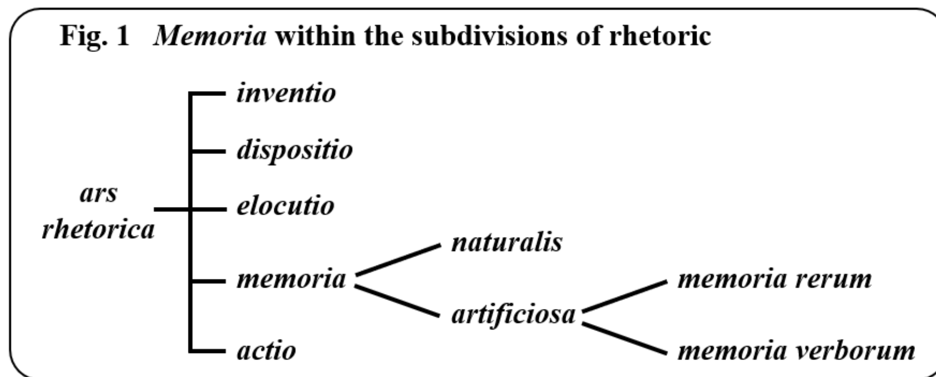
At this juncture, regarding the terminology used in modern scholarship and throughout this thesis, it is worth noting that the phrases 'the rhetorical theory of memory', *memoria artificiosa*, the *ars memoriae*, and 'the method of *loci*' (hereafter abbreviated to 'the MOL') are entirely interchangeable: they all refer to a sophisticated mnemonic technique involving the manipulation of *imagines* and *loci*, as it was presented in late-republican rhetorical handbooks (described in detail below, p. 21). I should also highlight my own decision to use the modern term 'theory' to describe both ancient models of natural mnemonic function (such as the notion that memory retains external impressions as if it were wax) and the set of precepts underlying the MOL. The two types of 'theory' are distinct: on the one hand, we have exegetic analogies proposed initially by philosophers (comparable to, say, 'atomic theory', *vel sim.*); on the other, we have a body of instructional rules taught by rhetoricians (comparable to 'medical theory', 'music theory', etc.). Nevertheless, I use the phrases 'philosophical theory' and 'rhetorical theory' throughout to describe both approaches to memory to highlight how they are both, ultimately, different 'ways of seeing' an individual's mnemonic capacity. At some points, these ways of seeing intersect, while at others, they diverge.

[4] As summarised by Small (2007) 195-6.

1. Rhetorical *memoria*: between memorisation and improvisation

Fig. 1 (below) presents *memoria* within the taxonomy of rhetoric. The subdiscipline was typically listed as the fourth of five: *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria*, and *pronuntiatio* (otherwise known as *actio*).[5] Practitioners of the *ars rhetorica* used the precepts of the first three subdisciplines when preparing to speak, to develop and arrange their lines of argument (*inventio*; *dispositio*) and to phrase those arguments as persuasively as possible (*elocutio*); the final two subdisciplines dealt with the speaker's performance, his production of a speech from memory (*memoria*) and his delivery (*pronuntiatio*).

Fig. 1 ***Memoria* within the subdivisions of rhetoric**



At a subdisciplinary level, rhetoricians defined two different types of *memoria*. As the Auctor *ad Herennium* puts it, *sunt igitur duae memoriae: una naturalis, altera artificiosa*.[6] *Memoria naturalis* was defined as the *memoria* inherent to an individual's mind, the type 'born simultaneously with thought'.[7] *Memoria artificiosa*, on the other hand, was understood to be neither innate nor involuntary, but a type of mnemonic technique, a collection of rules that described how to memorise a predefined set of information.[8] Accordingly, in what follows, when I refer to *memoria naturalis*, I mean the involuntary mental processes that occur when we 'remember' something – a person, a place, an object, an abstract concept. When I refer to *memoria artificiosa*, I mean the mental processes involved in executing a specific mnemonic technique, the MOL, as outlined by the Auctor and Cicero in the first century BCE (and subsequently by Quintilian *et ceteri*).

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[5] 'Invention', 'arrangement', 'expression', 'memory', and 'delivery': see *Rhet. Her.* 1.3; Cic. *Inv. Rhet*. 1.9. For definitions, see May and Wisse (2001) 29-38.

[6] *Rhet. Her.* 3.28.

[7] *Rhet. Her.* 3.28: *Naturalis est ea, quae nostris animis insita est et simul cum cogitatione nata*. Text: Calboli (2020).

[8] The Auctor uses the phrase *ratio praeceptionis*: *Rhet. Her.* 3.28.

In brief, the oratorical MOL involved a speaker memorising a set of familiar *loci*, or stopping points on a mental journey, in an orderly series. He would generally assign one of the major talking points or topics in his speech to each *locus*. Within each *locus*, he fabricated a set of memorable mental images, *imagines*, to act as reminders of the details of each topic. *Loci* could be recycled from speech-to-speech since they simply retained the order of talking points; the *imagines* were specific to a given talking point, so had to be fabricated individually to reflect different content. As the speaker progressed through his speech, he would mentally progress from one *locus* to the next, dealing with the *imagines* placed in each *locus* in turn. When the *imagines* in one *locus* were exhausted, he knew that it was time to move on to the next, and hence to start talking about the next topic in his speech.[9]

While the two conceptualisations of *memoria* outlined above, one 'natural' and the other 'artificial', are notable for their differences, they are not polar opposites. Both assume a shared understanding of various underlying processes of mnemonic encoding, storage, retrieval, and execution. *Memoria naturalis* operates in accordance with many of the principles described by the theoretical framework of *memoria artificiosa*. In turn, the efficacy of *memoria artificiosa* relies upon the existence and correct functioning of *memoria naturalis*. I explain these statements in greater detail below – although the task is made somewhat tricky because our surviving rhetorical texts shy away from addressing the exact relationship between 'natural' and 'artificial' memory.

To begin, then, with *memoria naturalis* (an individual's innate mnemonic faculty), rhetorical texts tend to highlight how mnemonic capacity varies greatly between individuals, asserting that some possess astonishing, almost superhuman *memoria naturalis*.[10] Inherent mnemonic skill is generally accompanied by incredible talent and intellect – Cicero's favourite *exemplum* is Themistocles, who possesses extraordinary *ingenium* and *consilium* alongside superlative powers of recall.[11] The concept of *memoria naturalis* therefore seems intuitive enough, as a faculty on a spectrum of strength from 'goldfish' to 'savant'. In cognitive terms, however, it encompasses a series of complex mental processes, namely, mnemonic encoding (the processes of memory formation), storage (the processes of memory retention), retrieval (the processes of recall), and execution (the mental or physical processes

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[9] For further exegesis, see Yates (1966) 22-6, and Blum (1969) 3-37.

[10] On variance, see e.g. *Rhet. Her.* 3.29, Cic. *De or.* 2.357.

[11] E.g. Cic. *De or.* 2.299-300, 2.351. For Cicero's Themistocles, see Ch. IV, p. 172-4.

prompted by recall).[12] In rhetorical theory, *memoria naturalis* is the innate capacity of an individual to encode, store, retrieve, and execute information related to a speech; it does not include the information itself. That information, or mnemonic content, is denoted by the suitably all-embracing terms *res* and *verba*.

On the relationship between *ars* and *natura*, and the associated question of whether we can even talk about 'artificial' memory, as indicated above, the Auctor and Cicero generally avoid debate, taking the existence of artificial memory as given. What they do have to say might be summed up as follows: they agree that *natura* is the principal source of *memoria*; that the function of *ars* is to further strengthen *natura*; that *natura* and *ars* often function in a similar manner; and hence, that *ars* must imitate *natura*.[13] Thus, rhetorical mnemonic theory – the goal of which was to consciously improve the retention of specific mnemonic content – was not at all concerned with questions such as *why* memories form or *whether* memories are accurate. Rather, rhetoricians and orators wanted to know what made particular memories particularly memorable, and how those particular memories could be accurately retrieved.

Latin rhetoric presented the answer to these questions as a set of rules that collectively defined the *ars memoriae*. As its name suggests, rhetoricians treated the technique as an *ars* (equivalent to the Greek τέχνη), though they did so in a relatively loose, non-philosophical sense – it was a set of rules that could be taught and which, if executed correctly, could increase (but not guarantee) the practitioner's chances of obtaining reliable results.[14] In the case of the MOL, the desired results were the encoding, storage, and reliable retrieval of the content of a speech. The content itself was encoded in the form of *imagines* and, as our texts make clear, it did not include every word of a speech. Details are provided by the Auctor *ad Herennium*: there are, he says, two types of *imagines* used in *memoria artificiosa*, one set for *memoria rerum* ('memory for things') and another for *memoria verborum* ('memory for [individual] words').[15] The '*res*' in *memoria rerum* are defined as the talking points of a speech – the material (including commonplaces, lines of argument, evidence, names, details,

[12] For terminology, see Ellis and Freeman (2008) 1-2: the mnemonic tasks of encoding, storing, retrieving, and executing a speech fall under the modern definition of 'prospective memory'.

[13] *Rhet. Her.* 3.28-9, 3.36. Cic. *De or.* 2.356-7. For fuller analysis, see p. 77-9.

[14] For the ancient definition of an *ars*, see May and Wisse (2001) 23. Greek philosophers had stricter requirements for τέχναι, notably that the application of rules should ensure consistent results: see Ch. II, p. 100.

[15] *Rhet. Her.* 3.33. See Fig. 1.

and facts) from which the speaker will construct his case.[16] At *Rhet. Her.* 3.33, the Auctor illustrates how one 'uncomplicated' (*simplex*) *imago* might encode all the main facts of a case in a single *locus* using a remarkable worked example, which concerns a defendant on trial for poisoning someone to get his inheritance. This *imago* involves a sick man on a deathbed, the defendant holding a poisoned chalice, a will, and a set of ram's testicles; each feature of the composite *imago* symbolises a detail of the case.[17] Evidently, in this example, the orator is not expected to encode every word of his defence speech using *imagines* – rather, the *imagines* prompt his talking points, reminding him of the facts (the inheritance, the poison, and so on) as he moves through the details of the case. The exact phrases and words that the orator uses to make his points will be largely improvised. The MOL functions at a macro level, while the orator improvises the minutiae.

The Auctor asserts that this branch of *memoria artificiosa*, namely *memoria rerum*, is the skill that the orator will actually deploy in the forum, because it is more useful (*utilior*) and has greater potential (*plus facultatis*) than *memoria verborum*.[18] *Memoria verborum*, because it encodes word-by-word, is more difficult, slower, and laborious. Again, the Auctor's worked example, provided at 3.34, is demonstrative. In this case, the Auctor explains how memorising the six words *iam domum itionem reges Atridae parant* (a single line of verse) might involve visualising two different *loci*, each a complex scene containing numerous *personae* and composite *imagines*: in the first *locus*, members of the Marcian *gens* flay a certain Domitius with whips, while he appeals to the heavens, hands outstretched; in the second, two named actors are dressed as Agamemnon and Menelaus, as in the play *Iphigenia*.[19] Yet the Auctor stresses that even using complex *imagines* such as these will not be enough for the practitioner to memorise the line securely unless he also stimulates his *memoria naturalis* by repeating the line multiple times. This complexity explains the Auctor's view that the MOL is of greatest utility and efficacy for those who want to memorise *res* (rather than *verba*). Cicero concurs: *memoria verborum* is not essential for the

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[16] This definition can be deduced from the Auctor's exposition of *memoria rerum* (e.g. the *res* to be memorised in the exemplary case at 3.33) and the Auctor's own definitions, e.g. *Rhet. Her.* 1.3: *Inventio est excogitatio* ***rerum*** *verarum aut veri similium* […] *Memoria est firma animi* ***rerum*** *et verborum et dispositionis perceptio.*

[17] The poisoned chalice and the will are self-explanatory. As for the ram's testicles (*testiculi arietini*), they are probably meant to symbolise a trial witness (*testis*), while the ram may symbolise the first astrological sign of the zodiac, Aries, thus serving as a reminder that the *imago* is located in the first *locus*. For discussion, see Yates (1966) 11-2; also Caplan (1954) 215 n. 'b', den Boer (1986) 11-4.

[18] *Rhet. Her.* 3.39.

[19] The named actors are Clodius Aesopus (a celebrated contemporary) and Cimber (otherwise unknown). These lines receive detailed treatment in Calboli (2020) 626-9, *ad loc*.

orator, whose true province is *memoria rerum*.[20] Quintilian goes even further, denying that the MOL is of any use for memorising *oratio perpetua* (i.e. continuous prose passages), especially because verbal constructions and conjunctions cannot be readily represented by *imagines*.[21]

Of our early sources, then, the Auctor is the most enthusiastic about the potential application of the MOL to *verba* as well as *res* – but even he admits its severe shortcomings in this area. Memorising strings of words is really only useful as an exercise for students in the *ludus*, he says, in order that they might pass 'without effort' (*sine labore*) from the overly difficult *memoria verborum* to the comparatively easy *memoria rerum*.[22] This approach, of executing more difficult tasks to make the effort required during a live contest or performance seem easier by comparison, was used in Rome by athletes training for physical sports (just as athletes undertake resistance training today).[23] The Auctor's MOL – and more specifically, *memoria rerum* – was therefore designed to be most effective at meeting the demands of a very particular scenario: i.e. a trial, in which setting an orator was required to memorise and recall the details of a case swiftly and fluently, but was not required to reproduce a prepared speech verbatim.[24]

Did the MOL fulfil its intended purpose? While the Auctor would certainly have us believe so, he (and other ancient advocates of the method) cannot provide evidence beyond unverifiable anecdote; and lawyers do not, as far as I am aware, use the MOL to make speeches in court today. Fortunately, ancient testimony concerning the efficacy of the MOL has been supplemented in recent decades by numerous cognitive studies conducted in lab conditions and also by revived enthusiasm for classical mnemonic techniques among modern mnemonists.[25] I shall deal first with some of the relevant lab studies, the most basic of which involve participants who are asked to memorise lists of items – numbers, objects, words, and so on. In these instances, the MOL is shown to significantly improve retention and ordered

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[20] Cic. *De or.* 2.359: *verborum memoria, quae minus est nobis necessaria…* […] *rerum memoria propria est oratoris*. Text: Kumaniecki (1969).

[21] Quint. *Inst.* 11.2.24-6.

[22] *Rhet. Her.* 3.39.

[23] See Sen. *Contr.* 9.pr.4.

[24] How this worked in practice is explored fully in Ch. III.

[25] For a brief summary of modern psychological research in mnemonics, see Ericsson (2003) 233-5. For a fuller introduction to the MOL in the cognitive science of 'mnemonology', I recommend Worthern and Hunt (2011) Ch. 4-5.

recall.[26] Probably the most famous ancient example of an individual using the MOL to memorise lists in this way is Cicero's oratorical rival Hortensius, who is said to have memorised the exact order of a whole day's worth of auction listings as they were being sold, along with their prices and buyers, entirely unaided.[27] The memorisation of a speech – even a speech reduced to its key talking points – might initially appear to be a much more complex task than memorising lists of items. A series of studies have, however, shown that the MOL proves especially successful in scenarios where participants are asked to memorise the salient features of expository prose passages – not the passages verbatim, but the key pieces of information contained in the passages.[28] That is to say, using the MOL, the participants were able to memorise a list of topics as each one was being presented. Interestingly, the MOL proved more effective when subjects were asked to assimilate information from passages presented orally as opposed to passages presented in writing (a phenomenon called 'the oral presentation effect').[29] Thus, although the participants were listening to and processing a large volume of information, they were able to reduce that large volume to a list of key details, which they then memorised using the MOL. The ancient forensic scenario, in which an orator would listen to his adversary's speech and commit talking points to memory (ready to make a response) is not dissimilar.[30]

Another set of experiments, conducted on modern mnemonists who have trained themselves to be proficient at specific mnemonic tasks (such as memorising the exact order of a pack of playing cards at speed), confirms that mnemonic techniques are highly specialised and not universally applicable: a technique that is extremely effective for memorising one kind of information may be much less effective for memorising another; and individuals who show superlative skill in specific mnemonic tasks may demonstrate average

[26] E.g. Ross and Lawrence (1968) 107-8; Groninger (1971) 161-3.

[27] Sen. *Contr.* 1.pr.19; Quint. *Inst.* 11.2.24. There is also good evidence that Hortensius used the MOL when making speeches: for full discussion, see Ch. III, p. 138-42.

[28] The researchers define 'expository' passages as those that follow a logical structure, including elements such as classification and comparison, as opposed to 'narrative' or 'descriptive' text. See Cornoldi and De Beni (1991) 511-8; De Beni and Moè (2003) 309-24; Moè and De Beni (2005) 95-106.

[29] De Beni et al. have hypothesised that the oral presentation effect is caused by selective interference between reading a written text (using the sense of sight) and mental imaging (when using the MOL). Both activities are visuo-spatial and one can impede the other, whereas when material is presented orally, the two activities (listening to speech and mental imaging using the MOL) are performed in different modalities: De Beni, Moè, and Cornoldi (1997) 401-16.

[30] Again, evidence for this scenario is discussed in detail in Ch. III, p. 139-42.

ability when asked to memorise other information of a different type.[31] Independently of the cognitive scientists, modern mnemonists have continued to use and to develop techniques based on the traditional MOL to meet the demands of competitive memorisation. Participants in 'Memory Championships' attempt to memorise and recall large quantities of information in a race against both the clock and other competitors. Disciplines include 'Spoken Numbers' (which involves memorising numbers as they are spoken aloud at a rate of one per second); 'Random Words' (memorising a list of random words); 'Cards' (memorising the number, suit, and arrangement of multiple packs of playing cards); and 'Abstract Images' (memorising the order of textured, random shapes).[32] Hence, the events generally entail the encoding, storage, and retrieval of information that can be ordered, grouped in sets or lists, and often reduced to numerical values, which makes it ideally suited to a mnemonic technique based on visualisation, grouping, and sequencing such as the MOL.[33]

For our interests, perhaps the most instructive event to emerge from the World Memory Championships is the discontinued 'Poem' discipline, which demanded participants memorise a new, previously unpublished poem word-for-word under timed conditions before reproducing it in writing, receiving marks based on how close they came to verbatim recall.[34] The discipline was, according to Foer's account, 'universally dreaded': competitors who relied upon the MOL in this event tended to do badly, while those who did well relied instead upon infusing the content of the poem's words with emotional resonance. The approach of a one-time record-holder in this discipline, Corinna Draschl, for instance, was to segment a poem and assign a series of emotions to each chunk, associating the words with feelings rather than images.[35] This approach seems to align with a series of studies conducted by the researchers Helga and Tony Noice into how professional actors manage to memorise their scripts. They found surprisingly little rote repetition of lines, and no method in the sense of the 'method of *loci*'. Instead, the actors tried to identify the meaning and emotion behind the

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[31] E.g. Maguire et al. (2002) 90-5: in this lab study, the superior performance of expert mnemonists was no better than a control group when asked to memorise the shape of snowflakes, a mnemonic task for which they had not trained. See also Ericsson and Kintsch (1995) 214-5.

[32] See the 'World Memory Championships' (www.worldmemorychampionships.com and www.world-memory-statistics.co.uk/disciplines.php).

[33] On modern mnemonists' use and adaptation of *loci* mnemonics, see Foer (2011) 97, 163-8.

[34] My understanding is that the discipline was discontinued internationally because it may have given native English speakers an unfair advantage. It is still practised in the USA: for the rules, see www.usamemorychampionship.com/events/.

[35] Foer (2011) 121-2, 132-3.

words of their characters – a process that rendered word-for-word memorisation unnecessary.[36] This reflects the ancient advice that *memoria verborum* – that is, the word-for-word memorisation of poetry or prose using the MOL – is extremely difficult and (relatively) inefficient.[37] Today, individuals who are required to memorise long passages verbatim, such as actors, find different approaches to the task. I know of no ancient advice, however, which recommends deliberately infusing mnemonic content with highly-charged emotional force (as Corinna Draschl did). As I argue throughout this thesis, the reason for this – that is to say, the reason why more efficient methods of verbatim memorisation were not incorporated into the *ars rhetorica* – is because rhetoricians and orators had no *need* to memorise their speeches verbatim. They relied upon *memoria* to mentally store and retrieve the structure and top-level content of their speeches, while utilising their extensive training in improvised delivery to supply the individual words.

I shall continue to refer to the modern studies outlined above throughout the rest of this thesis where relevant. As regards the two 'types' of memory defined in rhetoric, *memoria naturalis* and *memoria artificiosa*, modern cognitive science provides evidence that can help us deduce when and where (in pedagogic and oratorical settings) these different types of *memoria* would have proved most useful. There are two key points. First, the modern studies confirm that the MOL is no panacea for forgetfulness: the orator who was also an expert practitioner of the MOL had an enhanced capacity for encoding, storage, and retrieval of the types of material to which the MOL was most suited (including structured lists, the salient details of an oration, and the topics to be covered in a speech), but he was not necessarily equally brilliant at memorising other types of mnemonic content (such as faces, foreign languages, or everyday events). For mnemonic tasks unrelated to oratory, even the small percentage of the population who had been trained in *memoria artificiosa* relied heavily upon *memoria naturalis* or external mnemonic aids (i.e. written notes or assistants).[38] Second, even within the sphere of rhetoric and oratory, utilisation of *memoria artificiosa* was targeted and specialised. Orators and rhetoricians did not need to memorise texts verbatim to make

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[36] See e.g. Noice, H. (1992) 417-28. The experimental series is summarised and reviewed in Noice and Noice (2002) 7-19.

[37] That is not to say that it *cannot* be done. Noice details how the mnemonist H. Lorayne devised an elaborated version of *loci* visualisation techniques to learn a theatrical script verbatim, Noice, H. (1996) 1-17.

[38] Most orators seem to have produced written notes in the form of *commentarii* when preparing for trial: see Ch. III, p. 120-5. As for assistants, by the late Republic the elite commonly utilised enslaved *nomenclatores*, whose duties included memorising the names and details of influential voters. See Kolendo (1989) 13-9; and Ch. IV, p. 165-6.

forensic speeches, so in practice they used the subdiscipline of *memoria rerum* rather than *memoria verborum*. Although *memoria verborum* was ostensibly used as a (purposefully difficult) training exercise, the method is unlikely to have been utilised for routine verbatim memorisation of large quantities of poetry or prose because it became so rapidly intricate and convoluted. Nevertheless, memorisation exercises were a key feature of Roman pedagogy. As I argue below, I think it most likely that the strength of a student's *memoria naturalis* was the deciding factor in whether he succeeded at these less sophisticated exercises of rote memorisation.

In both Republic and Principate, Roman students were required to memorise texts from an early age – a pedagogic methodology that had long precedence in the Greek-speaking world.[39] Since rhetoric was typically only taught to older students, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and *De oratore* do not provide much information on exercises for the young. Nevertheless, in the *Brutus*, Cicero tells us that in his boyhood, he studied and committed to memory the exemplary *Epilogus* of Gaius Galba.[40] Not dissimilarly, the elder Seneca (recalling a period in the very late Republic when he was attending the *ludus*) indicates that the memorisation of poetry was commonplace – even competitive, perhaps, with students attempting to memorise the most verses.[41] Although Quintilian's testimony is from a later era, it provides our richest source material on how memorisation exercises had become a pedagogic staple in the *ludus*; and how, given the long didactic tradition, they probably always had been. Quintilian inherited and preserved a great deal from the earliest Latin rhetorical treatises – and this is especially true in the subdiscipline of *memoria*, to the point that rather than provide his own rules for the MOL, he simply quotes Cicero verbatim.[42] As regards the pedagogic role of memorisation exercises more generally, Quintilian recommends rote memorisation of set texts for even the youngest students, on the grounds that they cannot produce compositions themselves (*Inst.* 1.1.35-6); small children thoroughly enjoy learning

[39] E.g. Xenophon's Socrates, who asserts that memorising texts is part of a good education if accompanied by deeper understanding, Xen. *Symp.* 3.3.5; or Plato's Athenian, who explains how boys are made to memorise the works of poets, Pl. *Leg.* 810e-811a.

[40] Cic. *Brut.* 127: the key verb is *ediscere*, 'to learn by heart'.

[41] Seneca was born in the 50s BCE. I suggest 'competitive' only because of the context of Seneca's boasting in *Contr.* 1.pr.2, where he reminisces about how his peers in the *ludus* would test his ability to memorise vast tracts of verse.

[42] Quint. *Inst.* 11.2.22, quoting Cic. *De or.* 2.358.

snippets of poetry, apparently; and he suggests they should memorise moral *sententiae* too, since these shape young minds and are retained until old age.[43]

When it comes to preparing slightly older students for speechmaking, for starters, Quintilian recommends they simply repeat what they have heard, perhaps in a different order, 'so that they might strengthen the memory from the outset' (2.4.15-7).[44] Relying on memory to reproduce phrases also allows them to develop *correct* speech, as opposed to speech that is fluent but flawed. Building on this approach, when the student becomes more advanced, Quintilian advises that they should refrain from memorising their own compositions (2.7.1-5). This is a common practice, he says, but should be changed. It is done to please fathers who like to watch their boys declaim as proof that they have learnt something. It proves, says Quintilian, nothing of the sort – he has his students memorise texts that are truly worth learning by heart, passages of histories, or speeches (some of Cicero's, no doubt), and only very occasionally has them deliver their own work.[45] Memorising the work of the best authors is a better workout for the memory because it is more difficult to memorise unfamiliar text; and further, it means the student permanently retains the best models, which he may consciously and subconsciously imitate in his own style. Quintilian also uses a metaphor frequently invoked in other rhetorical treatises on memory: the *thesaurus* (2.7.4).[46] He explains that memorisation exercises create a *thesaurus* of optimal vocabulary, phrases, and figures in the mind, a valuable store of eminently quotable material, which will win praise when used both in private conversation and when speaking publicly in the forum.

Quintilian's prescriptions for memorisation are a good indication of the knowledge that he believed his elite students needed to secure permanently in their minds, ready for easy access later in life. He specifies famous authors and canonical texts – the kind of material that would invest a student with the 'cultural capital', as it were, of well-educated Roman

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[43] Cf. Augustine, *De civ. D.* 1.3, who states that *Romani* make young boys read Virgil so much that his poetry (and the non-Christian gods it contains) cannot be forgotten from memory. Quintilian's recommendations might be compared with those of Aelius Theon, who (writing in Greek no earlier than the late first century BCE) collects some examples of extracts that young students might learn by heart in his *Progymnasmata*, 65-70 (Spengel); see also useful notes in Kennedy (2003) 9-13.

[44] *Inst.* 2.4.15: *ut protinus memoriam firment*.

[45] Quintilian's recommended method for such memorisation exercises is outlined at *Inst.* 11.2.40-2: students must practice memorising texts from other authors daily, starting with short extracts before building up incrementally, and with rhythmical passages (i.e. poetry) before gradually moving to technical prose, like the writings of *iurisconsulti*. Thus, difficulty is increased; but the exercises should remain difficult, he says, so that when it comes to memorising for a real speech, the task seems easy. Cf. the Auctor *ad Herennium*, above, p. 24.

[46] See below, p. 38.

society.[47] Specifically, for the student who would one day go on to become an orator, the ultimate purpose of practising basic memorisation exercises in the *ludus* was to learn models of best practice, which would eventually, it was hoped, improve his speaking ability. Yet, even if a student's future career did not demand proficiency in public speaking, the acquisition of a mental repository of great works of past literature would still aid him in adult life, allowing him to understand and to be accepted into the cultural milieu of the social and political elite. Consider the provincially-born younger Seneca and his brothers. Unlike republican aristocrats of earlier generations, they were not compelled to travel to Greece for a 'proper' education. Instead, their father brought them to Rome to receive schooling.[48] The subsequent career of the younger Seneca, with his roles as Nero's tutor and advisor, provides a notable illustration of how the newly-institutionalised rhetorical curriculum could equip ambitious young men with the prerequisites of elite life.

Elite Roman education furnished students with the kind of knowledge that enabled them not only to write and speak proficiently, but also to demonstrate their membership of an exclusive club; if a student failed to secure that knowledge in his memory, it could bring his membership of the club into question. We witness the consequence of such mnemonic failings in one of Seneca's letters, as he lambasts a wealthy man named Calvisius Sabinus for his appalling memory and lack of literary learning.[49] Seneca tells Lucilius (the recipient of the letter) that Sabinus' memory was so poor, he would regularly forget the names of Homeric heroes like Ulysses and Achilles, characters whom 'we knew as well as our own *paedagogi*'.[50] Sabinus' memory was worse than that of a senile *nomenclator*, who forgets everyone's names.[51] In order to appear educated, however, he spent ridiculous sums on slaves who had been forced to memorise poetry, one for Homer, another for Hesiod, and nine more for each of the lyric poets. In Sabinus' eyes, any knowledge his slaves possessed, he possessed too – he believed that their memories were a literal extension of his own. The

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[47] The 'canonisation' of texts, Greek and Latin, in Roman literature is discussed by Citroni (2006) 204-34. For the role of texts of 'high-culture' within rhetorical education, see Connolly (2011) 104-6.

[48] For the younger Seneca's life, see Griffin (1972) 1-19; Cornell (2013) Vol. 1 505-6.

[49] Sen. *Ep.* 27.5-8. The fullest discussion of Sabinus' identity remains Vassileiou (1974) 241-56. The assumption made by some (e.g. Préchac and Noblot (1945) 119, n. 3; Sullivan (1968) 129-32) that Sabinus was a freedman is unfounded. Vassileiou believes Sabinus was most likely the member of the elite Calvisii Sabini who held the consulship in 26 CE; cf. Elvers and Eck (2006) nos. 5 and 8, which distinguish two different members of the same family.

[50] Sen. *Ep.* 27.5: *quos tam bene quam paedagogos nostros novimus*. Text: Préchac and Noblot (1945).

[51] For *nomenclatores*, see n. 38 above. The primary *raison d'être* of the *nomenclator* was, of course, to remember names.

moral of Seneca's story is that although ordinary literary activity (as opposed to philosophy) requires help to achieve proficiency (in the form of teachers, and so on), nevertheless, you can neither borrow nor buy intelligence and common sense; and even if you could, men would prefer to purchase idiocy and depravity (*Ep.* 27.8). Yet the fact that Sabinus betrays his lack of culture through his defective memory can also tell us a great deal about the kind of literature Seneca believes a 'properly' educated Roman should study and memorise when young.

Take the heroes whom Seneca ostensibly knew as well as his *paedagogus* (a label typically given to an enslaved guardian who accompanied the young *dominus* in an elite family, acting as his chaperone and assistant in the *ludus*).[52] The name of the *paedagogus* is indelibly linked, in Seneca's early memories, to the heroes of myth. The comparison between the names of Greek heroes and the names of *paedagogi* is therefore carefully chosen, especially as we know that Roman masters often gave their slaves mock-epic names.[53] In making the comparison, Seneca is appealing to the shared pedagogic experiences of his class, which are, specifically, experiences exclusive to the sons of the privileged elite. To be a member of Seneca's club, you must be able to relate to his schoolboy memories of Achilles, Priam, and the *paedagogus* – Sabinus is so far from qualifying for membership that he cannot even fake these basic credentials. The lengths to which Sabinus has gone to gloss over his lack of learning, paying out over one million sesterces for bespoke enslaved poetry-reciters, merely demonstrates his vulgarity. He fails to understand that the minds of others cannot be treated as an extension of his own. It is simply not enough that Sabinus dons a mask, as it were, and roleplays the intellectual; what he ought to do is take ownership of the knowledge for himself and have the sense to know when to deploy it.

The exercise at which Sabinus failed so embarrassingly, poetry memorisation, was a staple for Roman *pueri* from the late Republic onwards. Exactly how these *pueri* went about their memorising is, however, far from clear. Certain properties of poetry do of course render it inherently more memorable than prose (Quintilian, for instance, highlights rhythmic arrangement).[54] Orally-derived poetry in particular had evolved to facilitate recall, and much has been written on its various mnemonic elements – by which I mean organisational

[52] For *paedagogi*, see Bonner (1977) 37-45.

[53] For discussion of the social significance of this naming custom, see Fitzgerald (2000) 5-6.

[54] Quint. *Inst.* 11.2.39. That verse was more memorable than prose had long been recognised: e.g. Pl. *Phdr.* 267a.

structures such as rhythm, repetition of epithets and half-lines, the use of standard poetic vocabulary, and so on.[55] Likewise, the idea that the poetic catalogue as an archaic constituent of oral epic exhibits internal mnemonic structure is convincing.[56] These intrinsic traits will have helped young students memorise their Homer at least, if not their Lysias.

As for extrinsic aids and techniques, I have already observed that the MOL was deemed ineffective for the memorisation of poetry and prose. Instead, Quintilian makes several practical suggestions: for verbatim memorisation of long passages and speeches, he recommends a technique referred to today as 'chunking', that is, splitting a passage up into meaningful sections of suitable length before attempting to memorise them consecutively; he also recommends basic associative techniques if something is not sticking in the mind (i.e. the sparing use of *imagines* to visualise a few subjects mentally, without the accompanying use of *loci* or the consecutive, spatial associations of the MOL); visualisation of the target text on the page (or, rather, tablet); reciting the text aloud; frequent testing; getting a good night's sleep; and, of course, unremitting daily practice and repetition.[57] Hence, approaches to memorising texts verbatim seem to have been eclectic, and were no doubt determined by a student's individual mnemonic strengths – i.e. by his *memoria naturalis*. Younger pupils were not taught to memorise in the systematised way that older students learning rhetoric were taught to utilise the MOL, and there existed in Roman *ludi* a clear distinction between general mnemonic techniques for verbatim memorisation and the oratorical *memoria rerum*, which was designed to meet the needs of live performance.

The evidence presented above also raises the possibility that the goal of the memorisation exercises recommended in the more advanced rhetorical treatises differed from the goal of the basic memorisation exercises undertaken by younger students. The basic exercises essentially required students to retain and reproduce target texts, thereby providing them with the bedrock of what the Romans considered a 'classical' education; the more advanced were, by way of contrast, frequently the province of the *rhetor* and his budding orators, who needed to utilise their mnemonic skills while making speeches. The purpose of memorisation exercises therefore shifted as the Roman youth progressed through his education, from

[55] See Ong (1982) 34-6; Rubin (1995) Ch. 8-9.

[56] Nikulin (2015) 39-41.

[57] Quint. *Inst.* 11.2.27-35, 11.2.40-4.

knowledge-acquisition and content-reproduction in the early stages, to creative mental composition and live performance later on.

We can observe the shift away from content-reproduction and towards improvisation in an advanced memorisation exercise advocated by Cicero's Crassus (who is, it should be noted, generally lukewarm about the MOL per se).[58] At *De oratore* 1.154-5, he tells us that when he was young, he would memorise as much of a poem or a speech as he could, before reproducing a paraphrase of it in prose (an exercise also used by Gaius Carbo, and one which continued to be practised throughout antiquity). He realised, however, that his paraphrases were of inferior quality, because the most appropriate vocabulary already appeared in the originals. Consequently, he adapted the method, and would instead memorise as much of a famous Greek work as possible, before reproducing it in spontaneous Latin translation: thus, he learnt to always choose the best vocabulary to express himself.[59] Whether the historical Crassus practised this exercise or not, Cicero appears to have personally recommended it.[60] Why? Because, as I see it, the exercise forces the student to improvise. He cannot simply rely on rote memorisation, as he may have done when memorising his Homer or his Lysias. Rather, he must mentally paraphrase what he has memorised; then, in an act of improvisation that must occur almost simultaneously with the act of recall, he must invent new words to express the original sentiment (while the additional burden of Greek-to-Latin translation forces him to focus on finding the optimal Latin vocabulary). In this way, the exercise combines the rhetorical subdisciplines of *elocutio* and *pronuntiatio* with *memoria*; it becomes a much more productive training method than rote memorisation, and one designed to meet the special demands of oratory. It does not matter at all whether the student is able to reproduce the original text – verbatim memorisation is actively discouraged (and prevented entirely when the element of translation is introduced). Paraphrase and paraphrase-translation were therefore memorisation exercises where the goal was not word-for-word content-reproduction but mnemonic retention that led to and facilitated improvised invention.

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[58] Cicero's Crassus states that the (more advanced) student of oratory might use mnemonic techniques to help with memorisation exercises if he wishes, but he sees no obligation: *De or.* 1.157. For Crassus' views on the *praecepta* of the MOL, see *De or.* 1.144-5.

[59] Aelius Theon describes various paraphrase exercises with some examples but does not mention translation: *Progymnasmata* 107-110 (Spengel). Quintilian, however, references the methods of Cicero's Crassus and fully endorses them, as well as recommending basic paraphrase: *Inst.* 10.5.2-11. Finally, over four centuries later, Augustine, *Conf.* 1.27, tells us that when he was a boy, he had to perform paraphrase exercises using Juno's speech from Verg. *Aen.* 1.37-49.

[60] As asserted by Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.5.2.

The above observation, that there were several distinct objectives for memorisation exercises at different stages of a student's education, is often overlooked, although it is crucial if we are to properly understand the role of *memoria* in the *ars rhetorica* as a whole: in the context of oratorical training, memorisation was practised less to enhance verbatim recall than to facilitate improvisation. Quintilian provides probably the clearest exposition of why students should concentrate on memory when training to deliver unscripted and/or largely improvised orations. At *Inst.* 10.6.1-7, he explains how professional orators put their rhetorical training into practice when preparing for and speaking in real forensic cases, thus describing the 'endgame' of the orator's education. He calls the method *cogitatio* ('mental preparation'). He opens by suggesting that *cogitatio* is perhaps the most frequently used preparatory method, since pure improvisation relies too much on chance, while working out a speech in writing does not make it stick in the memory and its words, though they may feel secure, slip from the mind.[61] From 10.6.3-4, he explains that preparing for a speech using *cogitatio* therefore relies primarily on the capacities of *memoria*, the enhancement of which requires intensive training in accordance with the rules of the rhetorical subdiscipline. Proficiency in the method will, he says, produce impressive speeches, as well-structured and coherent as if they had been worked out in writing and learnt by heart – as was demonstrated by the most exemplary oratorical mnemonist of the Ciceronian era, Hortensius.[62] Quintilian expands the theme in the next section of his work (*Inst.* 10.7), explaining his view that an ability to improvise (*facultas dicendi ex tempore*) is the *sine qua non* of the orator. Unsurprisingly, his model of best oratorical practice is based on Cicero and, using Cicero's *commentarii* as supporting evidence, he again explains how proficient orators who conduct many cases do not devise their speeches fully in writing beforehand, nor do they rely entirely upon improvisation, but they ready themselves instead using *cogitatio* (10.7.30).[63]

To focus on the role of *memoria* in this process, consider the following passage, in which Quintilian explains why students should practice exercises involving *cogitatio*, before presenting the ideal outcome, which relies upon mnemonic strength:

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[61] Cf. *Inst.* 11.2.9-10: here, Quintilian references the famous passage in Plato, *Phdr.* 275a, where Socrates proposes that writing hinders mnemonic ability; he concludes that Socrates' reasoning explains why written texts take so long to memorise, whereas the product of *cogitatio* is automatically retained.

[62] For Hortensius, see Ch. III, p. 138-44.

[63] For detailed discussion of this 'preparation phase' (and Cicero's *commentarii*), see Ch. III, p. 119-30.

> Ideoque totum hoc exercitationis genus ita instituendum ut et digredi ex eo et redire in id facile possimus. […] Id autem fiet memoriae viribus, ut illa quae complexi animo sumus fluant secura, non sollicitos et respicientes et una spe suspensos recordationis non sinant providere.
>
> Quint. *Inst.* 10.6.5-6.[64]
>
> We must undertake this whole mode of exercise in this way, so that we are able to digress from a subject and return to it with ease. […] But it is strong *memoria* that enables the thoughts we have held in our mind to flow unperturbed, allowing us to be relaxed, to look forwards without looking backwards, without hanging all our hopes on our powers of recall.

For Quintilian, truly strong *memoria* means that the speaker's chances of success are not tied to his ability to recall things exactly. The speaker will have no need to worry about what he has said or is going to say – he can focus instead on *how* he is going to say it. Strong *memoria* provides him with an infallible route map, as it were, in his mind, which has all his talking points (his *loci*) fixed so firmly that he can ad-lib or improvise, departing from them and returning to them at will. Ultimately, whether the orator utilises *memoria naturalis* or *memoria artificiosa* to achieve his mnemonic strength does not matter – the goal remains the same. The proficient speaker does not aim for superlative *memoria* to memorise scripts or reproduce the exact words of a prepared speech but, rather, so that he might go off-piste without worrying about regaining his course; so that he might elaborate one of his carefully-premeditated *sententiae* with an inspired *extemporalis color*; so that he might, in short, adapt his performance to the changing circumstances of a live trial. It was for this reason that *memoria* was counted alongside *actio* as one of the performative subdisciplines of the *ars rhetorica*.

Further, regarding the performative aspects of *memoria*, all our texts stress the same imperative: that the orator's speech should appear natural, spontaneous, and not as if it has been extensively rehearsed or memorised (even if the orator is an expert practitioner of the MOL). I discuss late-republican views concerning the appropriate application of mnemonic skills during performance in detail in Chapter III.[65] For now, to illustrate the point briefly, we can refer to Quintilian's summation of how to use memorised material to best effect. In an early aside at *Inst.* 2.4.27-32, Quintilian expresses his distaste for speakers who memorise a

[64] Latin text: Russell (2001).

[65] See p.133-6.

few generally-applicable commonplaces and then force them, stale and unpalatable, down their listeners' throats: the tactic is unimaginative, ineffective, and disliked by audiences.[66] At *Inst.* 11.2.46-7, he reiterates that an orator will appear stilted and charmless if he speaks like he has learnt a speech by heart; if, however, he conceals the use of his *memoria* to give the appearance that he is speaking impromptu, he will gain a reputation for ready wit (and it may even make the *iudex* drop his guard). Thus, it was important that an orator's mnemonic capacity, however incredible, remain hidden, such that it would be perceived, from the audience's point of view, as an incredible capacity for improvisation. If used in this ideal fashion, memorisation could endear an orator to his audience, helping him to achieve his primary goal, persuasion.[67]

If we are to understand the function of *memoria* in rhetoric and oratory fully, we must abandon the notion that the traditional goal of memorisation was the verbatim reproduction of written content. In forensic oratory specifically, word-for-word memorisation was certainly not the intended outcome, since a speaker could harm his performance if he gave the impression of having learnt something by heart. Orators in the forum were not being assessed like *pueri* reciting their lessons in the *ludus*, nor indeed like modern mnemonists competing in the World Memory Championships. For orators, the goal of practising mnemonic exercises and/or of using the MOL was the enhancement of a performance for the benefit of their audience. To this end, they relied upon *memoria* to provide their speeches with a firm scaffold, a well-structured series of solid talking points or *loci*. As importantly, *memoria* allowed orators to free themselves from the shackles of a script, to adapt, to display their wit, to improvise – with their arguments and the facts of the case always retrievable and secure.

2. *Memoria* in *Rhetorica ad Herennium*: normalisation and differentiation

The numerous sources introduced in the section above illustrate how *memoria* was a well-developed subdiscipline of Latin rhetoric, but this had not always been the case. Our best insights into how the various technical subdisciplines of Greek rhetoric were integrated into the Roman rhetorical curriculum come from the earliest surviving Latin treatises, *De*

[66] Quintilian compares cliched commonplaces to *frigidi et repositi cibi*: *Inst.* 2.4.29.

[67] For this conventional definition of the *officium oratoris*, see *Rhet. Her.* 1.2-3, phrased otherwise at Cic. *De or.* 1.138. It was inherited from Hellenistic rhetoricians like Hermagoras (as quoted in Sext. Emp. *Math.* 2.62).

inventione and *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. There are, for example, explicit and underlying similarities in the treatments of *inventio* presented by Cicero and the Auctor, which provide good evidence of an increasingly standardised pedagogic approach.[68] Likewise, although the Auctor claimed he was introducing – and perhaps even coining – previously non-existent Latin terms for Greek concepts, the sometimes word-for-word correspondences between his and Cicero's rhetorical definitions are a clear indication that an accepted rhetorical lexicon was already instituted by the 80s BCE.[69] As I argue below, standardising the rhetorical curriculum in this way would have helped to normalise the practice of teaching rhetoric in Latin rather than Greek. At the same time as Roman rhetoricians were adopting Greek concepts, however, they were also attempting to adapt rhetorical theory to suit the desires and sensibilities of an oratorically-oriented Latin-speaking audience, by distancing themselves from the practices of their Greek-speaking counterparts.[70] It is this fine line – between normalisation and differentiation – that the Auctor *ad Herennium* attempted to walk in his treatment of *memoria artificiosa*.

I begin with the Auctor's mnemonic terminology. Although external evidence is limited, it appears that the Auctor learnt and implemented a Latin vocabulary for rhetorical *memoria* that was already in wider use. As in the case of other rhetorical subdisciplines, terminological and conceptual congruences feature throughout the surviving texts. In *De inventione*, Cicero provides the following summation: *memoria est firma animi rerum ac verborum perceptio*; the Auctor, *memoria est firma animi rerum et verborum et dispositionis perceptio*, adding to Cicero's definition only the qualifier that rhetorical *memoria* encompasses retention of the arrangement (*dispositio*) of words and ideas in the mind, along with the words and ideas themselves.[71] The Auctor and Cicero also include other conceptualisations of *memoria* that are specific to rhetorical theory but unrelated to the MOL, such as the rhetorical definition of *historia* as *gesta res, ab aetatis nostrae memoria remota*.[72]

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[68] For the relationship between the *Rhetorica* and *De inventione*, begin with Guérin (2006) 61-76, Gaines (2007) 171-80.

[69] *Rhet. Her.* 4.10. For the similarity of definitions, see notably the enumeration of the five subdisciplines, *Rhet. Her.* 1.3 and Cic. *Inv. rhet.* 1.9.

[70] We see this in, for example, the disdain expressed by the Auctor for *Graeci scriptores*, *Rhet. Her.* 1.1; or Cicero's Catulus, who criticises the Greek approach at *De or.* 2.75; similarly, Cicero's Crassus, *De or.* 3.93-5.

[71] Cic. *Inv. rhet.* 1.9, text: Hubbell (1949). *Rhet. Her.* 1.3. Note the alternative manuscript reading at *Inv. rhet.* 1.9, *…rerum ac verborum [ad inventionem] perceptio*: see apparatus in Achard (1994) 64, *ad loc.*

[72] Cic. *Inv. rhet.* 1.27; *Rhet. Her.* 1.13, where the phrasing is identical, save for *sed* (*gesta res, sed ab…*). This 'historical' conceptualisation of *memoria*, which invokes the notion of a set of past events remembered

Similarly, both authors indicate that the possession of strong *memoria* is a prerequisite for the character trait *prudentia* ('wisdom' or 'foresight').[73]

The rhetorical texts share a notably standardised set of metaphors for *memoria*, which imply a shared view of both mnemonic function and mnemonic content. These include the metaphors of *memoria* as *custos omnium partium rhetoricae* and *thesaurus inventorum*.[74] To conceptualise *memoria* as *custos* attributes a defensive function to the faculty, with the notion that one's individual memory operates as a watchful guard and protector of knowledge. This is complemented by the conceptualisation of *memoria* as *thesaurus*, which implies one's memory acts as a secure container for valuable content.[75] Thus, in the context of the *ars rhetorica*, these metaphors present *memoria* as both protecting and defining the limits of a speaker's knowledge. Probably the most famous shared metaphor for *memoria* is, however, the 'wax tablet', whereby the formation of memories in the mind is rendered analogous to the impression of marks in wax.[76] The origins of this metaphor in Greek philosophy are analysed fully in Chapter II (p. 68-71).

When it comes to the technical aspects of *memoria artificiosa*, here also, the Auctor's and Cicero's treatments are fundamentally the same, using the same concepts, specialised terminology (*imagines*, *loci*, and so on), and the same underlying set of rules. Their framing of those rules, however, differs markedly: it is the purpose of the following sections to delineate and explain those differences. I begin with the Auctor *ad Herennium*, whose approach is certainly the more didactic of the two and is consequently (and perhaps unfairly) often considered less sophisticated.

Unlike Cicero, the Auctor is primarily interested in providing a technical blueprint for the MOL, which the aspiring practitioner might use to develop, test, and refine his own mnemonic technique. The exposition of *memoria* is to be found at *Rhet. Her.* 3.28-40. After stating that there are two types of *memoria* (*naturalis* and *artificiosa*), the Auctor refuses to get side-tracked into a debate over whether *memoria artificiosa* should be classified as a true

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collectively by a generation, enters the territory of modern Memory Studies: for *memoria nostrae aetatis* specifically, see Walter (2004) 35-8.

[73] Cic. *Inv. rhet.* 2.160, *Rhet. Her.* 3.3.

[74] *Rhet. Her.* 3.28, Cic. *De or.* 1.18.

[75] For possible origins of the *thesaurus* metaphor, see Ch. II, p. 92.

[76] *Rhet. Her.* 3.30-1, Cic. *De or.* 2.354.

ars in the strict (philosophical) sense (3.28).[77] Similarly, the question of whether our mnemonic powers can be enhanced through training or whether they are entirely determined by nature is, he says, a discussion more suited to some other time – the effectiveness of the MOL should, for the budding student of rhetoric, be assumed. He further justifies his stance on the utility of the MOL by asserting that however great one's natural mnemonic talent, theory can always aid nature; and even if those who only rely on their natural talent do not need it, the precepts he sets out will be beneficial to others (3.29).[78] After explaining those precepts in detail, to close the discussion, the Auctor advises Herennius (the hypothetical student and addressee of the work) that he will realise the utility of *memoria artificiosa* as he learns to use it in practice – and to argue the point further would be to doubt Herennius' assiduity (3.40).

These utilitarian justifications, repeated at intervals, tacitly acknowledge the existence of contemporaneous doubts over the worth of teaching students the MOL – expressed explicitly in later treatments of the subdiscipline by Cicero and Quintilian.[79] The Auctor, however, refuses to air or argue against those doubts, instead framing *memoria* as a subdiscipline of emergent practical value, a value that will be realised when theory is put into practice, and a theory in which there is no room for extraneous philosophising. Some modern scholars have seen instances such as these, where the Auctor avoids tricky questions, as a reason to criticise and doubt his sagacity – Müller, for example, believes they betray 'ein gewisses "intellektuelles Defizit"'.[80] Yet the fact that such questions are acknowledged in the text at all seems to me to suggest less that the Auctor was unable to address them and more that he deemed a rhetorical treatise – and moreover, a Latin rhetorical treatise – the wrong place for such tangential discussion.

Consider the Auctor's reluctance to provide proof of the MOL's utility. While we might read it as a simple case of avoidance, or a desire to dismiss the age-old student favourite, "Why should we bother learning this?", when we compare it to the Auctor's overall approach to promoting the *ars rhetorica* as a subject worthy of study, we find that it is

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[77] See above, n. 14.

[78] This justification was evidently commonplace: cf. Cic. *De or.* 2.351.

[79] Cicero's Antonius cites unskilled/lazy people (*inertes*) who say that the *ars memoriae* is ineffective at *De or.* 2.360; Quintilian states that some consider *memoria* 'a gift of nature only' (*naturae modo… munus*, *Inst.* 11.2.1), and expresses his own doubts concerning the limitations of the MOL at *Inst.* 11.2.23-6.

[80] Müller (1996) 104, and p. 83-103 for Müller's general criticisms of the Auctor's failure to address philosophical questions concerning *memoria*.

entirely consistent. The Auctor's general attitude is nowhere more apparent than in the opening lines of the work, where he states that he generally prefers to spend his *otium* ('leisure time') in the pursuit of *philosophia*; but he has engaged himself in the *negotium* ('business') of writing a treatise on rhetoric at Herennius' behest because he knows that oratorical skills bring great benefits.[81] This is an archetypically Roman justification for 'intellectual' study and composition, somewhat reminiscent of Cato's introduction to the *Origines*, where, as part of his apology for writing *historia*, Cato states the moralising principle that great and distinguished men ought to justify the worth of their *otium* no less than their *negotium*.[82] The Auctor was writing in a period when there was still considerable aristocratic stigma attached to the teaching of rhetoric in Latin; thus, his Catonian apology for composing a work that fundamentally advocates such an approach can be construed as an attempt to address and refute any such stigma. He presents rhetoric as the opposite of his otiose philosophical studies, as a subject not of leisure but of business, of resolutely utilitarian and practical value – an intellectual discipline that will aid the productive Roman in his *negotium*, whether conducted on behalf of his family or the wider community.[83] The Auctor, from the outset, attempts to normalise the exposition of rhetoric in Latin to suit Roman *mores* by investing his project, and the *ars rhetorica* itself, with potent benefits for other members of society.

Following this line of reasoning, when the Auctor turns to the rhetorical theory of *memoria*, he avoids what we might call 'meta-disciplinary' questions not because he is incapable of addressing them (he is, after all, a lover of philosophy), but because they are extraneous to the practical instruction required by those who want to put *memoria artificiosa* to beneficial use.[84] At the end of the mnemonic exposition, he highlights how the techniques prove most useful when 'we are engaged in some *negotium* of major importance'.[85] Thus he invokes once more the Catonian ideal that study pursued during *otium* should be as worthwhile as the tasks of *negotium*: specifically, the Auctor's treatise on *memoria*, pursued

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[81] *Rhet. Her.* 1.1: *non enim in se parum fructus habet copia dicendi et commoditas orationis…*

[82] Cato *Orig.* 1.2 = Cic. *Planc.* 66. For analysis of Cato's prologue, see Churchill (1995) 91-106. The foundational study of dedicatory conventions in Latin literature is Janson (1964): his comments on the Auctor (p. 27-32) remain relevant.

[83] The Auctor states that much of his time is taken up with *negotia familiaria*, *Rhet. Her.* 1.1.

[84] Cf. *Rhet. Her.* 3.3: the Auctor professes that he is (again) postponing extraneous discussions of war and statecraft to a more suitable time – although he still wants us to believe that he is capable of writing treatises on these (more obviously 'utilitarian') disciplines.

[85] *Rhet. Her.* 3.40: *cum aliquo maiore negotio detinemur*.

during the course of his personal *otium*, has (he says) the potential to benefit others when they are pursuing *negotium*. By cutting out extraneous detail and tangential questions of merely theoretical importance, the Auctor attempts to present a sustained case for the utility and value of studying rhetoric in Latin. Instead of wasting time asking *why* rhetorical theory is useful, as the Greeks do, Roman students should put theory into practice and witness its utility with their own eyes.

Consequently, it seems to me that the Auctor's unadorned, rather prosaic, and overtly technical treatment of rhetorical theory was prompted at least in part by his need to justify an exposition of rhetorical theory written in Latin rather than Greek. As he remarks in his opening statements, it is *Graeci scriptores* who discuss, 'for the sake of vain arrogance' (*inanis adrogantiae causa*), topics that he omits; to protect the façade of their expertise, they teach absolutely irrelevant subjects, 'so that the *ars* might be thought more difficult to understand' (*ut ars difficilior cognitu putaretur*).[86] The Auctor promises instead to strip his *ars rhetorica* of all Greek intellectual gimcrack and, motivated to fulfil that promise, he deems certain questions, such as whether or not *memoria* qualifies as a true *ars*, irrelevant – they smack a little too much of Greek intellectual quibbling.

Another hallmark of the Greek approach was the charging of fees for tuition. Again, in his opening statements, the Auctor stresses that he is not motivated by desire for profit or glory (unlike the rest) – thus, he simultaneously condemns and distances himself from mercenary Greeks and perhaps also the *Latini rhetores* of Crassus' infamous censorial edict, who presumably took payment for their services.[87] We might (justifiably) question the Auctor's selfless motives and his claims about the Greeks; nevertheless, by removing what the stereotypical aristocratic *pater* might have considered the faults and flaws of Greek rhetoricians, the Auctor at least attempted to make his approach more palatable to his intended audience, to normalise the exposition of rhetoric in Latin and to render it a subject worthy of budding Latin orators.[88] Moreover, those same budding orators, when faced with the sprawling rhetorical curriculum, may well have appreciated the Auctor's straightforward

[86] *Rhet. Her.* 1.1.

[87] See p. 15.

[88] On the other hand, the Auctor (and Cicero, in *De inventione*) sometimes fails to adapt his source material to his Roman audience, with references that only make sense in a Greek cultural context: for examples and discussion, see Corbeill (2002) 34-8.

and unadorned prose. His work is ultimately presented as an instructional text and, in pedagogy, concision and clarity are often key considerations.

In the absence of Greek or Latin rhetorical texts from the late second century, it is difficult to judge whether the Auctor's framing of his Latin *ars rhetorica* was in any way a true departure from what came before – we do not even know whether his criticisms were aimed at anyone specifically, since he never engages with other rhetoricians by name, tending instead to criticise generalised groups (such as the *Graeci scriptores*).[89] The fact that his definitions are sometimes identical to those in Cicero's *De inventione* rather leads one to suspect that the Auctor was seriously exaggerating the extent of his originality. Many in the Auctor's Roman audience would have known that his rhetorical theory was imported directly from the Greek tradition; yet it seems that, for the Auctor, it was not the content but the packaging of this theory that mattered most.

To this end, the Auctor was fully committed to differentiating his own methods from those of his Greek predecessors. He provides a summary of the main tenets of his ostensibly novel approach at the beginning of his fourth and final book (*Rhet. Her.* 4.1-10). His principal belief is that the rhetorician should be able to talk in accordance with the precepts of his *ars*.[90] He explains that, unlike Greek rhetoricians who copy out passages from other authors and rely on the prestige of ancient orators and poets to elevate their texts, he has created his own examples of rhetorical techniques in action. The Auctor frames this method as a positive innovation, stating that 'there is no need to concede everything to antiquity' (*non omnia concedenda esse antiquitati*, 4.4).[91] He warns that others who satisfy themselves with quotes from previous authors run a real risk of appearing naïve and inexperienced in matters of greater importance (*insueti rerum maiorum*, 4.6); a true expert should be able to demonstrate practical application of the subject he purports to have mastered (4.9).[92] Thus, by claiming to have produced his own (suitably Roman) *exempla*, the Auctor simultaneously

[89] Schmidt and Gruen note that a lack of references is no proof of the non-existence of earlier Latin-medium treatises: Schmidt (1975) 193-4, Gruen (1990) 184.

[90] Specifically stated at *Rhet. Her.* 4.6, 4.10; cf. Cic. *Inv. Rhet.* 1.8.

[91] Note the Auctor's latent implication that the Romans will one day surpass *antiquitas* – i.e. the Greeks – in literary and oratorical achievement.

[92] The Auctor's criticisms are hardly unprecedented. Isocrates, writing several centuries earlier, made similarly damning condemnations of other rhetoricians for imparting knowledge as prescriptively and unimaginatively as if they were teaching the letters of the alphabet, and for failing to demonstrate practical mastery of rhetorical τέχναι: Isoc. *C. soph.* 10, 12-8. For Isocrates' approach (and what we know of his successors), see Heath (2017) 77-80. Whether pedagogical methods had changed significantly by the first century BCE is ultimately impossible to judge.

rejects Greek models and demonstrates to his audience how dissimilar he is to Greek rhetoricians who are content to study *ars gratia artis*.[93]

In general, the Auctor's didactic approach to *memoria artificiosa* follows the tripartite pedagogical model that he advocates in the rest of his *ars rhetorica*: first, the student must learn the theoretical method (*ars*); then, he must imitate others (*imitatio*); finally, he must practice his own style (*exercitatio*).[94] These are the Auctor's three ingredients for rhetorical success.[95] Accordingly, in the section on *memoria*, he provides the theoretical method (*Rhet. Her.* 3.28-40, passim); he provides a limited number of *exempla* for the purposes of imitation (the most remarkable of which can be found at 3.33-4); and he asserts that, in the subdiscipline of *memoria* especially, practice is key (3.40). The Auctor's overarching desire to differentiate himself from earlier Greek rhetoricians is also particularly apparent in this section. As was discussed above in relation to 3.28-9, he rejects the Greeks' ostensible fondness for tangential debate and extreme complexity by refusing to engage in meta-disciplinary discussion about the nature and utility of *memoria artificiosa*. We see another instance of the Auctor prioritising concision at 3.34, where he starts to develop the metaphor of *memoria* as *custos*. *Memoria artificiosa* acts, he suggests, as a reinforcement for the defence provided by *memoria naturalis*, 'for each of the two types [of *memoria*] will, when separated, be less reliable, although it is still true that there is much greater protection (*praesidium*) in theory and in *ars*'.[96] Taken at face value, this assertion tells us something more about how the two types of *memoria* were perceived in rhetorical theory, with *memoria artificiosa* (the MOL) treated as the *praesidium* of the potentially vulnerable *memoria naturalis*. The Auctor's claim remains, however, unsupported. He states that he would be quite happy to prove the greater protective power of *memoria artificiosa*, were it not that it would ruin the 'straightforward concision of his instruction' (*dilucida brevitas praeceptionis*). So once more, tangential debate is omitted in favour of unadorned technical exposition.

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[93] For more on the 'Romanness' of the Auctor's *exempla*, see Corbeill (2002) 42-3.

[94] *Rhet. Her.* 1.3; cf. 4.69.

[95] Note that although the Auctor clearly believed *natura*, in the sense of 'natural ability', was another prerequisite for success, he omits it from his list. It was usually included: e.g. Pl. *Phdr.* 269d; Isoc. *C. soph.* 14; Cic. *De or.* 1.146-7, 2.89-92.

[96] *Rhet. Her.* 3.34: *Nam utraque altera separata minus erit firma, ita tamen, ut multo plus in doctrina atque arte praesidii sit.*

The Auctor's most overt attempt to differentiate his exposition of *memoria* from earlier treatments comes in a passage at *Rhet. Her.* 3.38-9, where he denigrates and rejects the prescriptivist approach of certain (unnamed) Greek rhetoricians. He says that these Greeks prescribe vast numbers of *imago-verbum* pairs – i.e. they pre-designate a mental image of their own design for each word. He then argues that the practice is absurd on numerous counts: first, such prescriptivism is rendered unfeasible by the vast quantity of words students might need to memorise; second, it robs students of their agency by removing the need to devise personalised *imago-verbum* pairs; and finally, it is ineffective, since what is profoundly memorable for one person will barely make an impression upon another (3.38). The Auctor develops this final point at some length, observing that there are certain things that everyone remembers particularly well – images of outstanding beauty, singular ugliness, hilarity, etc. – but the details always differ between individuals. Just as it is up to the individual to devise his own arguments using the principles of *inventio*, therefore, the practitioner of the MOL must himself seek out and discover what works best. In contrast to the overly prescriptive Greeks, good Roman tutors (like the Auctor) will provide one or two examples to illustrate the theory, then leave it up to students to exercise their own initiative and gain all-important practical experience.

We might argue that the Auctor, in criticising the methods of other rhetoricians at such great length, borders on hypocrisy; that his condemnation of excessive tangential discussion becomes itself excessive. It is no accident that when the Auctor allows himself the liberty of digression, it is to promote his own pedagogic practices at the expense of the much-maligned Greeks. As the passages discussed in this section illustrate, his attempts to differentiate his approach are particularly prominent in his treatment of *memoria artificiosa* – perhaps he felt it necessary to provide robust justification of the somewhat esoteric MOL. Until recently, the MOL had been taught only in Greek, and the Auctor had to sell the merits of his Latin translation of the technique to a potentially sceptical Roman readership. As later texts confirm, there were some who doubted the effectiveness of *memoria artificiosa*. In *De oratore*, Cicero's Antonius addresses these doubts by admitting that although some truly great orators will never need the MOL (he gives Themistocles as an example), others such as himself will always benefit.[97] In contrast, the Auctor generally avoids the debate or refuses to engage: just try the MOL for yourself, he says, and see how useful it proves in the pursuit of

[97] Cic. *De or.* 2.351.

your daily business. The Auctor's MOL is not *ars gratia artis*, but *ars gratia negotii*. We can thus view the Auctor's efforts to reframe the exposition of the MOL as an attempt to normalise the teaching of the technique to suit the *mores* of a pragmatic, outcome-oriented Roman audience. Another facet of this bid for normalisation involved stripping the MOL of its 'Greekness'. By rejecting the methods of his Greek counterparts, by doing away with prescriptivism and returning agency to the student, the Auctor attempted to differentiate his approach to the MOL, even if this differentiation was only superficial. In the Auctor's model, control comes to reside with the would-be Roman orator, so that he might master his memory and put it to work in his oratory.

3. *Memoria* in *De oratore*: differentiation from the norm

If the Auctor's approach to *memoria* as a subdiscipline of the *ars rhetorica* was characterised by the normalisation in Latin of a prior, exclusively Greek tradition, then Cicero's presentation of the same subject in *De oratore* bears witness to how the Auctor's approach rapidly became the norm; so much so that Cicero, writing a few decades later, desired to differentiate his work from it. A desire for generic differentiation from rhetorical pedagogy was of course one element of Cicero's overall authorial agenda for *De oratore*: as he himself wrote in a letter to Lentulus Spinther (dated December 54), *De oratore* avoids rehashing the *communia praecepta* of the rhetoricians.[98] Accordingly, Cicero elevated the register of the work above that of a typical didactic treatise.

We can detect the differing overall goals of the Auctor and Cicero in their justifications for the utility of *memoria*. The Auctor, writing primarily for the purpose of rhetorical instruction, asserts at the end of his discussion that strong *memoria* is always useful, especially when engaged in business of special importance (*maius negotium*). He does not, however, provide explicit examples, instead encouraging his readers to try the technique for themselves.[99] Cicero, by way of a slight but significant contrast, delineates the nuanced and varied utility of *memoria* for the Roman advocate specifically: the object of his discussion is the orator himself as much as it is rhetorical instruction. Accordingly, at *De or.* 2.355, Cicero has Antonius list the benefits of excellent mnemonic capacity before he gives

[98] *Fam.* 1.9.23. Scholarship on Cicero's agenda in *De oratore* is extremely wide-ranging, but for a general introduction to his goals, see May and Wisse (2001) 3-55.

[99] *Rhet. Her.* 3.40; above, p. 39.

any technical rules. Cicero's Antonius states that *memoria* is of great value to the orator since it allows him to remember all the information pertaining both to the case in hand and to cases from the past; it allows him to secure and arrange all his ideas and vocabulary before speaking; and it even enables him to memorise arguments made by his opponents while they are speaking.[100]

On a more technical level, Cicero's treatment of the MOL in *De oratore* is based fundamentally upon the same set of rules presented in *Rhetorica ad Herennium* – yet Cicero summarises them in such a compressed fashion that, if we did not have the Auctor's full exposition, it would be difficult to extrapolate some of the more granular details.[101] As discussed earlier, Cicero uses the same generic metaphors for *memoria* as the Auctor.[102] He also recognises the existence of doubts over whether *memoria* can be classified as an *ars*. But rather than taking the Auctor's approach and avoiding or dismissing these doubts, Cicero generalises the question to encompass the *ars dicendi* at large, referring back to a debate that the participants in his dialogue have already conducted in the first book (*De or.* 2.356, referring to 1.96-110). There, Cicero's Crassus argues that for the orator's purposes the question is effectively irrelevant (and more suited to some 'Greekling', *Graeculus*), but that in his view, speaking strictly, oratory cannot constitute an *ars*, save perhaps in the barest sense, because the precepts an orator follows and the language he uses must change in accordance with his audience and general circumstances, whereas the precepts of a true *ars* are never changed by the influence of external factors or one's own judgement.[103] He admits, however, that in less technical terms oratory does contain precepts comparable to those of an *ars*, which, if followed, will help the orator achieve his goals and become truly eloquent. With this previous discussion in mind, when addressing the question of whether *ars* can aid *memoria naturalis*, Cicero's Antonius acknowledges Crassus' views, then takes a similar approach to the Auctor, resolving the issue by saying that while the principal source of *memoria* is certainly *natura*, there is hardly anyone whose inherent mnemonic ability will not

[100] The final point is often overlooked: see Ch. III, p. 139-42.

[101] Demonstrated most starkly at *De or.* 2.358, where Cicero refers with extreme brevity to several mnemonic rules that the Auctor treats in much greater detail (*Rhet. Her.* 3.31-2, 3.37). Our reliance on *Rhet. Her.* for interpretation is evident in the commentary of Leeman, Pinkster, and Wisse (1996) 75-7, *ad loc.* Cicero's precise rules for the creation of appropriate *imagines* are particularly obscure: see Blum (1969) 23-32. I note also that the correspondence between the Auctor's and Cicero's rules is not one-to-one: the Auctor cites more rules and explains them in greater depth; Cicero's are necessarily compressed, though he introduces a few mnemonic tricks that the Auctor omits, e.g. the transformation of case endings to enhance memorability.

[102] See p. 38.

[103] For *ars*/τέχνη in philosophy, see Ch. II, p. 100.

be improved by putting into practice some of the precepts of the MOL (2.356-7).[104] Thus, Cicero recognises sceptics of the *ars memoriae* in referencing Crassus' views, while simultaneously using Antonius to justify why an exposition of the MOL remains necessary.

The underlying similarities in *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and *De oratore* are ultimately overshadowed by Cicero's main strategy of differentiation: the introduction and incorporation of the poet Simonides of Ceos into his explanation of the MOL and, hence, into Latin rhetorical pedagogy itself. As Quintilian states, it was Cicero who first popularised the story that connected Simonides to the MOL.[105] As I argue below, that connection was not routinely made by Roman rhetoricians before Cicero released *De oratore*. Yet, thanks not least to his posthumous reputation as the paragon of Latin oratory, Cicero's Simonidean take on *memoria artificiosa* was so successful that it fundamentally changed Roman understanding of the origins of the MOL – and all later expositions of the technique became almost obliged to follow suit.

Cicero sets the tone for his treatment of the MOL immediately, choosing not to introduce the theory by conventional direct means, using definitions and technical instruction, but with narrative. He has Antonius voice a vote of thanks to Simonides of Ceos as the first man to demonstrate the effectiveness of the MOL (*De or.* 2.351). He then relates the origin myth, explaining how Simonides had been invited to dine with Scopas in Thessaly and to compose a poem in Scopas' honour. In this poem, Simonides also praised Castor and Pollux; Scopas objected, paying Simonides only half the agreed commission, because, as Scopas argued, only half the poem was about him. Later, Simonides was told that two young men were requesting his presence outside but, when he left the palace, they were nowhere to be seen. While Simonides was gone, however, the dining hall collapsed. Scopas and the other dinner guests were crushed inside, and the story concludes as follows:

> Simonides dicitur ex eo, quod meminisset quo eorum loco quisque cubuisset, demonstrator unius cuiusque sepeliendi fuisse. hac tum re admonitus invenisse fertur ordinem esse maxime, qui memoriae lumen adferret. itaque iis, qui hanc partem ingenii exercerent, locos esse capiendos et ea, quae memoria tenere vellent, effingenda animo atque in iis locis conlocanda:

[104] Cf. *Rhet. Her.* 3.28-9.

[105] Quint. *Inst.* 11.2.15: *Cicero hanc famam latius fudit*.

> sic fore, ut ordinem rerum locorum ordo conservaret, res autem ipsas rerum effigies notaret atque ut locis pro cera, simulacris pro litteris uteremur.
>
> Cic. *De or.* 2.353-4.[106]

> Simonides is said to have identified every one of them for burial based on his memory of the *locus* where each of them had reclined at the table; then, prompted by this event, he is said to have discovered that it is order, above all, that sheds light upon *memoria* and, consequently, that those who would train this aspect of their intellect must choose *loci* and fashion representations of the things that they wish to retain in memory to be placed in those *loci*. Thus, it will be the case that the order of the *loci* preserves the order of the *res*, while the representations of the *res* signify the *res* themselves, and that we use *loci* in place of the wax on a tablet and likenesses in place of the letters.

First, a few notes on vocabulary. In contrast to the Auctor, who uses a limited range of terms consistently throughout, Cicero refers to technical concepts using a variety of expressions. Take *imagines*, for example: in the quoted passage alone, Cicero uses *simulacra* and *effigies* as synonyms for *imagines*, plus the related *effingenda animo* to describe their formation. It is not that he has rejected the term *imago* in favour of others (it appears frequently elsewhere), but he has expanded upon the more limited and strictly technical vocabulary of the Auctor, emphasising, with the terms *effigies* and *effingenda*, the idea that *imagines* must be consciously 'fashioned' as likenesses of the objects they resemble. The Auctor never uses *effigies* or consanguineous terms, and whereas Cicero deploys *simulacra* as a synonym for *imagines* liberally, the Auctor uses it twice only, once simply to define *imagines* as a technical rhetorical term and once to emphasise that *imagines* must be an accurate representation of the objects they denote.[107]

The Auctor's more limited range of technical vocabulary aligns with his stated aims, both to introduce and normalise Latin terms, and to be clear and concise in his instructional exegesis of rhetorical precepts. Cicero's Antonius, on the other hand, is not concerned that his audience will misunderstand the theory: the ruleset of the MOL is, he says, common knowledge (*De or.* 2.358). Cicero's unrestrained deviation from the standard term *imagines* thus assumes his audience's familiarity with the MOL and elevates the register of Antonius'

[106] Latin text: Kumaniecki (1969).

[107] For Cicero's use of *imagines*, see *De or.* 2.355-60. For the Auctor's limited use of *simulacra*, see *Rhet. Her.* 3.29, 31. Re the 'fashioning' of *imagines*, I note that Cicero elsewhere uses the terms *figura* and, even more unusually, *conformatio*, which May and Wisse deem was chosen for its parallel usage in the fashioning of figures of speech: see May and Wisse (2001) 220, n. 344.

speech above that of basic pedagogy to a more sophisticated level. Another consideration for Cicero was perhaps the non-technical connotations of the terms *simulacrum*, *effigies* and, especially, *imago*, which are all associated with death, funerals, and representations of deceased individuals.[108] Such evocations are particularly resonant when set alongside the Simonidean origin myth, since it was Simonides' memories of the deceased dinner guests that enabled proper funeral rites to be performed even after their physical features had been obliterated in death.

When it comes to Cicero's rendering of the Simonidean origin myth itself, it is clear from the use of *res* in the final sentence of the quoted passage, as well as the fact that Simonides was remembering people and where they were sitting, that Cicero is focussing here on *memoria rerum* rather than *memoria verborum*. Antonius does mention *memoria verborum*, but only later, when he states that it is unsuited to the orator (2.359); he makes no explicit link between Simonides and *memoria verborum*. I mention this because it is difficult to square the representation of *memoria verborum* as a cumbersome and ineffective technique for memorising individual words in passages of prose or poetry – a representation that appears in the Auctor, Cicero, and Quintilian, and which has been confirmed by modern mnemonists (see above, p. 23-7) – with the modern scholarly perception that Simonides invented the MOL precisely because he needed to learn his written poetry by heart.[109] This perception, overly influenced by Cicero's hold on the rhetorical tradition, is untenable.

As well as discarding the notion that the MOL was invented for the purpose of memorising poetry, we should also remove Simonides from any historical role as its inventor. For the last fifty years, modern scholarship has generally subscribed to a chronology for the development of rhetorical memory that commences with Simonides' invention of mnemonic techniques and a method akin to the MOL, if not the MOL itself. The most influential works on rhetorical memory remain Yates' *The Art of Memory* (1966) and Small's *Wax Tablets of the Mind* (1997). For Yates, Simonides was a figure of true importance, and 'really did take some notable step about mnemotechnics, teaching or publishing rules'.[110] Like Yates, Small concludes that Simonides had something to do with the invention of mnemonic techniques, but goes further, adding the reasoning that I have challenged above: Simonides, she says, was

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[108] I am thinking here of wax funerary masks (*imagines*), statues, and portraits (*imagines*/*effigies*/*simulacra*). For funerary *imagines* (in Roman life and rhetoric), see Flower (1996) esp. 32-59, 150-8.

[109] Epitomised by Small (2007) 195-6.

[110] Yates (1966) 28-9.

a natural inventor because he was one of the first poets to compose his work on the page and needed a method of memorising words for oral recitation.[111] Hence, both Yates' and Small's studies conclude that Cicero's Simonidean origin myth does bear some relation to historical reality. Of course, the question of whether Simonides really invented the MOL is age-old – Quintilian, for instance, went to significant lengths to ascertain and fact-check Cicero's sources.[112] He believed that Cicero followed a Callimachean poetic tradition, as opposed to the version of the story promoted by various Alexandrian scholars, who asserted that the collapsed palace was located at Pharsalus rather than Crannon. He also states that the sources do not agree whether Simonides really wrote his poem for Scopas; that, regardless, Scopas did perish in the disaster; and finally, that he does not personally believe Castor and Pollux descended from heaven to save Simonides.[113] Leaving Quintilian's doubts about the Dioscuri aside, what emerges most clearly from his Quellenforschung is that Simonides' reputation as a mnemonic innovator was not common knowledge among Roman writers before the mid-first century BCE when Cicero apparently introduced it.

Quintilian's engagement with a multitude of variations on the basic story also reflects the complex nature of Simonides' legacy in antiquity, which presents problems compounded for us by the loss of most Simonidean poetry and the fragmentary nature of that which does survive. Simonides' reputation was fostered during the Hellenistic period in intellectual hubs such as Alexandria, to the point that he was installed among the canon of nine lyric poets.[114] Many epigrams and gnomic sayings, a sizeable number of which are spurious and/or unverifiable, were attributed to him.[115] At the same time, a host of biographical stories spread, about his alleged miserliness, his sage-like wisdom, and his mercenary greed.[116] Simonides' reputation as a mnemonist was also part of this complex legacy. The earliest and clearest attribution of a system of mnemonics to him comes from the *Marmor Parium*, a marble chronicle inscribed during or shortly after 264/3 BCE, which names him as ὁ τὸ

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[111] Small (1997) 73-4.

[112] Quint. *Inst.* 11.2.14-5.

[113] The fullest investigation of Quintilian's own sources can be found in Slater (1972) 232-40, although the Loeb text of *Institutio* book 11 has some useful notes on these Alexandrian scholars, plus alternative readings of Quintilian's reference to Callimachus: Russell (2001) 65, n. 8. For the Callimachean fragment (probably) referenced here, see Callim. *Aet.* fr. 64.10 (Pfeiffer). The fragment is corrupt at the point where Simonides' mnemonic system may (or may not) be referenced.

[114] See Barbantani (2009) 302-3.

[115] Parsons (2001) 56-8.

[116] For Simonides' developing reputation, see Bell (1978) 29-86.

μνημονικὸν εὑρών.[117] The sources of the chronicle's entries remain obscure. Although it has been suggested that they were based on Athenian records, and it would be convenient to conclude that stories about Simonides (including the one about the palace-collapse) were promulgated in Athens and that he appeared on the marble as a result, the fact that the start of the inscription is lost means that such a scenario can be nothing more than an attractive possibility.[118] Likewise, to rely on much later sources such as the Byzantine *Suda* to confirm the reality of Simonides' invention of the MOL would be seriously misguided.[119] It seems entirely possible that Simonides had acquired a reputation for being a master of memory by the end of his life, and that this reputation was fostered after his death.[120] The story of Simonides as the 'inventor of mnemonics' may even have resulted from the conflation of his reputation as an elegist whose poetry preserved memories of the dead with the idea that he employed an actual system of mnemonics to retain memories in his mind.[121]

I believe the most likely scenario, however, is that the narrative of the Simonidean origin myth, with the details of the palace-collapse and the intervention of Castor and Pollux, was itself invented alongside other stories of Simonides' exploits, like those relating to his astonishing wisdom or (equally astonishing) greed, in intellectual hubs such as Alexandria where his poetry was preserved.[122] To be clear, I am not suggesting that Cicero was the first to link this Simonidean story with the invention of the MOL, but it is entirely possible that another practitioner of *memoria artificiosa* saw the potential of the pre-existing palace-collapse story to explain the utility of *ordo* to the *ars*, and adapted the myth by appending the 'lesson' that order enhances memory. Simonides, already famed for possessing impressive powers of memory, was a natural fit for the role of inventor and, thus, a new explanation of

[117] *Mar. Par.* 54: text, Jacoby (1904) p. 16; see also Rotstein (2016) 31, 45. Rotstein provides an up-to-date introduction to the inscription (Ch. 1) and considers our application of historical details from the inscription to the many literary figures it mentions (Ch. 6).

[118] Young and Steinmann (2012) 230, cf. Rotstein (2016) 1-3.

[119] *Suda* Σ439. Obbink believes the entry in the *Suda* contains 'nonsense': Obbink (2001) 74-5. Nevertheless, by the Renaissance period, Simonides' position as the 'founding father of mnemonics' had become so entrenched that Giordano Bruno (1548-1600 CE) included him on his 'memory wheel': see Yates (1966) 221-2.

[120] In a line (of unverifiable authorship) quoted by Aristides, Simonides boasts that, even aged 80, when it came to memory, nobody rivalled him: see Aristid. *Or.* 28, with the caveats of Slater (1972) 235-6.

[121] See Parsons (2001) 58, n. 32 for this idea, and also the more unorthodox reading of Farrell (1997) 377-9.

[122] Cf. Post (1932) 107, who speculates that the Simonidean origin myth first appeared in a lost work by Hippias of Elis. Given the type of mnemonic techniques that Hippias is said to have used (see Ch. II, p. 68), this seems unlikely.

why the MOL works was born. Cicero, using his knowledge of the Hellenistic tradition, picked up this explanation and ran with it in *De oratore*.

Such a hypothesis is of course speculative – but the fundamental idea that the Simonidean origin myth contains little historical fact is hardly revolutionary. Small seems unaware of the views of classicists from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who rejected the notion that a poet could have developed the MOL. Morgenstern (writing in 1835) and Post (1932) both agreed on the issue, the latter stating that, 'the development of an artificial system of memory is appropriate only to a teacher of rhetoric'.[123] We can bring these views up to date and supplement them with the evidence from modern cognitive science presented earlier, which demonstrates that the ancient MOL is not necessarily the most effective method for memorising poetry verbatim, but that it is particularly useful for extracting and memorising the salient points of expository passages (see p. 25). The old argument, that a poet is highly unlikely to have created the MOL, stands. The MOL was designed to meet the requirements of the forum, not the poetry recital, and we should consequently conclude that the Simonidean origin myth was just that – a myth. This conclusion rather disrupts the start of both Yates' and Small's timelines for the chronological development of the MOL. The implications of this disruption will be considered in detail in Chapter II.

For now, with the question of historical (in)accuracy addressed, we can focus on Cicero's own presentation of the Simonidean origin myth within the specific context of Roman rhetoric. First, I note that the narrative feature most relevant to the underlying principles of the MOL is Simonides' memorisation of the dining hall's arrangement – in other words, the story is most useful as an illustration of the importance of *ordo* or *dispositio* to the MOL. Yet, although the myth provides a reasonable demonstration of how order promotes accurate mnemonic retention, it hardly supplies a comprehensive explanation for the derivation of a complete ruleset involving *ordo*, *loci*, and *imagines*.

This inadequacy is highlighted at the point when Cicero's Antonius transitions from mythic narrative to the statement of rules, which occurs at *De or.* 2.354 (quoted p. 47-8),

[123] Morgenstern (1835) 7-10; Post (1932) 106. Post posits the Sophists as likely inventors, but I disagree: fifth-century Sophists did not use any mnemonic systems as sophisticated as the Auctor's fully-fledged MOL: see Ch. II, p. 67-8.

immediately after Simonides' inference concerning the importance of order for effective mnemonic retention. Cicero first employs the metaphor of *ordo* as a light that illuminates the dark recesses of memory. Subsequently, the transition to the rules (*itaque iis…*) is somewhat abrupt, tied together by an extended AcI construction dependent on *invenisse*. The transition is smoothed over by various translators with the reintroduction of Simonides as agent: for example, Sutton and Rackham, 'He [Simonides] inferred that persons desiring to train this faculty must…' or May and Wisse, 'And he [Simonides] concluded that those who would like to employ this part of their abilities should…'.[124] That Cicero wanted to credit Simonides with the initial formulation of the laws for *loci* and the placement of *imagines* in *loci* is clear; the circumlocutory fashion in which he does so might, however, be explained by the idea that Cicero's invocation of Simonides to explain the rules of the MOL was novel and unfamiliar to his audience.[125] If Cicero, while attempting what was already an unorthodox introduction to rhetorical memory, had simply stated up front that it was Simonides who invented the rules for the creation of *loci* and *imagines*, he would have directly contradicted his readers' prior knowledge of *memoria artificiosa*. The standard curriculum (or at least, the curriculum presented in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*) did not offer students explanations for the rules of mnemonics that were based on Simonides' mythical discovery; rather, students were probably taught mnemonics according to the Auctor's approach, which relies on explanations such as the traditional wax tablet metaphor. Cicero's explanation of *loci* and *imagines* was highly irregular.

The clearest indication of this irregularity is the fact that, by the end of the quoted passage, Cicero feels it necessary to revert to the Auctor's wax tablet metaphor to explain how *loci* and the *imagines* placed in them work.[126] For the Auctor, the wax tablet is the go-to explanation for the rules of the MOL, and he elaborates the analogy between writing in wax and *memoria artificiosa* at much greater length than Cicero.[127] The differences are worth

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[124] Sutton and Rackham (1948) 467; May and Wisse (2001) 219. Cf. Small, whose translation preserves the absence of Simonides: '…he [Simonides] is said to have invented the order that especially brings light to memory. And so for those who would train this part of the mind…' Small (1997) 73. The most comprehensive commentary on this section is Leeman, Pinkster, and Wisse (1996) 64-78.

[125] Cf. Quintilian, whose rendering of the Simonidean origin myth makes the causal relationship between the palace-collapse and the invention of mnemotechnics explicit: *Inst.* 11.2.17. Marchesi (2005) 395 believes the causal relationship to be a 'specific Roman contribution'; again, we cannot be certain.

[126] And he returns to the wax tablet model again at *De or.* 2.360: see p. 60.

[127] *Rhet. Her.* 3.30-1. For the origins of the wax tablet metaphor, see Ch. II, p. 68-70.

scrutinising. Consider how the Auctor uses the wax/writing analogy to justify the necessity of creating *loci* and *imagines*:

> Nam loci cerae aut cartae simillimi sunt, imagines litteris, dispositio et conlocatio imaginum scripturae, pronuntiatio lectioni. Oportet igitur, si volumus multa meminisse, multos nos nobis locos comparare, uti multis locis multas imagines conlocare possimus.
>
> *Rhet. Her.* 3.30.[128]
>
> For the *loci* are extremely similar to the wax or the parchment, the *imagines* to the letters, the arrangement and placement of *imagines* to the writing, and the delivery to the reading. We should, therefore, if we desire to memorise many things, prepare many *loci*, so that we can place many *imagines* in those many *loci*.

In the Auctor's model, then, the analogy between writing and the MOL leads directly to the rule that a large number of *loci* must be prepared in order to accommodate an equally large number of *imagines*. Cicero, on the other hand, chooses to place the same assertions (*locos esse capiendos et ea, quae memoria tenere vellent, effingenda animo atque in iis locis conlocanda*, see p. 47) directly after his retelling of the Simonidean origin myth. He thus replaces the conventional preliminary explanation of how the MOL works, used by rhetoricians in treatises such as the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, with a novel narrative derivation. Or, rather, this seems to be his intention, until the wax tablet metaphor suddenly reappears, relegated to half a sentence at the end of the passage and dismissed in a few words. The fact that the metaphor remains entirely unelaborated is a good indication that Cicero assumed familiarity on his readers' part; that the metaphor was the model they would have expected to encounter in any conventional exegesis of the MOL. Thus, Cicero's Antonius concludes his explanation of how 'we use *loci*' (*ut locis pro cera, simulacris pro litteris uteremur*) in the same manner that the Auctor initiates the statement of mnemonic rules.

The idea that Cicero was attempting to graft the Simonidean origin myth onto what was, by the 50s, the 'normalised' wax tablet derivation is supported by Cicero's later use of the same metaphor in *Partitiones oratoriae*, when he briefly introduces *memoria* as the fifth subdiscipline of the *ars dicendi*. He says that the 'composing' or 'completing' of memory (*confectio memoriae*) involves arranging *imagines* in *loci* just as letters are arranged in wax.[129] Here, there is no mention of the Simonidean origin myth – and it cannot be the case

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[128] Latin text: Calboli (2020).

[129] *Part. or.* 26.

that Cicero took this passage from the *Partitiones* and elaborated it in *De oratore*, since *De oratore* was produced first.[130] Rather, in the *Partitiones*, Cicero dispensed with the Simonidean myth in favour of the normal, more succinct wax tablet explanation. This approach is in accordance with the differing treatments of *memoria artificiosa* in the two works: the *Partitiones* contain a simple gloss, passing on from the subject in a couple of sentences; the *De oratore* aims for a much fuller exposition. In the *Partitiones*, Cicero therefore chose the regular explanation with which his audience was familiar, and which required no further elaboration.[131] In *De oratore*, he had more scope for innovation, not least because he was presenting the subject as part of a wide-ranging dialogue delivered by characters with differing views and approaches. Accordingly, Cicero used Antonius' speech to develop a treatment of *memoria artificiosa* that foregrounded the Simonidean origin myth and relegated the standard wax tablet model to the end of the narrative. The wax tablet model, as a well-established justification for the creation of *loci* and *imagines*, thereby acts in *De oratore* as a reaffirmation of the mnemonic principles that Cicero is attempting to illustrate in a novel manner with the story of Simonides.

Cicero's construction of the MOL in *De oratore* is consequently something of a bricolage, incorporating his innovative Simonidean derivation alongside more standard explanations such as the wax tablet metaphor – occasionally, as in the transition between narrative and the statement of technical rules, the stitching shows at the seams. The story of Simonides and Scopas was not originally intended as an aetiology of the MOL and, consequently, it contains inconsistencies. As mentioned above, of all the technical precepts underlying the MOL, the Simonidean origin myth illustrates the importance of *ordo* most readily. But even here, the pedant will find holes in Cicero's derivation where, by contrast, the Auctor's explanation remains watertight. The Auctor says that strict order is necessary, firstly, to prevent confusion; secondly, to aid speedy recall of successive memories; and thirdly, to enable the practitioner to move both backwards and forwards in his mnemonic sequence.[132] He then asks us to imagine a queue of acquaintances. The order of the queue, he says, would not affect your ability to name the acquaintances, no matter where you began – but the clear implication is that, were the order of this queue to be broken, you would lose

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[130] Two dates have been proposed for the composition of *Partitiones oratoriae*: 54 and 46 BCE. Both are later than *De oratore* (55).

[131] Cf. *Orat.* 54, where Cicero deliberately omits *memoria* from a brief survey of the parts of the *ars dicendi*.

[132] *Rhet. Her.* 3.30.

track of which acquaintances had already been named, just as you will lose track of which *imagines* you have already dealt with if the order of *loci* is not preserved in the MOL. Thus, maintaining a strict order enables recall and prevents confusion.

Now let us consider the logic underpinning Cicero's derivation of the same principles concerning order and arrangement, which are based on Simonides' identification of the deceased dinner guests' remains. As in the case of the Auctor's queue of acquaintances, the ordered arrangement of the dinner guests at Scopas' table is essential to Simonides' identification of their bodies: if they had swapped their respective *loci*, he would have failed to name them correctly. Nevertheless, Cicero's narrative assumes that the guests maintained their ordered arrangement while Simonides was out of the room searching for the elusive Castor and Pollux. This prompts the following question: if the guests' remains were so absolutely crushed that they defied recognition, how did Simonides know that they had not moved around while he was absent? It is a somewhat trivial detail, and the last thing I want is to ruin a perfectly good story with pedantry. Rather, my point is that Cicero's explanation of the need for order in the MOL relies upon details of the pre-existing Simonidean origin myth to do the same job as the Auctor's tailor-made queuing analogy. The Auctor's imaginary scenario does not present the problem of misidentification as a result of a reordering outside of his control because the faces of his compliant (and, most importantly, invented) acquaintances remain mercifully intact. Cicero had to work much harder than the Auctor to make his exposition of the MOL's rules follow on logically from the details of the Simonidean origin myth, since the Auctor could either rely upon standard justifications or invent suitable analogies. At points, when using the myth meant that the logic of his explanations for the rules was questionable, Cicero reverted to the accepted approach – in this case, by invoking the wax tablet metaphor and citing the ordered arrangement of letters on a tablet to justify, in one summative phrase, the rules concerning *ordo*, *loci*, and the placement of *imagines*.

Cicero's final efforts to weave Simonides into the fabric of rhetorical mnemonic theory come at *De or.* 2.357, where he re-introduces Simonides as follows:

> vidit enim hoc prudenter sive Simonides sive alius quis invenit, ea maxime animis effingi nostris, quae essent a sensu tradita atque impressa; acerrimum autem ex omnibus nostris sensibus esse sensum videndi; quare facillime animo teneri posse, si ea, quae perciperentur auribus aut cogitatione, etiam oculorum commendatione animis traderentur…
>
> Cic. *De or.* 2.357.

> For it was discerned wisely, whether it was Simonides or someone else who made this discovery, that the things represented most accurately in our minds are those that are transmitted and imprinted by a sense; and moreover, that the keenest of all our senses is the sense of sight; and for this reason, things that are perceived through the ears or through the process of thought can be retained by the mind most easily if they are also transmitted to our minds via the mediation of the eyes…

In this passage, Cicero presents and combines several concepts with great concision. He invokes the Simonidean origin myth once more, alongside the notion of the 'mind's eye': a concept developed in relation to memory-formation by Aristotle, who likened mental images (φαντάσματα) contemplated by the primary sense faculty (το πρῶτον αἰσθητικόν, equivalent to the 'mind's eye') to material bodies perceived by the sense of sight.[133] Cicero draws on this same analogy to explain the remarkable retentive power of *imagines* as utilised in the MOL, reasoning that because the sense of sight is the most powerful of all the senses, words and ideas should be translated into *imagines* if they are to be memorised effectively using the MOL. Whereas Aristotle's theory of memory-formation is concerned with natural mnemonic functions, in the context of *memoria artificiosa*, Cicero takes the notion that mental *imagines* are the principal media through which mnemonic content is naturally transmitted and uses it to justify the primacy and effectiveness of *imagines* in the MOL. Hence, says Cicero, 'as if by seeing, we can retain things [in memory] that we could have scarcely embraced by thought'.[134] He then goes on to summarise, again in an extremely compressed fashion, various precepts of the MOL, such as the rules that *loci* should be visible and spaced at moderate intervals, and that *imagines* should be clearly-defined, conspicuous, and striking.[135]

Cicero's invocation of the concept of the mind's eye to explain the MOL was not necessarily novel. The Auctor had done almost the same when discussing rules for *imagines* and *loci*, by likening the faculty of thought (*cogitatio*) to the sense of sight (*aspectus*):

> Intervalla locorum mediocria placet esse, fere paulo plus aut minus pedum tricenum: nam ut aspectus item cogitatio minus valet, sive nimis procul removeris sive vehementer prope admoveris id, quod oportet videri.

Rhet. Her. 3.32.

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[133] For Aristotle, see Ch. II, p. 80-7.

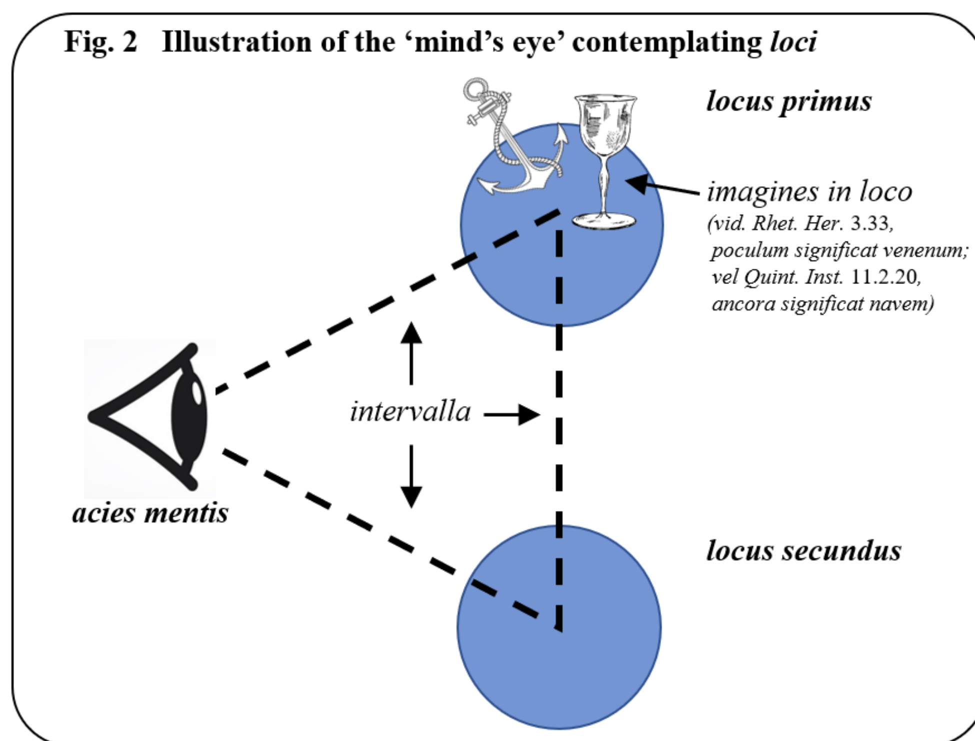
[134] *De or.* 2.357: *ut ea, quae cogitando complecti vix possemus, intuendo quasi teneremus.*

[135] *De or.* 2.358.

> The displacements of the *loci* should be moderate, for the most part a little more or less than 30 feet; for like the sense of sight, the faculty of thought has less power if you have moved what needs to be viewed too far away, or if you have brought it objectionably close.[136]

Here, the Auctor uses the mind's eye to explain how *imagines* and the *loci* that contain them must be arranged to function effectively (Fig. 2, below, illustrates the basic principle). In fact, all the Auctor's precepts for the MOL (summarised at *Rhet. Her.* 3.31-2 and 3.37) take the concept of the mind's eye for granted, focussing exclusively on the visual characteristics of *loci* and *imagines*: size, separation, clarity, brightness, distinctiveness, and so on. Thus, the Auctor explains rules concerning the spacing of *loci* and the clarity of *imagines* using the same concept of the mind's eye that Cicero introduces to explain a similar ruleset – although in Cicero's case, the rules are covered extremely succinctly, because, as Antonius says, they are 'well-known and banal'.[137]

Fig. 2 Illustration of the 'mind's eye' contemplating *loci*



[136] Precisely what the Auctor means by *intervalla locorum* is not immediately transparent: does *intervallum* refer to the distance between individual *loci*, or to the distance between a given *locus* and the mind's eye? The second half of the sentence seems to imply the latter, but I mean to retain the Auctor's ambiguity with my use of 'displacement', which should be understood in its modern mathematical sense as a vector defining the position of an object (in this case, a given *locus*) relative to the point from which it was moved (which the Auctor does not specify, but could be either another *locus*, or the notional 'viewer' – see Fig. 2).

[137] *De or.* 2.358: [*res*] *nota et pervolgata*.

At this point, once more, the underlying correspondence between the two authors ends. The Auctor only explicitly invokes the analogy between *cogitatio* and *aspectus* briefly, whereas Cicero deals with it at much greater length. Hence, the two approaches are a reversal of one another. The Auctor, who has stated that he is going to avoid tangential discussions of a philosophical nature, assumes that his readers will intuitively understand the visual nature of mental imagery, and focusses on explaining how to put the technical rules of the MOL into practice, even specifying an (apparently arbitrary) figure of thirty feet for the displacement of *loci*. Cicero, by contrast, wants to move away from this formulaic exposition of precepts, and does so by engaging in a more sustained discussion of a concept that has its roots in philosophy, namely the 'mind's eye', which culminates with the axiomatic statement that, 'a body (*corpus*) cannot be comprehended without a *locus*'.[138] Cicero's exposition of mental imagery and its relationship to the sense of sight, which is mostly in line with Aristotle's theorising, is consequently much more developed than the Auctor's. Cicero even includes an analogy involving a painter producing images (non-existent in the Auctor's treatise) that is reminiscent of the parallels Aristotle drew between a mental image (φάντασμα) and a pictorial representation (ζῷον/εἰκών).[139]

More overt than Cicero's extraneous philosophising is, of course, his re-introduction at the start of *De or.* 2.357 (quoted above) of Simonides. With an allusion to the Simonidean origin myth, once again Cicero innovates on the Auctor's unembellished statement of rules. Whether Cicero's weaving of myth, philosophy, and technical advice from 2.357-8 is an overall success is, of course, a matter of individual judgement. There is absolutely no mention in Cicero's original palace-collapse narrative of Simonides' discovery of the superior strength of the sense of sight, and Antonius' acknowledgement that 'someone else' (*sive Simonides sive alius*) might have made the discovery is a good indication that Cicero recognised any links between Simonides and the visual nature of memory were tenuous at best. On the other hand, in what is ultimately a short section on rhetorical memory, Cicero manages to combine an abundance of metaphors and multiple philosophical commonplaces, while linking them (however tendentiously) back to Simonides. Throughout, Cicero's assumption that his readers are familiar with traditional explanations of *memoria artificiosa*

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[138] For Latin text, see Kumaniecki (1969) 256, *ad loc.* Cicero's statement here may hint at philosophical ideas concerning the prerequisites for flawless perception of external objects, as developed by philosophers such as Carneades: see Ch. II, p. 74-5. Cf. Leeman, Pinkster, and Wisse (1996) 74-5, who assume that *corpus* is here just another Ciceronian synonym for *imago*.

[139] Compare Cic. *De or.* 2.358 with Arist. *Mem.* 450b-451a.

allows him to express the MOL's precepts in a compressed format and to concentrate instead on establishing the unfamiliar Simonidean derivation.

In sum, Cicero differentiates his treatment of *memoria* in *De oratore* from earlier Latin treatises in two key ways: by developing some of the links between the philosophical and rhetorical theories of mnemonic function that the Auctor took pains to avoid; and by introducing the Simonidean origin myth as a running narrative to help bind together the mix of technical precepts, philosophical concepts, and oratorical disciplinary discourse. The contribution of the Simonidean origin myth to the overarching narrative framework of *De or.* 2.351-60 is illustrated neatly in Antonius' closing statements on rhetorical memory. Having started the section by expressing a personal debt of gratitude to Simonides, he concludes with another personal touch, citing his own meetings with Charmadas and Metrodorus (in Athens and Asia respectively) as proof of the efficacy of the MOL's rules – both, he says, recorded *imagines* in *loci* as if they were writing on wax.[140] The wax tablet metaphor, which first appeared tagged incongruously onto the back end of the Simonidean origin myth, returns, this time as solid proof of the MOL's methodological efficacy. The real-life (and relatively recent) *exempla* of Charmadas and Metrodorus contribute to the notion of a canon of impressive mnemonists stretching back to Simonides and the 'golden age' of oratory embodied by his notional coeval Themistocles, which in turn contributes to establishing the pedigree of the MOL as a time-honoured discipline.

In this way, Cicero's treatment of the MOL is less instructional than it is literary and faux-historical. Moreover, asking why Cicero chose to differentiate his exposition of the MOL from the norm exemplified by the Auctor helps answer the question of why he included Simonides in the first place: abandoning the Auctor's approach to *memoria* enabled Cicero to abandon convention. We must bear in mind Crassus' statement at *De or.* 3.95: the Romans, he says, await the arrival of sufficiently learned men (*homines eruditi*), who will be able to produce treatments of rhetoric in the Latin language that will match and surpass those of the Greeks; the current stock is simply not up to scratch. If we view Crassus' remarks as, in fact, a commentary from the mouth of their author, Cicero, reviewing the rhetoricians of the 90s and 80s BCE (who were Cicero's own teachers, and who presumably taught a curriculum similar to the one established in *De inventione* and *Rhetorica ad Herennium*), we can

[140] Cic. *De or.* 2.360. Full discussion of the passage: Ch. II, p. 104.

understand the reframing of *memoria artificiosa* as a reaction against the instructional programmes of Cicero's youth some three decades earlier, which presumably remained prevalent.[141] Part of Cicero's goal, in writing *De oratore*, was to live up to the ideals for Latin rhetoric that he has Crassus espouse, to produce a treatment of the subject worthy of the most erudite of those *homines eruditi*. The incorporation of the Simonidean origin myth into the exegesis of *memoria artificiosa*, where it could be fused with both technical and philosophical precepts, helped him towards that goal, and contributed to the creation of a text that is less about the rules of the MOL (which are dispatched in a few sentences) than it is about ensuring *De oratore* stands as a literary edifice in its own right. That Cicero was successful in his bid to reformulate the standard approach to the *ars memoriae* is attested by the subsequent influence of his 'Simonidean' MOL. We see traces of Cicero's version of the origin myth in works from Horace, to Quintilian, to authors of later antiquity, and beyond.[142]

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[141] The degree to which Cicero's Crassus reflects the views of the historical Crassus is debated: some scholars (e.g. Gruen (1990) 189-90) would like to believe that Cicero's Crassus provides authentic commentary on the censorial edict of 92. Scepticism is, however, required.

[142] I am thinking here particularly of the dinner guests and the collapsing canopy in Horace's *Satire* 2.8. For Simonidean allusions in this poem and Horace in general, see Marchesi (2005) 393-402, Harrison (2001) 264-7. The Simonidean myth continued to evolve in late antiquity: see, for example, Ammianus Marcellinus 16.8, where it is reported that Simonides acquired his mnemonic prowess by drinking certain potions.

II

Towards a chronology of *memoria artificiosa*

In the previous chapter, I proposed that we reassess *memoria artificiosa* as it was taught at Rome by conceptualising the MOL as a technique designed to facilitate largely improvised oratorical performances, rather than verbatim memorisation. This reassessment demands, in turn, a rethinking of the longer history of artificial mnemonic techniques. The last chapter also highlighted instances where the concepts of *memoria naturalis* and *memoria artificiosa* infringed upon or were (to a certain extent) merged with one another, which raises the question of whether the borders between philosophical and rhetorical theories of mnemonic function were in fact more porous than has previously been assumed. Accordingly, the primary aim of this chapter is to provide a new chronology of rhetorical mnemonic theory prior to the first century BCE.

The current timeline for the development of the subdiscipline of *memoria* within rhetoric is relatively crude, moving no further beyond the vague notion that, around the time when Hermagoras of Temnos was innovating doctrine, rhetoric was divided into five parts, with the key additions of 'delivery' and 'memory' (the latter in the form of the MOL).[1] This gives the impression that the MOL appeared fully-formed in the rhetorical canon, a complete system developed at one point in time in isolation from other fields of knowledge, which was then transcribed and preserved for us in later Latin texts. Certainly, this is an impression endorsed by the Ciceronian narrative, whereby a single inventor – *sive Simonides sive alius* – enshrined the principles of the *ars* in stone (or, rather, in wax).[2] Just as with all of Cicero's chronologies – presented in his dialogic histories of oratory, philosophy, and so on – such a narrative belies an underlying complexity that would have been difficult to unpick even at the time of writing.[3] This latent complexity is, for us, only accentuated by the dearth of surviving evidence for philosophical and rhetorical activity in the third and second centuries BCE.

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[1] E.g. Kennedy (1963) 304. The idea is seemingly based on the inconclusive passage at Quint. *Inst.* 3.3.8-10. The approach of dividing rhetoric into subdisciplines dates from at least Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, but it is unclear when the (Roman) five became canonical. Fortenbaugh suggests the codification of 'memory' as a subdiscipline can only have occurred after Theophrastus, who may have formulated a four-part rhetoric: Fortenbaugh (2005) 72.

[2] Cic. *De or.* 2.357.

[3] Fox (2007) explores what he calls Cicero's 'philosophy of history' in detail: see esp. p. 244-56 for Cicero's history of the philosophical schools.

Nevertheless, enough remains to introduce nuance into, and in some cases overturn, our current overly simplistic narrative.

Having already done away with the notion that Simonides played any historical role in the invention of the MOL, in the first section of this chapter, I examine the earliest surviving descriptions of artificial mnemonics – simple associative techniques, which are much less sophisticated than the fully-developed MOL. They appear to have been utilised by certain Sophists in the late fifth/early fourth century BCE, including Hippias of Elis, who consequently receives criticism from Plato's Socrates. Platonic criticisms of Sophistic techniques do not, however, mean that philosophical theories of memory had no influence on the development of *memoria artificiosa*. There is in fact good reason to believe that an intersection may have existed: there are three identifiable concepts (all of which were touched upon in the previous chapter and all of which have their roots in Greek philosophy) in the expositions of *memoria artificiosa* supplied by the Auctor *ad Herennium* and Cicero. The origins of these concepts are discussed in turn, beginning with the 'wax tablet', moving on to the 'mind's eye', and finishing with the '*ars/natura* axiom'.

The second section progresses to examine the Aristotelian evidence for the existence of mnemonic techniques in the fourth century. Numerous scholars have used this evidence to conclude that Aristotle had some role in developing the MOL, but my analysis casts doubt upon the validity of that claim. Certainly, mnemonic techniques that associated image and space (relatively early 'τόποι-mnemonics') did exist in this period. Nevertheless, Aristotle's references to them are generally incidental: they do not indicate the presence of the fully-fledged oratorically-oriented mnemonic theory that appears in the later Roman texts, and we should not force such a reading onto them. The third section of this chapter proceeds to pose questions about when and where, in the interval between Aristotle and the Auctor *ad Herennium*, basic τόποι-mnemonics may have developed into the systematic τέχνη that is the Latin MOL. I focus on interactions between rhetoricians and philosophers of three important Hellenistic schools of philosophy, namely the Epicureans, the Stoics, and the Academic Sceptics.[4] Based on the (primarily Ciceronian) evidence, I suggest that the codification of the rhetorical mnemonic theory presented in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* is most likely to have

[4] The Peripatetics appear to have had little to say on memory in this period, whether because none of their writings have survived, or because they failed 'to exploit Aristotle's work or develop it in a positive way': Gottschalk (1998) 292.

taken place in the late second century BCE, on the fringes of the Sceptical Academy, where philosophical instruction seems to have embraced rhetorical pedagogy.

The fourth section develops this suggestion by investigating two prominent Academic Sceptics who were also renowned mnemonists: Charmadas of Athens (section 4.a.) and Metrodorus of Scepsis (section 4.b.). I posit that we should envision the existence of a spectrum of *artes memoriae* in the late second century, ranging from the simplest of associative techniques, through the oratorical MOL, right up to the most complex and intricate methods, such as the astrological variation of the MOL devised by the erstwhile Academic Sceptic Metrodorus. For rhetoricians and orators, the most effective of these techniques was the standard MOL, which was codified and survived as a subdiscipline of the Latin *ars rhetorica*. The survival of the oratorical MOL in Roman *ludi* does not, however, rule out the existence of other contemporaneous mnemonic systems: Metrodorus, whose patron was Mithridates VI, may even have utilised his own artificial techniques to perform encomiastic speeches and virtuoso feats of memory before audiences at the court of the polyglot king.

Some of my hypotheses in this chapter are obviously more speculative than others. Consequently, when in the fifth section of this chapter I propose a revised chronology of *memoria artificiosa*, I do so with the caveat that it can only be a 'model of best fit', derived from a combination of the available ancient evidence and the novel insights into mnemonic techniques we have gleaned from recent studies in modern cognitive science. Despite this limitation, the chapter adds detail and nuance to our understanding of how *memoria artificiosa* influenced, and was influenced by, various schools of ancient intellectual thought. The revised chronology is presented in graphical format in Fig. 3 at the end of the chapter (p. 116, described p. 111-5). The reader may find this chart helpful as a point of reference throughout.

1. Evidence of philosophical concepts in the MOL

It will be worthwhile to summarise here at the outset the two chronologies of the development of *memoria artificiosa* that have been most influential on previous scholarship, which were formulated (as discussed earlier in relation to Simonides) by Yates and Small. The traditional narrative proposed by Yates in *The Art of Memory* remains attractive for its

relative simplicity, which leaves scope for individual interpretation.[5] Simonides is a key figure at the start of Yates' chronology (p. 28-9). She moves on to cite Plato's caricature of the Sophist Hippias as evidence of early practitioners of artificial mnemonics, even wondering whether novel techniques might not have been a key factor in the success of Sophistic teaching (p. 30-1). Aristotle, according to Yates, did not make major advances in the MOL, but referred to the techniques as 'illustrations of his argument' (p. 35). She posits the existence of handbooks on mnemonics written by Metrodorus of Scepsis (p. 39-42) and suggests that thereafter Greek techniques were introduced along with other rhetorical teachings to Rome, where Cicero, thanks to his reading of Platonic philosophy, recognised that *memoria* was more than just a rigid tool to be exploited by orators (p. 43-6).

Small, in *Wax Tablets of the Mind*, proposes a rather different developmental model, based on the emergence and spread of written texts.[6] As mentioned, Small believes it plausible that Simonides invented the MOL, on the grounds that he was one of the first to compose written poetry, which then required memorising (p. 73-4, 91-2). This idea, that 'mnemotechnics is very much an art of literacy for the highly literate' (p. 89), propels the development of *memoria artificiosa* down the centuries of Small's timeline: she argues that an increasing volume of written material was not accompanied by an adequate increase in the efficiency of physical systems of organisation, storage, and retrieval, and that this deficit led to the emergence of mnemonic techniques as reliable mental alternatives (p. 74). Finally, she argues that *memoria* only became a rhetorical discipline in the late second century, and that the use of buildings as *loci*, as recommended by the Auctor's MOL, was a Roman innovation (p. 85-90).[7]

I have already spelled out the issues with Yates' and Small's conclusions regarding Simonides' role as the inventor of the MOL. The 'invention of Simonides' (in both senses of the phrase) was a later creation.[8] Yet it is not just Simonides who had little to do with the development of *memoria artificiosa*, but poets in general. Small's chronology in particular

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[5] Yates (1966) Ch. 1-2.

[6] Small (1997) esp. Ch. 7-9.

[7] Aside from Yates and Small, a third frequently-cited source is Carruthers' *The Book of Memory* (2008), which focuses primarily on the reception of classical mnemonic techniques in the mediaeval and renaissance periods. This later focus means that Carruthers tends to conflate important distinctions between earlier theories of rhetorical and philosophical memory (e.g. p. 24-5 and 32-3, where she conflates early philosophical 'seal in wax' metaphors with later rhetorical 'writing in wax' metaphors, missing some of the key distinctions explored in this, and the previous, chapter).

[8] See p. 49-52.

relies on the method's poetic origins. Beginning from the point at which the dominant form of poetic composition moved from oral to written, she correlates the ongoing development of mnemonic techniques to the increasing prevalence of large quantities of written material and interprets the evidence in a way that allows her to deduce cause and effect. This deduction ultimately rests on the premise that the prevalence of written records creates a demand for accurate (verbal) reproduction of those records, and while I agree that this may well be the case – and that less emphasis seems to be placed on verbatim recall in oral cultures – I cannot see that there is any contemporaneous evidence to suggest that this was the driving force behind the development of Greek and Roman theories of rhetorical memory.[9]

Our earliest surviving evidence for the existence of basic mnemonic techniques illustrates the point that artificial mnemonics were, from the start, the province of those who argued, lectured, and orated for a living, rather than poets who composed verse on the page. It comes from a section on memory in the *Dissoi logoi*, which has been dated to the late fifth/early fourth century BCE.[10] From the nature of its content, the text appears to have originated in the Sophistic tradition, since it deals with the strengths of opposing arguments concerning such subjects as the Good and the Bad, the Just and the Unjust, and so on. The fragmentary section prior to the one on memory initiates a discussion of the necessary traits and skills of the politically active wise man (ὁ σοφός); this is perhaps significant for the opening of the memory section, since it is stated here that excellent mnemonic ability is extremely beneficial for both φιλοσοφία and σοφία, terms which have been interpreted in this context as referring, on the one hand, to the theoretical abilities of the wise man (φιλοσοφία) and, on the other, to the application of these theoretical abilities to civic life (σοφία).[11] This interpretation would suggest that the author considered mnemonic techniques useful for both intellectual pursuits and practical, real-world applications. On the other hand, if we interpret φιλοσοφία in a stricter disciplinary sense, as 'philosophy' (i.e. the discipline of philosophers, as opposed to σοφία, the discipline of Sophists), then this passage may provide a precedent

[9] For Parry and Lord's classic study of inaccurate 'verbatim' recall among oral poets, see Lord (1960) 20-29 and Ch. 7 (where the findings are applied to Homeric Greece). For a summary of progress since Parry and Lord, plus a detailed study of the transformation of oral epic into text, see Ready (2019) Ch. 3.

[10] For the text, see Becker and Scholz (2004) 90. The frequently accepted dating of 404/3-390 BCE is uncertain. See Bailey (2008) 249 and Becker and Scholz (2004) 16, with Conley (1985) 59-65; more recently, Maso has proposed an earlier dating of the mid-fifth century, when the Sophistic approach was just beginning to spread, although this is as hypothetical as previous suggestions: Maso (2018) 1-20. Conversely, Molinelli argues for the mid-fourth century: Molinelli (2018) 35-44.

[11] *Dissoi logoi* 9.1. See Sprague (1968) 166-7, Becker and Scholz (2004) 111.

for the approach of certain Academic Sceptics like Charmadas of Athens, who (as I argue below) appears to have incorporated mnemonics into his philosophical method.[12] The section on memory comprises a list of techniques: first, in order to improve mnemonic retention, your attention must be focussed; second, you must repeat material multiple times; and third, you should use associative techniques, such as memorising the name Chrysippus by visualising the man riding a golden horse, since χρυσός + ἵππος = Χρύσιππος, or memorising the concept of courage by thinking of Ares or Achilles; unfortunately, the fragment then breaks off.[13]

There are obvious parallels between the techniques in the *Dissoi logoi* and those in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. The Auctor also instructs that the mind must be focussed and that repetition is essential. The characteristics of the mnemonic images (such as the golden horse) in the *Dissoi logoi* likewise possess some striking resemblances to the bizarre details of the Auctor's own worked example for the creation of *imagines*, in which he combines visuals into a distinctive and unnatural scenario, while concrete words and familiar people act as substitutes for material that would otherwise be difficult to visualise.[14] We cannot know, of course, what other advice for memorising was included in the fragmentary *Dissoi logoi*: did τόποι feature as the equivalent of the Auctor's *loci*?

In my view, the discrete nature of the techniques listed in the *Dissoi logoi* indicates that even if other elements of the MOL were included in the section, the whole cannot have constituted a comprehensive system of the type presented in *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Explanations and justifications of the MOL's rules are central to the Auctor's exposition of rhetorical memory. In contrast, in the *Dissoi logoi*, there are two simple examples for recalling names and two for recalling abstract nouns, while each mnemonic technique – attention, repetition, association, and so on – features as an item on a list, rather than as an integral component of a method that relies upon its other components to be effective (as, for example, the creation of memorable *imagines* relies intrinsically upon their repetition to promote retention in the Auctor's MOL).[15] What we have in the *Dissoi logoi* are, perhaps, some of the elements that were combined to form a fully-functional MOL, but they are far from a developed system tailored to the memorisation of oratorical speeches. Further, given

[12] For the narrow interpretation of φιλοσοφία, see Molinelli (2018) 255-6. For Charmadas, below, p. 102-6.

[13] *Dissoi logoi* 9.2-6.

[14] *Rhet. Her.* 3.33.

[15] See *Rhet. Her.* 3.37.

that the purpose of the *Dissoi logoi* is obscure, it cannot be concluded that mnemonic techniques were a key feature of, or integral to, Sophistic doctrine.[16] We know that individual Sophists, such as Hippias of Elis, had their own mnemonic methods for memorising different material: according to Plato's Socrates, Hippias used his mnemonic skills for memorising long lists of items, such as names.[17] But Socrates treats Hippias' μνημονικὸν τέχνημα as something of a party trick, a sideshow rather than a method that was intrinsic to the Sophistic approach (although this trivialisation may, of course, be part of Plato's programmatic denigration of Sophistic teaching).[18] Blum rightly points out that the associative techniques in the *Dissoi logoi* do not contain provisions for the sequential memorisation of lists and, consequently, they cannot have been exactly the same as Hippias' μνημονικὸν τέχνημα.[19] Overall, during this early period, the evidence points to the existence of a range of basic mnemonic techniques, which were put to varying use (practical or otherwise) depending on the practitioner's needs.

1.a. The wax tablet

While Plato may not have shared Hippias' interest in cultivating mnemonic prowess, he (and subsequently Aristotle) was very much preoccupied by the relationship between memory and knowledge – a preoccupation that did not trouble later rhetoricians and orators and one which, in the interests of concision, this chapter does not address in any great depth.[20] Nevertheless, the first surviving reference to the wax-like 'fabric' of memory (defined as the region where memories are stored in one's ψυχή or *animus*) comes from Plato's *Theaetetus*. This wax metaphor became, as the first chapter illustrated, a common – probably the most common – conceptualisation of natural mnemonic function in the Greek and Roman world. The notion of wax at 'the heart of the soul' (τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς κέαρ) may have existed before Plato, because (as Socrates tells us) there was a perceived similarity between the words κέαρ

[16] Bailey (2008) 249-50 even suggests that the *Dissoi logoi* may be a 'heavy-handed spoof'.

[17] Pl. *Hp. Mai*. 285d-286a, cf. *Hp. Min*. 368d, Xen. *Symp.* 4.62.

[18] On the Sophists, Plato, and Socrates, see Broadie (2003) 73-97.

[19] Blum (1969) 50.

[20] I am referring to Platonic 'recollection' (as formulated in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*) and subsequent debates over the role of remembering in knowledge-formation. For a full discussion, see Scott (1995) Ch. 1-6. The reception of Plato's theory of recollection by later philosophers is of occasional tangential importance to my study: see below, p. 86 and p. 103.

or κῆρ (heart) and κηρός (wax).[21] In the relevant passage, Plato's Socrates asks Theaetetus to assume that Mnemosyne, the god-given gift of memory, is a block of wax (κήρινον ἐκμαγεῖον) in the soul. The wax is of different qualities in accordance with an individual's capacity to remember. We hold the wax under perceptions and thoughts, which are imprinted upon it just like the stamps from seal rings (δακτυλίων σημεῖα). Socrates explains that a correct memorial imprint (τὸ μνημεῖον ὀρθῶς) that matches what you know (from the past) to what you perceive (in the present) leads to the formation of a true judgement.[22] Moreover, people say that when the wax at the heart of a man's soul is just right – deep and smooth and receptive – the impressions created by perceptions are imprinted properly.[23] Thus Socrates' metaphor envisions the waxy element at the heart of the soul as a plastic fabric, capable in wise men of holding an accurate image of reality securely. From this waxy element, if perfectly balanced, wisdom flows.

Aristotle, who composed the most important surviving philosophical treatise on memory, *De memoria et reminiscentia* (part of the *Parva naturalia*), was also exercised by the question of what it means to remember something that is not present (whether object, sensation, or thought).[24] He repeated the idea that the relationship between an original sensation and the sensation remembered is the same as the relationship between a signet ring (δακτύλιος) and its impression (τύπος) in wax, while construing the metaphor in a way that seems to suggest the creation of memories has a physical element and makes a direct impression upon the mind, or at least that the physical constitution of an individual plays a major role in memory retention.[25] For our purposes, the most important aspect of the Platonic and Aristotelian formulations of the wax tablet metaphor is that the philosophers were

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[21] See Pl. *Tht.* 191c-e, 194c-e. Whether Socrates is serious or not is another matter; he cites Homer as his authority for the heart/wax similarity, based on the Homeric description of a heart as 'rough' or 'shaggy' (λάσιον κῆρ: Hom. *Il.* 2.851). For the wax tablet metaphor in other genres of Greek literature, see Agócs (2019) 72-81. Agócs (p. 74) states that the tablet metaphor, by the time it appeared in extant poetry, 'was certainly conventional and clichéd (if hardly dead)'.

[22] Pl. *Tht.* 191e-192c.

[23] *Tht.* 194c-e. Woolf makes the interesting argument that this paradigm, about men he dubs 'good waxers' and 'bad waxers', fails to explain the reality of false belief, so the wax tablet model fails as an explanation of the nature of thought: see Woolf (2004) 588-604.

[24] There has been some debate over whether Aristotle is interested strictly in the philosophy of remembering, or in the 'science' of memory: see Bloch (2007) 56-7. The distinction seems to me somewhat meaningless in the ancient context.

[25] Arist. *Mem.* 450b. For the considerable debate regarding Aristotle's perception of the physicality of memory-formation, see Bloch (2007) 65-7.

attempting to model the *natural* processes of memory formation and not, as later rhetoricians would do, the artificial creation and retrieval of mnemonic imagery.

Bearing these philosophical conceptualisations of the wax-like fabric of memory in mind, consider the wax tablet metaphor as deployed by the Auctor *ad Herennium* at *Rhet. Her.* 3.30. The Auctor states that, in the MOL, 'the *loci* are extremely similar to the wax or the parchment, the *imagines* to the letters, the arrangement and placement of *imagines* to the writing, and the delivery to the reading' (Latin text quoted Ch. I, p. 54). This formulation has been seen by some scholars as a straightforward replication of Platonic and Aristotelian usage.[26] There are, however, important differences that indicate how the wax tablet has been tailored specifically to explain the MOL, the most distinctive of which is the switch between models of memory-formation, from passive to active. By this I mean that the philosophical metaphor presents the 'wax at the heart of the soul' as a receptive substance upon which external forces (sensory impressions) act, in the manner of a seal ring. The seal ring has a set of properties that cannot be altered by the individual who is forming the memory and the metaphor models a natural process over which the individual has no control.[27] In contrast, the Auctor's metaphor ascribes a great deal of agency to the individual who is creating the memory. When the Auctor develops the metaphor at *Rhet. Her.* 3.31, in reference to the permanence of *loci*, he reasons that just as the letters on a wax tablet can be erased and the underlying wax can be reused, so *imagines* can be erased and new ones can be placed in the underlying *loci*. Thus, it is in the practitioner's power to control what letters/*imagines* are inscribed upon the wax/*loci* in his mind, and although these *imagines* and *loci* must be created according to the rules of the MOL, they will all have properties unique to the individual practitioner, in the same way (we might say) as handwriting has properties unique to its producer.

The Auctor's formulation of the wax tablet metaphor almost goes so far as to do away with the wax entirely, introducing parchment as an alternative (*carta* becomes interchangeable with *cera*).[28] Parchment is not plastic like wax; it cannot be erased or reformed as simply, and yet, as far as the act of inscribing is concerned, it is easier to ink letters onto parchment than it is to scratch them into wax. Thus, we can say that the Auctor

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[26] E.g. Carruthers (2008) 24-5, 32-3; Nikulin (2015) 75.

[27] For the element of passivity in Plato's wax metaphor, see Woolf (2004) 595-6.

[28] *Rhet. Her.* 3.30: *Nam loci cerae aut cartae simillimi sunt…*

primarily used the metaphor to demonstrate how the MOL makes material easy to encode in memory, rather than because he was interested in it as a model of natural memory-formation. Although writing using a stylus on wax was common in both fourth-century Greece and first century Rome, it is only in the rhetorical context that we see the metaphor used. Thus, the Auctor's adaptation of the wax tablet metaphor, which replaces nature's seal ring with the mnemonist's stylus, emphasises the practical applicability of the rules, and reminds us that the MOL was valued for its utility in the forum. It helped the orator retain and retrieve information and, consequently, to maintain control of his speech and his audience.

1.b. The mind's eye

In the first chapter, I introduced the 'mind's eye' as a concept regularly invoked by ancient thinkers (explicitly or implicitly) to explain how mental imagery exists in relation to the sensible part of the mind.[29] The Auctor *ad Herennium* implicitly assumes his readers understand that we engage in some processes of thought with the aid of an internal eye, which operates in a similar way to our external eyes, viewing and reviewing mental imagery, including memories, just as our external eyes view the physical world. In *De oratore*, Cicero makes the connection more explicit, asserting the primacy of the sense of sight and alluding to some of the philosophical discussions regarding the form and function of mnemonic mental imagery – that is, mental images that serve as memories. The presence in the MOL of the idea that we can review mental *imagines* as if we are using our eyes has been commented upon before: in her influential portrayal of 'The Roman House as Memory Theater', Bergmann recognises the importance of 'a moving eye or body' to the MOL, although she does not make the connection to the pre-existing philosophical conceptualisation of how memory works or how one 'senses' or 'perceives' memories.[30] Given the evidence from the Auctor and from later treatises such as Quintilian's *Institutio*, I doubt that ancient rhetoricians routinely made or expanded upon that connection either – Cicero's approach is atypical. It is, nevertheless, worth examining ancient philosophical discourse concerning the relationship between mental images and memories, to assess the possibility that such discourse influenced the development of *memoria artificiosa* at some earlier stage.

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[29] See discussion, p. 56-9.

[30] Bergmann (1994) 226.

Our most complete discussion of the topic of natural memory formation is again *De memoria*, where Aristotle explores the factors that might affect the perceptive faculty of the mind's eye as it reviews mental images *qua* memories. He seems to have conceived 'remembering' as an almost exclusively visual process. Firstly, he invokes the precept that thought requires φαντάσματα, 'mental images'.[31] This assertion is based on a discussion of imagination in *De anima*, where Aristotle reasons that, like a hand manipulates objects in order to do work, the mind manipulates sensible forms, which are similar to perceptions of physical objects except that they are without matter. He defines these sensible objects as φαντάσματα; the mind must employ them in order to 'think' anything.[32] When it comes to his discussion of memory, Aristotle speaks of internally placing a quantity 'before one's eyes' (πρὸ ὀμμάτων) and says that, because the processes of memory take place in and belong to the 'primary sense-faculty' (το πρῶτον αἰσθητικόν), just as it is impossible to think without φαντάσματα, so too is it impossible to experience a memory without them. When addressing the nature of memories, and the question of whether a memory originates from a mental image of a physical object or is formed directly from the object itself, Aristotle uses the metaphor of a portrait painted on a panel: the portrait is at once a lifelike picture (ζῷον) and a representative likeness (εἰκών); that is to say, we regard these φαντάσματα like portraits, both as objects of contemplation themselves and as mental representations of the original objects. Significantly, this metaphor leads Aristotle to equate φαντάσματα with μνημονεύματα, 'mnemonic signs'.[33]

There are multiple factors, however, that will affect the accuracy with which the mind's eye perceives μνημονεύματα. To explain these factors, Aristotle combines the concepts of the mind's eye and the wax tablet: he says that if the original external φαντάσματα have not been impressed accurately upon the waxy surface of memory, they will not be retained or re-perceived accurately when we engage in the process of remembering.[34] The surface can be too fluid, like water, so that even strong stimuli do not impress permanent memories upon it – this is the case in those with a disability, or in the young and the old, who are in a changing state of growth or decay. Conversely, the receiving surface in the

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[31] Arist. *Mem*. 450a1.

[32] *De an*. 432a5-14.

[33] *Mem.* 450a1-15, 450b20-30.

[34] *Mem.* 450b1-12.

minds of the slow-witted is so hard that impressions cannot be made in the first place.[35] Thus, according to Aristotle, excessive softness or hardness leads to poor mnemonic retention. As already mentioned, Plato's Socrates had made similar stipulations, that the 'wax at the heart of the soul' must be deep and abundant and smooth for correct mnemonic impressions to be formed. Further, in *Theaetetus*, Socrates expands upon the necessary conditions for mnemonic retention, stating that the wax must be clean and contain no impurities in order to preserve the clarity of memories; that it must be neither too soft nor too hard, to preserve definition; and that there must be enough wax, to avoid overcrowding and consequent blurring.[36] We might generalise these Platonic and Aristotelian explanations of natural memory, then, with the statement that, for accurate mnemonic formation and retention, conditions in the mind have to be 'just right'. There is, as it were, a 'Goldilocks zone' for memories, where the conditions are just right for the accurate formation, storage, retrieval, and perception of mnemonic impressions.[37]

In the above models, the accuracy of memory formation and retention is determined by a set of parameters, including the consistency of the wax-like fabric of memory and the ability of the mind's eye to perceive the mnemonic images impressed therein. As I suggest below, according to the Auctor *ad Herennium*, the accuracy of memory formation and retention in the MOL is also determined by a set of similar parameters. Certain concepts underlying the theory of natural memory seem to have been adopted and adapted in the rhetorical theory of artificial memory – but the mechanisms by which these ideas were transmitted from philosophy into rhetoric, if indeed that is what happened, are far from transparent. Various Hellenistic schools of philosophy interpreted earlier theories about memory in different ways, adopting some aspects and discarding others.

The Stoics' approach to memory is particularly illustrative of this point, since the school seems *prima facie* to have followed the well-worn path of Plato and Aristotle by introducing the wax tablet analogy to describe how impressions are formed in the mind. Yet the Stoics derived quite different parameters for determining the accuracy of mnemonic

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[35] Cf. *Mem.* 453b1-8, where Aristotle states that a disproportionately heavy head leads to pressure on the primary sense faculty and subsequent poor mnemonic retention (e.g. in babies and dwarves) – that is, the body must also possess correct proportions for memory to function effectively.

[36] Pl. *Tht.* 194c-195a.

[37] I have borrowed the concept of a 'Goldilocks zone' from astrophysics, where it is standard shorthand for the 'circumstellar habitable zone', the area of space around a star defined by certain parameters amenable to life (e.g. to support life, an exoplanet must be neither too close nor too far from its solar heat source).

content. They equated a true impression to an 'imprinting in the soul' (τύπωσις ἐν ψυχῇ): Diogenes Laertius states that the term τύπωσις derives directly from the τύπος that a seal ring leaves in wax.[38] Whereas Aristotle used both φαντασία and φάντασμα to denote mental images (including a mental image that also represented a memory, μνημόνευμα), the Stoics employed a refined definition.[39] They reserved the term φάντασμα to denote imaginary figments produced by the mind, or unreliable hallucinations produced by inebriation or dreams; they also distinguished two types of φαντασίαι (impressions received from the external world), calling those impressions that could be apprehended directly by the senses 'cataleptic' and those that could not 'non-cataleptic'.[40] Only a cataleptic impression could be assigned the value of truth and, for this reason, it had to meet strict criteria: namely, that it was derived from a real object, that it was a faithful representation of that object, and that it had been impressed upon the senses accurately.[41] Only the re-presentation of a sensible object that had produced a cataleptic impression would result in a replicate affection of the soul, that is, a memory.[42] Anything that qualified as a memory was therefore, *a priori*, true. Thus, by introducing catalepsis into their discussions of memory formation and retention, the Stoics ostensibly sidestepped the need to define parameters that would lead to the formation of accurate mnemonic impressions in the way that Aristotle had done. In addition, I note that according to this strict Stoic definition, artificially fabricated mental images cannot qualify as 'memories' at all.

When it came to defining parameters for accurate perception, the Academic Sceptics took a significantly different approach from the Stoics, devising even more detailed specifications than Aristotle. Unfortunately, we have no full discussion concerning memory formation from a Sceptical standpoint, so we do not know whether the Sceptics subscribed to the idea that conditions in the mind had to be 'just right' for accurate mnemonic retention.[43] We can, however, look to the Sceptical theory of sensory perception as established by Carneades, scholarch of the Sceptical Academy in the mid-second century BCE, for an

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[38] Diog. Laert. 7.45-6. Cf. Cic. *Acad.* 1.40, and below, p. 89-90, for Epicurean usage.

[39] Arist. *Mem.* 450b25-39.

[40] Diog. Laert. 7.50, cf. Cic. *Acad.* 2.51-4.

[41] Diog. Laert. 7.46. My summary is an oversimplification of Stoic epistemology: for a thorough exposition, see Hankinson (2003) 60-6.

[42] Sext. Emp. *Math.* 7.219-20.

[43] Although there are circumstantial reasons to believe this was the case: Sceptics such as Charmadas and Metrodorus seem to have adopted the wax tablet model of memory formation (see below, sections 4.a. and 4.b.).

indication of the Sceptics' approach to mental images more generally. Carneades described a set of necessary conditions for flawless perception of external objects when explaining his thesis of 'the probable' (τὸ πιθανόν).[44] His argument, as presented by Sextus Empiricus, suggests that in order for us to be able to trust our judgement of an impression (of an object, say) received via our senses from the external world, we must test each of the elements that have combined to form that impression against various criteria: for our perception to be flawless, we must take into account factors such as the acuity of our vision, our mood, and our current activity; as regards the object we are observing, we must consider the size of the object (it should not be too small), the medium through which the observation is being made (e.g. air/water), the brightness of the atmosphere surrounding the object (it should not be too dark), the interval between objects (it should not be too small), the displacement of the object from us (it should not be too great), the surroundings of the object (they should not be too vast), and the amount of time we have allowed for the act of observing.[45] For Carneades, then, flawless perception of an object via the eyes of the body could only occur if conditions were just right. His parameters defined, as it were, a Goldilocks zone for the formation of accurate mental images. Since memories were typically understood to be a specific subset of mental imagery, it is not implausible that Carneades, or others in his school, formulated similar criteria for the accurate perception of memories via the mind's eye, just as Plato and Aristotle had done before them.

As in the previous section on the wax tablet, we can now consider the Auctor's invocation of the concept of the mind's eye, which occurs at *Rhet. Her.* 3.32 (quoted Ch. I, p. 57-8), with reference to the earlier Hellenistic ideas outlined above. The Auctor states that, in the MOL, the displacements of *loci* should be moderate, because the faculty of thought (*cogitatio*) is just like the sense of sight (*aspectus*), which cannot perceive objects if they are too close or too far away. Carneades' argument regarding flawless perception of an object relies upon the same logic: if an object we are observing is not presented in the correct conditions, it cannot be brought into focus and may be perceived inaccurately. Whereas Carneades invokes the concept of the mind's eye to explain the necessary conditions for reliable sensory perception of the external world, the Auctor uses it to justify one of his rules for the creation of imaginary *loci*: namely, that they should be created with *intervalla* of

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[44] For Carneades' concept of τὸ πιθανόν, see below, p. 95.

[45] Sext. Emp. *Math.* 7.166-84, esp. 7.183.

around 30 feet.[46] The 30-foot rule is directly comparable with Carneades' insistence that the distance of an observable object from the eyes of the body must not be too great (nor, conversely, too small) for it to be perceived and judged accurately.

The fact that the Auctor justifies one of his mnemonic rules with reasoning reminiscent of any given philosopher's logic would not, by itself, be particularly indicative of anything – yet he does so time and again. For the Auctor, as for Aristotle, accurate mnemonic retention and retrieval demand optimal conditions. This statement is borne out when we examine the Auctor's rules for the creation of memorable *loci* collectively: they are designed to foster the creation of optimal mnemonic content, *loci* that will not be forgotten. The end result is the definition of a Goldilocks zone for *loci* – that is, the rules define parameters amenable to mnemonic retention, which are designed to aid the practitioner in his search for *loci* that are 'just right' for use in the MOL. Here are the Auctor's rules for the creation of *loci*, examined in turn:

- *Rhet. Her.* 3.31: 'Again, it is more effective to arrange *loci* in a deserted area than in a crowded one, on the grounds that a crowding and swarming of people disorders and weakens the impressions of the *imagines*, while solitude preserves the integral shapes of the likenesses'.[47]

This rule defines a Goldilocks zone for the density of *loci* that ensures *imagines* do not overlap or become confused. It is directly comparable with Plato's and Aristotle's stipulations that the wax-like substance of one's memory must be pure and abundant, to preserve distinctiveness and avoid overcrowding of mental images; and again, with Carneades' tenet that the intervals between perceptible objects must not be too small.[48]

- *Rhet. Her.* 3.31: 'It is also necessary that *loci* be of moderate size and medium extent: for exceedingly large *loci* render *imagines* indistinct, while excessively narrow *loci* often seem incapable of holding the arrangement of *imagines*'.

This rule defines a Goldilocks zone for the spatial properties of *loci* that ensures they are neither too large, nor too small. It is comparable with Plato's and Aristotle's stipulations that

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[46] See p. 57-8.

[47] For Latin text, see Calboli (2020) 268-9, *ad loc.*

[48] Re Carneades, Sext. Emp. *Math.* 7.183 reads φυλοκρινοῦμεν […] τὸ δὲ διάστημα, μὴ συγκέχυται, lit. 'we distinguish […] the interval, that it is not poured-together/confused' (Greek text: Mutschmann (1914)). The key idea is that a sufficient interval ensures images do not become blurred.

the wax-like substance of memory be copious enough to contain many impressions; and conversely, with Carneades' tenet that the amount of space surrounding a perceptible object must not be too vast.

- *Rhet. Her.* 3.32: 'It is necessary that *loci* be neither excessively bright nor objectionably dark, so that the *imagines* are neither rendered unintelligible by shadows nor too glittering by brightness'.

This rule defines a Goldilocks zone for the luminance of *loci* that ensures they are neither too dim, not too bright. It is comparable with Plato's and Aristotle's stipulation that the wax-like substance of memory, as the environment in which mental images are impressed and stored, must be of the right consistency in order to preserve clarity; and even more so, with Carneades' point that the environment around a perceptible object must not be too dark. Considered as a group, the above rules define a set of parameters for the creation of *loci* that ensures they are 'just right' for the optimal retention of mnemonic content.

Although the link between the Auctor's definition of a Goldilocks zone for *loci* and ancient philosophical theories concerning the optimal conditions for perception and/or the retention of memories is by no means a one-to-one correspondence, I do not think it is too much of a stretch to say that Plato and Aristotle, at least, also believed that an individual's memory and its content must be constituted 'just right' to function in an optimal fashion (we have no directly comparable evidence for Carneades' views). The resemblance between the Platonic and Aristotelian conditions for reliable mnemonic retention and the Auctor's list of rules defining a Goldilocks zone for *loci* is therefore striking, even though the Auctor's rules are not grounded on any explicit philosophical precepts. For the philosophers, the 'wax at the heart of the soul' had to be of the right consistency, it had to possess plenty of room for impressions, it had to be clean; for the Auctor, *loci* had to be spacious, they had to be separated, they had to be well-lit. The philosophers established conditions for mnemonic wax; the Auctor established conditions for wax-like mnemonic *loci*.

1.c. The *ars/natura* axiom

The mnemonic rules discussed above concern the creation of *loci*; the Auctor also details rules for the creation of *imagines*. Here again, as explanation and justification for those rules, the Auctor invokes a commonplace that had its roots in philosophy: namely, the tenet that

'*ars* imitates *natura'* (hereafter, the '*ars*/*natura* axiom'). By the first century BCE, this axiom had become something of an established philosophical truth. Notably, Aristotle uses it in his *Physics* as an analogy to lay the foundation for many of his arguments about nature. He opens with the condition that τέχνη imitates φύσις and proceeds to reason that, if this is true, the physicist, whose τέλος is ultimately φύσις, must concern himself with both the form and the matter of his object of enquiry.[49] Later in the treatise, Aristotle returns to the idea that natural processes, like a deliberate art or craft, develop towards a specific end or goal.[50] He argues that if natural products could be produced using art, the art would be carried out as if it were a natural process. Thus, he concludes that an art both produces things that nature cannot and imitates the products of nature.

The Auctor *ad Herennium* provides, as far as I am aware, our earliest formulation in Latin of the axiom '*ars* imitates *natura*'.[51] He first introduces it in a passage at *Rhet. Her.* 3.28-9 with the statement that, in many disciplines, 'excellence of innate talent often resembles instruction,' and, 'further, *ars* strengthens and augments the advantages of *natura*'.[52] He explains that *memoria artificiosa* is no exception to this rule: 'frequently, if the *memoria naturalis* someone has been granted is outstanding, it is similar to the artificial type,' and, 'further, the artificial type preserves and amplifies the advantages of *natura* by means of systematic instruction'.[53] According to the Auctor, then, the product of *natura* (in this case, an individual's inherent mnemonic ability) resembles the product of mnemonic *ars*, and his reasoning follows Aristotle's almost to the letter. The Auctor also engages with the idea of a τέχνη and its associated τέλος in several sentences at 3.36. 'Let *ars* therefore imitate *natura*,' he says, before asserting that, 'the principles of things are advanced by natural talent, while the ends are obtained using instruction'. The goal (*exitus*) of *memoria artificiosa* is (per the Auctor's definition at *Rhet. Her.* 1.3) the firm retention in the *animus* of *res*, *verba*, and *dispositio*. Thus, the Auctor seems to understand the full implications of the *ars*/*natura* axiom as they relate to the *ars memoriae*.

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[49] Arist. *Ph.* 194a21-30. The opening condition states: εἰ δὲ ἡ τέχνη μιμεῖται τὴν φύσιν… For text, see Ross (1955). For Aristotle's understanding of τέχνη, see Stavrianeas (2015) 53-4.

[50] Arist. *Ph.* 199a10-20. For specific illustrations, see also Arist. *Mete.* 381b. For Aristotle on the τέλος of Nature, see Kelsey (2015) 42-5.

[51] Slightly later texts include numerous applications of the precept, suggesting widespread acceptance: e.g. Lucr. 5.1102, 1354, 1361, 1379; Cic. *Orat.* 58.

[52] For Latin text, see Calboli (2020) 265-6, *ad loc.*

[53] Note that in these quotes, 'instruction' translates *doctrina*; 'systematic instruction', *ratio doctrinae*, i.e. the didactic precepts of the MOL.

With the *ars/natura* axiom established, at *Rhet. Her.* 3.35-7, the Auctor then applies it to explain and justify his rules for the creation of *imagines*. *Natura*, says the Auctor, gives instructions for how the *ars* should work: no one marvels at or remembers every sunrise, because sunrises happen daily, but everyone is impressed by a solar eclipse because it is a rare event; similarly, recent quotidian events are forgettable, whereas events that occurred in our childhoods are fixed in our memories because they were once novel, and remarkable novelties remain in the *animus* for a longer time. He concludes that the *imagines* we create for use in the MOL should be of this memorable type – animated, gaudy, disfigured, hilarious – any trait that will, by nature, cause them to be retained in the *animus*. The rule instructs the practitioner of the MOL to imitate *natura* when applying the mnemonic *ars*. In accordance with the *ars/natura* axiom, *natura* leaves signposts that, interpreted correctly, direct the *ars*.

To clarify, I am not suggesting that the Auctor's approach to rhetorical memory, in which he utilises what were originally philosophical concepts (the wax tablet metaphor, the mind's eye, and the *ars*/*natura* axiom) to derive and justify the various rules of the MOL, was his own innovation. The Auctor presents his explanations of the rules I have cited as if they were the standard ones used in writings on rhetorical memory, making no claims to originality.[54] The evidence presented in this chapter so far is suggestive of a programmatic approach to the didactic dissemination of the MOL whereby philosophical theories of natural memory were invoked to rationalise the precepts of artificial mnemonics, some of which would have otherwise seemed entirely arbitrary.

The rhetorical codification of the MOL therefore seems to have borrowed ideas from philosophy. We see occasional reference to similar interdisciplinary exchange in other rhetorical subdisciplines – in *De inventione*, for instance, Cicero presents rules for the formulation of *partitiones* that he says are to be found *in philosophia* and not *in ceteris artibus*.[55] In the case of the MOL, judging how much interdisciplinary exchange occurred rather depends upon our assessment of the strength of the philosophical presence in the Latin texts. At one extreme, we might judge the philosophical influence to be truly 'weak' – so vestigial as to be attributable to mere commonplace. The evidence for this scenario is entirely circumstantial. Nevertheless, I observe that the concepts of the wax tablet, the mind's eye,

[54] Something that he is not shy to do elsewhere – see e.g. p. 42-5.

[55] *Inv. rhet.* 1.33. For discussion, see Corbeill (2002) 37-8.

and the *ars/natura* axiom are invoked in plenty of other, non-philosophical Greek and Latin texts: perhaps these commonplaces, by the time they were incorporated into the *ars memoriae*, had become *so* common that they had lost any philosophical connotations. According to this reasoning, rhetoricians would have deployed them as textbook explanations without worrying in the least about the underlying phenomena of 'memories' and 'remembering' per se. At the other extreme, we might conclude that a 'strong' philosophical presence in the MOL implies that it developed directly from earlier philosophical theorising, with philosophers involved in the advancement of artificial mnemonics. Unfortunately, we do not have sufficient evidence to produce a full and detailed timeline of the evolution of the discipline – but in a bid to arrive at the most plausible reconstruction possible, the following sections examine a series of Hellenistic philosophers, to assess what (if any) contribution they may have made to the codification of the MOL.

2. The Aristotelian evidence

Our main evidence in favour of the possibility that early philosophers did make some direct contribution to the development of the MOL comes, once more, from Aristotle, who makes occasional reference to artificial mnemonics. It is worth noting that Theodectes (a fourth-century-BCE tragedian and rhetorician) is often mentioned alongside Hippias as a potential practitioner of mnemonic techniques: Blum even posits that Theodectes was Aristotle's main source of information on mnemonics and 'der einzige "prominente" Mnemoniker dieser Zeit'.[56] There is, however, zero contemporaneous evidence regarding Theodectes' utilisation of artificial mnemonics or the nature of his techniques (if, indeed, they existed).[57] We therefore have no grounds for further speculation. Instead, several scholars have used Aristotelian references to mnemonics to argue that Aristotle himself contributed to the advancement of the discipline.[58] Having just posited the possibility that *memoria artificiosa* was, in the earlier stages of its development, quite receptive to the incorporation of ideas

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[56] Blum bases the hypothesis on Aristotle's apparent familiarity with Theodectes' rhetorical teachings (indicated by the fragmentary Aristotelian *Theodectea*): Blum (1969) 86-100, quoted p. 87.

[57] Cicero is our earliest reference to Theodectes as a mnemonist: *Tusc.* 1.59, see below, p. 104-5. Quintilian mentions Theodectes' ostensibly impressive memory for verse: *Inst.* 11.3.51.

[58] See below, n. 69 and 73.

taken from philosophical theories of natural memory, I want to add a note of caution, by questioning certain conclusions that have been drawn from the Aristotelian corpus.

Aristotle provides four key pieces of evidence relating to the development of artificial mnemonic techniques in the fourth century BCE. Additionally, Diogenes Laertius, in his Aristotelian bibliography, lists a (lost) work entitled Μνημονικόν, which has been taken by some scholars as proof that Aristotle was engaged in developing artificial mnemonics.[59] This work is, however, more likely a reference to *De memoria et reminiscentia*, which does not appear elsewhere on Diogenes' list.[60] Of Aristotle's definite references to artificial mnemonics, three are incidental, but remain worth scrutinising nonetheless. The first, in *De anima,* appears in a discussion of ἡ φαντασία, used to denote 'imagination', which Aristotle defines as the process through which φαντάσματα, 'mental images', are formed. Imagination, he says, is one of the processes of thought (along with sensation, opinion, knowledge, and intelligence) by which we judge truth. Yet imagination is unlike various other thought processes (e.g. knowledge or intelligence) since it can be 'false': that is, φαντάσματα can be invented at will.[61] In order to illustrate the difference, he observes that we can hold things before our mind's eye, 'like those who fashion images and place them according to mnemonic rules'.[62] These 'mnemonic rules', τὰ μνημονικά, are essentially an attribute that makes the mental images 'good for remembering'; no further details about what makes the images so memorable are provided. Nevertheless, this reference confirms that there existed individuals who were using mnemonic techniques that entailed the manipulation of invented mental images and, hence, were similar to those detailed in the *Dissoi logoi*.

Second, in *Topics*, in order to explain why one should learn by heart premises and definitions that occur frequently, Aristotle uses the example of τὸ μνημονικόν. In this system, he says, the τόποι that have been established cause 'things themselves' (αὐτά) to be recalled directly; likewise, memorising premises provides starting points from which arguments may be developed.[63] Thus, we have evidence that contemporary mnemonic rules incorporated

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[59] Diog. Laert. 5.1.26; e.g. Blum (1969) 102-4, Sorabji (2006) 26.

[60] See Simondon (1982) 318-9, Sassi (2019) 357.

[61] Arist. *De an.* 427b9-428b11.

[62] Arist. *De an.* 427b18-20: πρὸ ὀμμάτων γὰρ ἔστι ποιήσασθαι, ὥσπερ οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημονικοῖς τιθέμενοι καὶ εἰδωλοποιοῦντες. Text: Ross (1961).

[63] Arist. *Top.* 163b28-33: for text, see Ross (1958). I follow Smith's interpretation re premises and definitions, if not his hypothesis that Aristotle's τόποι method 'employed a variation of the place-memory system': Smith (1997) 159-161, *ad loc*.

τόποι, which served as triggers to aid memory-retrieval. Yet, the nature of these mnemonic τόποι remains unspecified (while the τόποι of the *Topics* are generic forms of dialectical argument, which have no spatial dimension).[64] More broadly, despite the affinity of the Greek/Latin terms τόποι/*loci*, for reasons that will be detailed below, it is far from clear that any of the τόποι mentioned by Aristotle are equivalent to the mnemonic *loci* of later Latin texts.

Third, in *De insomniis*, in order to demonstrate that dreams and other thought processes are quite separate and, moreover, that they can function in parallel, Aristotle again invokes mnemonists as an example:

> …οὕτω καὶ ἐν τοῖς ὕπνοις παρὰ τὰ φαντάσματα ἐνίοτε ἄλλα ἐννοοῦμεν. φανείη δ᾽ ἄν τῳ τοῦτο, εἴ τις προσέχοι τὸν νοῦν καὶ πειρῷτο μνημονεύειν ἀναστάς. ἤδη δέ τινες καὶ ἑωράκασιν ἐνύπνια τοιαῦτα, οἷον οἱ δοκοῦντες κατὰ τὸ μνημονικὸν παράγγελμα τίθεσθαι τὰ προβαλλόμενα· συμβαίνει γὰρ αὐτοῖς πολλάκις ἄλλο τι παρὰ τὸ ἐνύπνιον τίθεσθαι πρὸ ὀμμάτων εἰς τὸν τόπον φάντασμα.
>
> Arist. *Insomn.* 458b18-24.[65]
>
> …So also in sleep we sometimes think of other things apart from the φαντάσματα [of the dream]. This fact would seem clear to anyone who, upon rising, should focus his attention and try to remember. Indeed, some have even observed dreams of this sort, like those who imagine that they are placing the proposed objects according to the mnemonic rule. They often find themselves placing, before their mind's eye, some other φάντασμα, apart from the dream, into the τόπος.

The identity of Aristotle's dreamers is somewhat ambiguous: are they practising mnemonists, dreaming of mnemonic exercises? Or is the whole statement an analogy for thought processes that occur at the same time as dreaming? And what exactly does it mean to speak of φάντασματα that exist alongside and independent of a dream (παρὰ τὸ ἐνύπνιον)?[66] Likewise, the exact nature of τὰ προβαλλόμενα is obscure: these 'proposed objects' could, for instance, denote a set of concrete items put forward for memorisation, or a list of more abstract

[64] Cf. Sorabji, who assumes otherwise, stating that 'Aristotle explicitly compares these patterns [the dialectical τόποι], in respect of their utility, to the places, i.e. to the background images of places, used in the place system of mnemonists': Sorabji (2006) 29-30. According to this interpretation, the analogy alludes to the practical advantages of dialectical τόποι; it also presupposes the existence of a complete system of spatial *loci* mnemonics. See further Blum (1969) 88-9, who believes the passage implies the existence of the complete MOL, even attributing its invention to Theodectes.

[65] Greek text: Gallop (1990).

[66] For alternative readings of this line, see Gallop (1996) 86, n.11.

subjects, or perhaps even the topics of a speech. These questions are important because exactly what was being memorised has implications for our understanding of how contemporary mnemonic systems were being deployed and, hence, for the development of artificial mnemonic techniques. If τὰ προβαλλόμενα refers to the subject matter of speeches, then we might conclude that rhetorical mnemonics were at a considerably more advanced stage than if τὰ προβαλλόμενα simply denotes a list of random items – such as the long lists of names that Hippias was apparently renowned for memorising.[67] What we can say with certainty is that Aristotle understood φαντάσματα, in the sense of mnemonic mental images, as objects of thought that could be mentally manipulated into a τόπος: the passage is our earliest strong evidence that a mnemonic system involving something like the Greek equivalents of the MOL's *imagines* and *loci* had been developed, and developed sufficiently to be included as a brief but probative example.

As mentioned, a key difficulty concerning the interpretation of the Aristotelian evidence arises when we stop to consider Aristotle's understanding of mnemonic τόποι. Can we really assume that they were the direct equivalents of the Auctor's *loci*? A fourth passage from the middle of *De memoria* has attracted much attention in relation to this question:

> δεῖ δὲ λαβέσθαι ἀρχῆς. διὸ ἀπὸ τόπων δοκοῦσιν ἀναμιμνήσκεσθαι ἐνίοτε. τὸ δ' αἴτιον ὅτι ταχὺ ἀπ' ἄλλου ἐπ' ἄλλο ἔρχονται, οἷον ἀπὸ γάλακτος ἐπὶ λευκόν, ἀπὸ λευκοῦ δ' ἐπ' ἀέρα, καὶ ἀπὸ τούτου ἐφ' ὑγρόν, ἀφ' οὗ ἐμνήσθη μετοπώρου, ταύτην ἐπιζητῶν τὴν ὥραν.

Arist. *Mem.* 452a12-16.[68]

> We must take a starting point. This is why some people seem to recollect by way of τόποι. The reason is that they move swiftly from one thing to the next, for instance, from milk to white, from white to air, and from this to dampness, from which autumn is recalled, if this is the season sought.

By comparing this passage to the Auctor's later rendering of the MOL in Latin, some scholars have concluded that Aristotle had a significant impact on the development of the MOL.[69] Although it is beyond the scope of this study to engage in a full discussion of

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[67] See above, p. 68.

[68] Greek text: Bloch (2007).

[69] Notably Small (1997) 77-84, Carruthers (2008) 33-4. Nikulin (2015) 36 believes this passage 'refers to Simonides' method'. For the historical conflation, by the scholiasts, of Aristotle's *De memoria* with *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, which led to the belief that Aristotle provided philosophical justification of *memoria artificiosa*, see Yates (1966) 31-5.

Aristotle's *De memoria*, I believe such an inference is untenable.[70] A weaker conclusion holds that Aristotle was simply utilising terminology from pre-existing Greek artificial mnemonics for illustrative purposes, as in *De anima* and *De insomniis*.[71] This suggestion, which I examine and develop below, is much more likely.

Aristotle's reasoning in the above passage of *De memoria* cannot have furthered the development of artificial mnemonic techniques. The rules of *memoria artificiosa* were developed specifically to help practitioners control the process of memory-retrieval. In the passage, Aristotle makes no attempt to illustrate how, by starting from τόποι, we might control the recollective process of proceeding from one item to the next (e.g. from 'milk' to 'white'). Rather, he seems to be suggesting that the recollective process is analogous to a mnemonic technique in the sense that it is sequential and associative. An individual's thoughts, says Aristotle, may move from 'milk' to 'white' because the two things are associated naturally, not because they have been connected artificially in, for instance, the way that the *Dissoi logoi* recommends the name Chrysippus be connected to a fabricated image of a man riding a golden horse.[72] Sassi is quite correct to point out that previous scholars have misinterpreted this passage as Aristotelian *advice* on artificial mnemonic techniques.[73] The pairs 'milk' and 'white', then 'white' and 'air' are naturally associated thanks to their shared qualities – Aristotle is not suggesting, however, that the associative chain has been (or should be) deliberately designed or manipulated.

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[70] For a broader introduction to Aristotle's position in this text, and the associated issues, see Nikulin (2015) 60-9.

[71] As proposed by Yates (1966) 34.

[72] See p. 67.

[73] Sassi (2019) 355-61. I have simplified the problem somewhat, since immediately after the quoted τόποι extract, at *Mem*. 452a17-26, there appears another hotly-debated passage involving a sequence of letters (the text is corrupt and therefore difficult to interpret, although Sorabji's solution is generally accepted). I do not have space to reproduce and discuss the relevant text fully. Nevertheless, Small (1997) 77-8 and Carruthers (2008) 34 assert that it constitutes Aristotelian advice on how to control the recall process using an alphabetic mnemonic technique; Sorabji (2006) 31-4, that it constitutes a different mnemonic 'technique of mid-points'. Sassi accepts Sorabji's interpretation, with the caveat that Aristotle is simply using the technique as an analogy for the recall process. I would go one step further: it is much more straightforward not to try and squeeze a brand-new (otherwise unattested) mnemonic technique from the text, but rather, to read the alphabetic mid-points as a continuation of Aristotle's illustrative exposition of the natural, associative process of recollection in the preceding passage. Thus, in the same way as our thoughts may move naturally from 'white' to *either* 'milk' *or* 'air' (because both have natural associations with 'white'), Aristotle explains that our thoughts may move naturally from the letter B to *either* A *or* Γ. Accordingly, recollecting from the mid-point of a chain of naturally-associated objects is effective because our thoughts can move in either direction, but doing so can lead to mistakes if our thoughts travel down the wrong path. For analysis of the text itself, see Bloch (2007) 237-8.

Further, Aristotle's notion of what people do when they start the process of recollection 'from τόποι' is severely lacking and confused, at least if we want to read it as an exegesis of mnemonic *loci*. Aristotle does not state that the objects of contemplation between which the individual's thoughts jump – milk, white, air, and so on – are themselves located in τόποι. As discussed above, in *De insomniis* Aristotle seems to suggest that mental images, φαντάσματα, might be placed 'into the τόπος' (εἰς τὸν τόπον). Therefore, mnemonic τόποι must have a spatial dimension. So how can the aforementioned objects of contemplation – milk, white, etc. – be equivalent to mnemonic τόποι? Rather, they would be more appropriately described as φαντάσματα.[74] Yet Aristotle nowhere uses this term, referring to the objects in the series simply as τὰ ἄλλα. If he were describing the elements of a mnemonic technique, he would have presumably employed the correct technical vocabulary. Barring manuscript error, the simplest solution to this conundrum is to conclude that Aristotle, in *De memoria*, was not in fact describing the elements of a mnemonic technique, and that the objects of contemplation he lists are neither mnemonic τόποι nor mnemonic φαντάσματα akin to the *loci* and *imagines* of the MOL, but rather fleeting objects of contemplation, more transient than the Auctor's vivid mental images. Indeed, the series of items that Aristotle calls τόποι might more accurately be compared to a set of stepping-stones, which our thoughts touch lightly upon in the search for a destination – in this case, the desired information, 'autumn'. The items possess the properties of neither mnemonic τόποι nor mnemonic φαντάσματα, since they have been neither artificially fabricated nor artificially associated in a predetermined sequence.

The positioning of the passage within *De memoria* reinforces this interpretation: it appears within the context of a longer explanation of memory-retrieval, where Aristotle says that all recollection, whether we are actively trying to remember something or not, proceeds according to the natural process described, that is, according to a series of mnemonic triggers and associated impulses over which the conscious mind has no control, as a man has no control over a stone he has loosed, or over anger or fear; moreover, Aristotle states that natural processes of recollection can be inhibited by learned or habitual methods of thinking,

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[74] Consequently, the alternative reading of ἀπὸ τόπων (452a13) as ἀπὸ τύπων is both attractive and plausible (it would mean that 'milk', 'white', etc. should be interpreted as τύποι, the imprints left in the waxy fabric of memory, not the spaces that those imprints occupy). Another potential reading is ἀπ' ἀτόπων, which, if correct, would undermine any argument that Aristotle had mnemonic τόποι in mind. See the apparatus in Bloch (2007) 42.

so that we arrive at a different destination though starting from the same point.[75] This is the antithesis of the Auctor's conceptualisation of the MOL, which essentially asserts that the natural function of memory *can* be controlled, and controlled to the practitioner's advantage rather than to his detriment, while the MOL itself is designed to guarantee that he will arrive at the same destination (i.e. the same *locus*) time and again. So even if later mnemonists borrowed some philosophical ideas about natural mnemonic processes to explain their artificial methods, Aristotle's original intent in *De memoria* was not to understand, describe, or give advice on how artificial mnemonic techniques work. Rather, the 'weaker' conclusion referred to earlier, namely that Aristotle was borrowing a pre-existing concept of mnemonic τόποι as an analogy to illustrate natural mental processes, seems the more plausible possibility, consistent with his widespread use of τέχνη-analogies to illustrate natural phenomena.

Finally, I observe that in this second section of *De memoria*, the only one in which the term τόπος appears, Aristotle has left behind the subject of the first section, episodic memory, and has moved on to discuss semantic recollection.[76] Specifically, Aristotle's aim is to reformulate the process of recollection (ἀνάμνησις) as theorised by Plato.[77] According to Bloch's interpretation of Aristotle's argument, a sharp distinction must be drawn between the two mnemonic verbs used in the text: μνημονεύειν ('to remember'), which Aristotle prefers in the first section, refers to the retrieval of information from episodic memory (such as autobiographical episodes); ἀναμιμνήσκεσθαι ('to recollect'), which he prefers in the second section, is applied to the process of retrieving knowledge from semantic memory (such as dates, facts, concepts, and ideas – like milk, white, air, and autumn).[78] It this context, it seems perfectly reasonable that Aristotle would, within a discussion of semantic recollection specifically, refer for illustrative purposes to individuals who retrieve information using some form of associative mnemonic technique. His intention would not, however, be to convey

[75] Arist. *Mem.* 451b-452a, 453a.

[76] By 'episodic' I simply mean the 'timestamped' memories that Aristotle defines as relating to an episode in the past in the first section of *De memoria*. For the relevant passage, see Arist. *Mem.* 449b. Castagnoli argues against a restrictive view of Aristotle's μνήμη as episodic, advocating an Aristotelian 'as-past cognition view of memory': Castagnoli (2019) 236-56.

[77] See Sorabji (2006) 35-46. To demonstrate the process of recollection, Plato's Socrates famously has Meno's slave proceed via a series of logical steps to 'recollect' a geometrical proof: *Meno* 82a-85b. For analysis of this passage, see Scott (1995) 24-52.

[78] Bloch (2007) 87-109. The two verbs are often translated indiscriminately as 'to remember'/'to recall'.

instruction concerning the operation of that, or any other, mnemonic technique (hence the lack of technical vocabulary).

In sum, the τόποι-analogy in *De memoria* makes most sense if we do not start from the position that the passage *must* be a description of an artificial mnemonic technique. That position demands several leaps of imagination to fill in various gaps and still leaves an incoherent picture when it comes to Aristotle's conceptualisation of mnemonic τόποι. Context is perhaps the strongest indication that the passage at *Mem.* 452a is, like the rest of the work, describing the natural recollective process. According to this reading, Aristotle introduces the τόποι-analogy not to initiate the exposition of a mnemonic system, but simply as an illustration. For our purposes, regarding the chronological development of the MOL, we can conclude that in Aristotle's era there were individuals who had taken the natural associative processes of recollection and enhanced them by incorporating τόποι to aid their powers of mnemonic retrieval.

As for how τόποι came to be used in mnemonics in the first place, all manner of permutations have been suggested: that the mnemonic τόπος was derived from the use of τόπος to denote a paradigmatic passage or exemplar in rhetorical handbooks; that it was derived directly from the axiomatic use of τόπος in geometry; that it came from Aristotle's dialectical τόποι; or, vice versa, that Aristotle derived his τόποι from a pre-existing mnemonic usage.[79] We are left with multiple possible interpretations of Aristotle's protean mnemonic τόποι, none of which explain his usage flawlessly. As far as the development of the MOL in the fourth century is concerned, it seems clear that a method involving both φαντάσματα and τόποι did exist at this stage and, in that sense, what Aristotle calls (mnemonic) τόποι could be prototypes of the Auctor's *loci*. We cannot know whether detailed rules for the creation of mnemonic τόποι existed; but we can suppose that the practitioners using them were doing so because they had observed that associating space or place with mnemonic imagery could aid retention and recall. On the other hand, there is no evidence that τόποι-mnemonics were associated with speechmaking; memory is not a feature of Aristotle's surviving works on rhetoric. If a comprehensive mnemonic system designed specifically for use in oratory did exist (and it is a massive 'if'), its details are lost and we should not anachronistically infer the existence of the MOL based on later evidence.

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[79] For derivation from passages in rhetorical handbooks, see Cole (1991) 88-9; for a geometrical derivation, Eide (1995) 5-21; for the idea that Aristotle derived his τόποι from mnemonics, Solmsen (1929) 170-5.

3. Memory in the Hellenistic schools of philosophy

During the two centuries after Aristotle, various Hellenistic schools of philosophy continued to theorise about mechanisms of perception and natural memory formation. At some point during those two centuries, the development of a comprehensive artificial mnemonic system for memorising speeches occurred, to the extent that the Auctor *ad Herennium* was able to set down the precepts of a fully-fledged oratorical MOL for his Latin-speaking audience. This chronological coincidence means that it is worth considering whether the Hellenistic schools had any influence on the MOL's development, while bearing in mind that the most natural setting for the pedagogic codification of the MOL would have been a rhetorical school of some description. Unfortunately, our knowledge of rhetorical pedagogy during the third and second centuries is even more patchy than our knowledge of philosophy, at least until Hermagoras of Temnos appears, towards the end of this period – and his work has not survived.[80] It is generally accepted that Hermagoras, by establishing rhetorical doctrine, contributed to a 'revival' of enthusiasm for rhetoric and that this renewed popularity was met with increased hostility towards rhetoricians from various philosophers.[81] Murphy presents the intervening centuries as a period in which all rhetorical disciplines underwent standardisation, likening the ongoing codification to the systematisation of knowledge by contemporaneous Alexandrian scholars.[82] Given the highly schematic handbooks of rhetoric that emerged, interpolating a period of standardisation between Aristotle and the first century BCE seems perfectly logical, although the reality is that we have no direct evidence. As for the establishment of doctrine relating to the *ars memoriae* specifically, I am inclined to think that the codification of *memoria artificiosa* as one of the five subdisciplines of rhetoric occurred rather late in our two-century window. The reasons for this suggestion are developed in the following survey of approaches to memory in the Hellenistic schools.

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[80] The Hermagorean fragments are collected in Matthes (1962). For an overview, see Bennett (2005) 187-93. Brittain believes the testimonia justify a relatively precise composition date of 140-130 BCE: Brittain (2001) 306-7. Re non-preservation, Heath suggests that Hermagoras' rhetoric was rendered obsolete by later theoretical developments: Heath (2002) 289-91.

[81] For the quarrel between philosophers and rhetoricians in this period, see Wisse (2002a) 361-4, Brittain (2001) 302-6. For attacks on Hermagoras specifically, Reinhardt (2000) 533-5.

[82] Murphy (2003) 127-31.

3.a. Epicureanism

Epicurus founded his school in Athens at the end of the fourth century BCE.[83] He and his followers, both contemporaneous and subsequent, maintained a determined independence, and this seems to have alienated philosophically-minded outsiders: Chandler argues that the accusation of Epicurean indifference towards Greek arts and sciences, which was made by many writers (Cicero, Quintilian, Plutarch, and so on), is more a mark of hostility towards a closed group than a reflection of reality.[84] The Epicureans rejected, by and large, engagement with the wider world of philosophy and were rejected in turn, their 'uncultured' ideas deemed unworthy of serious consideration. This ostensible isolationism makes the Epicurean school an unlikely site for interaction with outsiders such as rhetoricians.

Memorisation, however, was a central tenet of Epicurus' own doctrine.[85] Diogenes reports that Epicurus used to train (ἐγύμναζε) those close to him to commit his treatises to memory, even though (based on the quoted text of a letter he wrote to Pythocles) he was well aware of the difficulty of the task.[86] In order to combat the challenge, Epicurus epitomised his teachings. In another preserved letter, to a certain Herodotus, Epicurus states that the student of his philosophy, after getting to grips with the system described in his *Physics*, 'ought to memorise an outline of the whole treatise reduced to its elements', and to return continually to this outline, because it formed the starting point from which one could fill in the more complex details.[87] There are several points of interest in Epicurus' stipulations concerning memorisation.

First, there is the vocabulary Epicurus uses in relation to remembering and the objects of memory. What should be retained in memory after one has finished studying Epicurus' works is ὁ τύπος, the 'outline' or 'impression'.[88] This same term, τύπος, had been used in the

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[83] Diogenes Laertius, who had access to Epicurean texts, is the main source for Epicurus' biography: Diog. Laert. 10. For the founders and subsequent transformation of Epicurean doctrine, see Chandler (2006) 5-9.

[84] Chandler (2006) 2. For discussion of the Epicurean attitude towards the arts in general, and those involved in *paideia* in particular, see Blank (2009) 216-33.

[85] See Clay (2009) 20-2; Spinelli (2019) 278-92. For the role that *natural* memory played in Epicurean empiricism, see Asmis (2009) 86-90.

[86] Diog. Laert. 10.12, 10.84.

[87] Diog. Laert. 10.35-6: τόν τύπον τῆς ὅλης πραγματείας τὸν κατεστοιχειωμένον δεῖ μνημονεύειν. Greek text: Dorandi (2013).

[88] Whether the use of τύπος implies the Epicureans saw memory as fundamentally materialistic is discussed by Spinelli (2019) 284-5.

earlier wax tablet analogy of mnemonic function for the impression of a seal ring retained in the soul and would, in later Latin rhetorical treatises, be transformed into *litterae* inscribed in wax. Although we should not read too much into the terminological similarities, it is worth bearing in mind that vocabulary associated with the notion of a wax-like vestigial mnemonic trace remained commonplace across all the Hellenistic schools.

Second, there is the emphasis Epicurus places on memorisation for pedagogic purposes. At its most concise, Epicurean teaching took the form of maxims (κύριαι δόξαι), which could be learnt by heart for later rehearsal and reinforcement.[89] This approach to philosophical pedagogy reflects the role of memorisation exercises in the education of young students, as discussed in Chapter I. Yet Epicurus did not fully endorse the unthinking, rote memorisation of target texts. In his letter to Pythocles, he recognises the futility of attempting to memorise a large amount of dense material verbatim, just as practitioners of the MOL would later state that attempting to memorise speeches word-for-word was difficult, unnecessary, or even counterproductive.[90] Of much greater benefit, he said, was memorisation of the outline of a philosophical treatise, or the outline of a speech: from this starting point, the details could be subsequently filled in.[91] Just as orators would prioritise memorising at a macro level, leaving the minutiae to be worked out later, Epicurus advised his students to memorise a condensed outline of his work in order to reach an understanding of the whole.

In addition, Tsouna makes the excellent point that Epicurus' focus on memorisation practised repeatedly, if extended into the realm of ethics, would help to build what she calls the student's 'quasi-automatic moral reflexes', because (as Aristotle observed in relation to the natural processes of recollection) memorising sequentially inclines one's thought patterns to follow the same sequence rapidly the next time the relevant mnemonic trigger is encountered.[92] This associative principle is at the heart of the later MOL, where *locus* yields *imago* and *imago* yields *verbum* in rapid sequence. Memory does not, for Epicurus, replace argument, in the same way that it cannot replace argument for the orator, but it instils foundational knowledge upon which that argument can be constructed.

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[89] Diog. Laert. 10.139-54.

[90] *Rhet. Her.* 3.39 and, more vociferously, Cic. *De or.* 2.359.

[91] Sassi sees Epicurus as the first to fully exploit 'the advantages of summarising': Sassi (2019) 354-5.

[92] Tsouna (2009) 254-5. Arist. *Mem.* 451b28-452a2.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that the place of memorisation in Epicurean doctrine directly influenced the development of *memoria artificiosa*. Rather, certain core elements of the Epicurean approach reflect conceptualisations of memory that bridged divides, philosophical and rhetorical, in this period: conceptualisations of the limitations of memory (which may be defeated by dense and complex pages of text); of when memorisation was useful and of when it was not (for the epitome, rather than the minutiae); and of how the practice of memorisation might be employed to embed knowledge and train patterns of thought.

3.b. Stoicism

The philosophical school that propagated Stoicism was established by Zeno of Citium in around 300 BCE.[93] As with the other schools, evidence concerning the development of Stoicism over the next two centuries is fragmentary and we must rely on later sources, principally Cicero and Diogenes Laertius.[94] Tracking Stoic thought is especially problematic because Zeno (unlike Epicurus) left behind no definitive doctrine and subsequent leaders of the school disagreed about how to interpret his teachings. One thing that seems to have united these subsequent Hellenistic Stoics is that they all saw a place and a function for rhetoric in philosophical discourse. Although they divided the discipline of 'logic' into a varying number of parts, the division always included rhetoric and dialectic: rhetoric concerned speaking well 'in narrative exposition' (ἐν διεξόδῳ), while dialectic concerned discussion conducted via the method of question and answer.[95] Both practices were designed to help guide a listener towards knowledge, if by different means.[96]

The Stoic definition of the *ars rhetorica* as a set of principles designed to facilitate one's powers of speaking in narrative exposition seems at first sight like it might have room for a system such as the MOL, to help the speaker retain the structure and topics of that narrative exposition. When Diogenes describes the division of Stoic rhetoric, however, he lists four parts, which correspond (in Greek) to the five parts of the Latin *ars rhetorica*, with

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[93] For Zeno and the subsequent development of the school, see Sedley (2003) 7-32.

[94] For discussion of what *their* sources may have been, see Atherton (1998) 396-7.

[95] Diog. Laert. 7.41-2. Discussion: Atherton (1998) 397-400.

[96] Bartsch (2017) 217-8.

one glaring exception: *memoria* is absent.[97] It therefore appears that no one of an affirmed Stoic persuasion was involved in the codification of *memoria* as one of the five pillars of rhetoric. This suggestion concurs with my previous conclusions regarding the Stoics' adaptation of the wax tablet model to fit their own theories of cataleptic perception and memory formation, which exclude fabricated mental images.[98]

Perhaps this is where my discussion of Stoicism and the *ars memoriae* would end, were it not for the Stoic (and probably Zenonian) definition of memory, which describes the faculty as a storing-up of impressions, θησαυρισμὸς φαντασιῶν.[99] Scholars tend to take Zeno's definition as the first instance of the metaphor of memory as a treasury, a storehouse of riches, although Ierodiakonou astutely observes that the Stoics did not actually use the word θησαυρός, the noun that generally refers to a physical storehouse for valuable items.[100] At any rate, we can see that the conceptualisation of memory as a store had, by the start of the first century, become commonplace: both the Auctor *ad Herennium* and Cicero present *memoria* as *thesaurus* in the same breath as they introduce the subdiscipline, suggesting that the metaphor was a standard element of the rhetorical definition of *memoria*.[101] The solidification of the metaphor, whereby the abstract Stoic notion of memory as an act of 'storing-up' is transformed, in the *ars memoriae*, into a more concrete stockpile of treasures, indicates a divergence of focus. While the Stoics were interested in how memories accumulate within the mind or soul, rhetoricians accepted that accumulation of memories without question, assigning an immediate assumed value to the mnemonic content of the mind as 'treasure' held within a vault.

3.c. The Sceptical Academy

The Sceptical Academy was founded in the 260s BCE by Arcesilaus after he became head of the Academy – although 'initiated' may better describe Arcesilaus' actions, since his philosophy represents the start of a phase in which older Platonic doctrine was assimilated

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[97] Diog. Laert. 7.43.

[98] See p. 73-4.

[99] Sext. Emp. *Math*. 7.373, specifically, a storing-up of *cataleptic* impressions.

[100] Ierodiakonou (2007) 48, n. 3.

[101] *Rhet. Her.* 3.28, Cic. *De or.* 1.18.

and reinterpreted along Sceptical lines.[102] A number of notable Sceptics, including Carneades and Philo (whom Cicero heard in person), had a major influence on the shape of philosophical debate well into the first century BCE.[103] That said, despite Cicero's enthusiasm for the school and his assertion that its arguments (adapted in his own works for a Latin-speaking audience) could be of benefit to the Roman way of life, the philosophy of the Sceptics diverged, fragmented, and died out in the decades following the death of Philo in the late 80s.[104]

One difficulty facing any attempt to reconstruct the Sceptics' stance on a given topic is, once more, the lack of surviving source material and (especially in the case of Scepticism) the overwhelming predominance of Cicero's work, in particular his *Academici libri*, upon which our basic understanding of the school is based.[105] To compound this difficulty, Cicero produced two editions of the *Academici libri*, of which essentially just the second book of the first edition and a partial section of the first book of the second edition have survived.[106] A further difficulty is the very nature of Scepticism itself, which entails, in its most radical formulation, the assertion that nothing can be known, and hence demands the complete suspension of judgement and the rejection of a doctrinal stance on anything.[107] Consequently, following the example of Socrates, neither Arcesilaus nor Carneades left any writings. In the case of Carneades, the result seems to have been that whenever he defended a position, no one could be sure whether he actually believed in what he was arguing. The *Index academicorum*, for example, cites one Zeno of Alexandria, who listened to Carneades as a student and took diligent notes – but when Carneades saw these notes, he apparently denied

[102] For Arcesilaus, see Thorsrud (2010) 58-62.

[103] For Carneades' visit to Rome, see p. 14. For Philo, Cic. *Brut.* 306. Thorsrud (2008) xv-xvi provides a useful timeline of the Academy's history.

[104] Cicero asserts his preference for Scepticism at *Inv. rhet*. 2.9-10 and its potential usefulness for his fellow countrymen at *Luc.* 6-7. For the decline of the Sceptical Academy, see Lévy (2010) 81-104. Cappello believes Cicero wrote about the Academic Sceptics at a point of institutional crisis to legitimise his own claim to be the inheritor and interpreter of the school for a Roman future: Cappello (2019) esp. Ch. 8, p. 337-9.

[105] In particular, Philo's works were lost; the indications are that Cicero misrepresents Philo's Scepticism to some extent. For issues associated with the Ciceronian evidence, see Görler (1997) 36-57, Brittain (2001) 173-191.

[106] For the different versions, see Griffin (1997) 1-35. Note that I refer throughout to the surviving book of the *Academica priora* as the *Lucullus*/*Luc.*, and the surviving book of *Academica posteriora* as *Acad.* 1.

[107] For the Sceptics' position, and some of its consequences for philosophical argument, see Perin (2010) 145-64.

they bore any resemblance to what he had actually said.[108] Similarly, Clitomachus, a later head of the school, reportedly produced hundreds of volumes (none of which survive) in an attempt to grasp the essence of Carneades' thought, before ultimately admitting defeat.[109] Carneades' ambivalence was not simply contrarianism for its own sake, however: his insistence on the suspension of judgement was aimed at avoiding what Thorsrud neatly dubs the 'epistemic arrogance' of dogmatic assent.[110] Thus, by attempting to avoid definition, the Sceptics rather came to define themselves through their opposition to other schools – chiefly, the Stoics.

As mentioned in section 1.b., we have no full exposition of a Sceptical theory of memory formation. Instead, we must rely on Cicero's rendering of the Sceptical objections to the Stoic theory of catalepsis. To recap, the Stoic theory posited the existence of two distinguishable types of impressions, cataleptic and non-cataleptic. The truly wise man could detect the differences between these two types of impressions and thus separate truth from untruth. The Sceptics' key criticism of catalepsis was that detecting differences is sometimes impossible. They asserted that two impressions, one true and one false, could be practically identical to one another, with no distinguishing marks. Cicero presents various instances when our senses might mistake a non-cataleptic impression for a cataleptic impression: identical twins, replica statues, similar eggs, and two seals stamped by the same ring in similar blocks of wax.[111] Given the Stoic suggestion that the impressions stored in the soul are similar to the imprints left by seal rings in wax, Cicero's 'identical seals' example is leading, opening up the possibility that we might be deceived not only by indistinguishable external sensible objects, but also by indistinguishable internal impressions *after* they have been stamped upon the soul. When these indistinguishable impressions, akin to seals in wax, are re-presented as memories, how can the veracity of those memories ever be taken as absolute, when we cannot be certain which impression is which?

Having established that true and false impressions might appear identical, the Sceptics' argument against catalepsis simply invokes the Stoic axiom that if two impressions

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[108] Phld. *Index academicorum* 22.37-42: this is the normal interpretation, although the text is fragmentary. See Mekler (1902) 83 *ad loc*. For newly-reconstructed fragments of the *Index* relating to Carneades and his successors, see Fleischer (2019) 116-24.

[109] Cic. *Luc.* 139; Diog. Laert. 4.67.

[110] Thorsrud (2010) 74.

[111] Cic. *Luc.* 84-6. Cicero renders the Greek philosophical vocabulary of impressions, catalepsis, apprehensions, etc. using various Latin phrases: for a helpful table of equivalents, see Brittain (2006) xli.

are identical, it is impossible for one to be cataleptic and the other to be non-cataleptic; following this argument, the Sceptics concluded that cataleptic impressions could not exist.[112] The Stoic response was to criticise such a proposition as untenable on the grounds that it led to perpetual aporia.[113] But Carneades, says Cicero, found a solution to all such objections when he developed the doctrine of the 'probable' (τὸ πιθανόν): the belief that there exists not only cataleptic and non-cataleptic impressions, but also impressions that are probable (*probabilia visa*).[114] Thus, the wise man can suspend his judgement as to the absolute truth of an impression, while still formulating a judgement of probability; he will, moreover, make use of probable impressions to avoid aporia, so that he can continue to lead his everyday life.[115] As illustration, Cicero gives the practical scenario of a wise man trying to decide if it is safe to sail onboard a ship. He cannot know whether he will arrive safely, but if the voyage is short, the crew competent, and the weather fair, it is probable, and so he can act rationally.

The Sceptics' pragmatic approach to the question of the reliability of impressions is also apparent when Cicero, in the *Lucullus*, responds to Lucullus himself regarding the Stoic theory of memory formation:

> 'Unde memoria, si nihil percipimus?' sic enim quaerebas. quid meminisse visa nisi comprensa non possumus? […] atqui falsum quod est id percipi non potest, ut vobismet ipsis placet. si igitur memoria perceptarum comprensarumque rerum est, omnia quae quisque meminit habet ea comprensa atque percepta; falsi autem comprendi nihil potest; et omnia meminit Seiron Epicuri dogmata; vera igitur illa sunt nunc omnia. Hoc per me licet; sed tibi aut concedendum est ita esse, quod minime vis, aut memoriam mihi remittas oportet et fateare esse ei locum etiam si comprehensio perceptioque nulla sit.
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> Cic. *Luc.* 106.[116]

> "What is the source of memory, if we apprehend nothing cataleptically?" – that's what you were asking. What, can we remember no impressions save those that we have apprehended

[112] The argument is outlined by Lucullus at *Luc.* 40. For further exposition, see Obdrzalek (2006) 245-6.

[113] The argument that some impressions *must* be cataleptic to avoid aporia is stated most clearly at *Luc.* 37-9, where Lucullus argues for the necessity of assent (συγκατάθεσις/*adsentio*) for action.

[114] Carneades' procedures for arriving at what is probable (τὸ πιθανόν) are outlined in Sext. Emp. *Math.* 7.166-84. For Cicero's equation of φαντασία with *visum*, see *Luc.* 18.

[115] Cic. *Luc.* 99-101. Cicero cites Clitomachus as his source. Whether Carneades' notion of the 'probable' demanded ongoing suspension of judgement even in relation to 'persuasive' impressions, or whether it conceded that such impressions might be accepted as 'probably true', is still debated. For contrasting views, see Frede (1997) 127-51, and Obdrzalek (2006) 243-80. The factors affecting the initial inherent persuasiveness of such impressions are considered by Reinhardt (2019) 218-53.

[116] Latin text: Straume-Zimmermann, Broemser, and Gigon (1990).

> cataleptically? […] And, as you [Stoics] yourselves are of the opinion, "It is impossible to apprehend cataleptically what is untrue": so if memory consists of things that have been apprehended cataleptically, everything that anyone remembers has been apprehended cataleptically; and yet nothing untrue can be apprehended cataleptically. Now, Siro remembers all of Epicurus' doctrine: therefore, all that doctrine is true! This is alright by me; but either you must concede it is so, which you certainly don't want to do, or you need to return memory to me and admit that there is a place for it, even if there is no cataleptic apprehension.[117]

Here, Cicero makes clear the fundamental difference between the Stoic and Sceptic theories of memory: the Sceptics have no problem with the idea that the impressions that constitute our memories can be non-cataleptic and, therefore, that they might be misleading or untrue. Just because Siro – a very wise Epicurean – had memorised Epicurus' entire doctrine, it does not follow that all of that doctrine, because it could be memorised, was comprised of cataleptic impressions and was therefore true.[118] Indeed, for Cicero's Stoic ambassador, Lucullus, the idea that Stoic philosophy might imply the truth of Epicurean doctrine would have been unconscionable.[119] The Sceptics, on the other hand, by leaving room in their definition of memory for non-cataleptic impressions, allowed for mnemonic content to which they could attach a value other than that of absolute truth. The wise man, according to them, would still be able to determine truth value if required, based on a judgement of probability.[120]

I observed earlier that the Stoics conceptualised memory as a storing-up of specifically cataleptic impressions; and also, that fabricated mental images could have only been classified, according to Stoic doctrine, as non-cataleptic impressions. Combining these observations, it is difficult to see how Stoics could have treated the *imagines* and *loci* of the MOL as anything other than non-cataleptic impressions – they might even have viewed them as akin to the hallucinations induced by inebriation or dreams.[121] This potential doctrinal objection to the MOL may have been part of the reason why *memoria* does not feature

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[117] I have translated *comprehendere* and *percipere* as 'to apprehend cataleptically' to clarify that Cicero uses these verbs to render the Stoic καταλαμβάνειν; likewise, *comprehensio perceptioque* equates to the Stoic κατάληψις, i.e. 'cataleptic apprehension'.

[118] Cicero elsewhere mentions Siro (who apparently tutored Virgil) in the same breath as Philodemus, both *homines doctissimi*: *Fin.* 2.119.

[119] Lucullus represents the views of Sceptic-turned-Stoic Antiochus: see Ch. IV, p. 170-1.

[120] Or at least, he would determine whether the memories were 'persuasive'.

[121] See p. 74.

alongside the other four traditional subdisciplines in Diogenes' division of Stoic rhetoric.[122] The Academic Sceptics, on the other hand, were much more comfortable with the idea that we can remember things that do not represent reality. It follows that there may have been scope in their conceptualisation of natural memory for the formation and retention of artificial memories – the *imagines* and *loci* of the MOL. The Sceptics' definition of memory could have conceivably incorporated *memoria* as *ars* since, in accordance with Sceptical principles, this *ars memoriae* would be classified as one of the *artes* that simply follow our impressions, having no means (nor any need) to judge whether or not those impressions are true.[123] As for the question of whether an *ars memoriae* was actually included among the rhetorical techniques utilised by the Sceptics, there are two highly suggestive sets of evidence. The first concerns the Sceptics' apparently positive stance towards teaching rhetoric to their followers; the second involves the few Sceptics-cum-rhetoricians who, according to Cicero, specialised in mnemonic techniques.

4. The Sceptical Academy: Where philosophy embraced rhetoric?

Carneades, according to Cicero's Antonius in *De oratore*, was a paragon of oratorical skill among philosophers.[124] As discussed in the Introduction, Carneades' eloquence struck a chord (and a nerve) at Rome when he arrived in 156 BCE, and his epistemic approach, that the truth might be sought by scrutinising the 'probable', was no doubt made more persuasive by his rhetorical skill.[125] While there is no evidence that Carneades prescribed, or even advised, that his students undertake rhetorical training, from his scholarchate onwards the school appears to have become increasingly engaged with the rhetorical method. As for rhetorical

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[122] See p. 91-2. The obvious counterargument is that Cicero's Lucullus, a professed Stoic, is proficient in the MOL (for full discussion of which, see Ch. IV, p. 168-72); then again, Cicero's Lucullus is hardly a model of Stoic doctrinal consistency.

[123] Cic. *Luc.* 107: *[artes] quae tantum id quod videtur secuntur nec habent istam artem vestram qua vera et falsa diiudicent*. Cf. Ierodiakonou (2007) 64-5, who frames the (Ciceronian) Sceptical take on memory as 'an ordinary, non-technical, non-philosophical' conceptualisation designed to explain the function of certain *artes*, giving Empiricist medicine as another example of such an *ars*. Full treatment of the (irredeemably hypothetical) question 'Can *memoria* be classified as an *ars* in any strict philosophical sense?' is beyond the scope of this thesis: as has been mentioned, rhetoricians like the Auctor avoided it entirely (*Rhet. Her.* 3.28). The matter is addressed by Wisse (2002b) 389-92.

[124] Cic. *De or.* 2.161, see also Cicero's Crassus at 3.68.

[125] Diogenes Laertius, 4.62, states that even professional rhetoricians would take the afternoon off to go and hear Carneades speak. For the 'Sceptical' rhetoric Carneades may have employed at Rome, see Wilkerson (1988) 131-44.

mnemonics, there is no suggestion that Carneades influenced the development of the MOL, although the resemblance between Carneades' conditions for optimal perception of external objects and the rules for the creation of effective *loci* is striking (see above, p. 76-7). Carneades explained how φαντασίαι might be distinguished from their surrounding τόποι; later mnemonists, how *imagines* might be distinguished from their surrounding *loci*.

Carneades inspired a number of pupils and successors, each of whom had his own take on Academic Scepticism: of significance to this study are the aforementioned Clitomachus, Metrodorus of Stratonicea, Charmadas of Athens, and Philo of Larissa.[126] Cicero's Crassus reports that, when he visited Athens circa 110, the school was at its height – Clitomachus, Charmadas, and Metrodorus were all present.[127] We know very little about the marginal Metrodorus of Stratonicea, although he may have proposed an alternative interpretation of Carneades' Scepticism, incorporating a mitigated version of the principle that one must suspend all judgement, thereby allowing for particular 'probable' impressions to be accepted as truth.[128] Metrodorus remains important because of his likely influence on both Charmadas and Philo, who in turn directly influenced Cicero's presentation of the Sceptical stance on various topics, including rhetoric.[129]

Moving swiftly on to Charmadas, in *De oratore*, Cicero presents two views of the man. One comes from Crassus, who says that he studied Plato's *Gorgias* with Charmadas.[130] The other comes from Antonius, who heard the philosopher debate in Athens, and who gives an outline of the arguments Charmadas made when 'often, he was carried away by his own discourse to the point that he wholly disputed the existence of any *ars dicendi*'.[131] At first sight, Charmadas' stance might appear to provide confirmatory evidence of second-century philosophers directing hostility towards rhetoricians – we might even group it with the

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[126] The relationships between many of the philosophers discussed in this section are presented clearly in a phylogenetic tree, detailing the successions of philosophers according to Cicero's Crassus in *De oratore*, compiled by May and Wisse (2001) 243.

[127] Cic. *De or.* 1.45. For the date, see Leeman and Pinkster (1981) 137.

[128] See Brittain (2001) 73-128; but the issues are hotly contested, e.g. Glucker (2004) 118-33.

[129] Brittain (2001) 212-9, 312.

[130] Cic. *De or.* 1.47.

[131] *De or.* 1.82-93, quoted at 1.90: *saepe etiam in eam partem ferebatur oratione, ut omnino disputaret nullam artem esse dicendi*. Charmadas based his argument on Plato's refutation of rhetoric. Sextus also attributes an argument against rhetoric to Charmadas, although the line of attack is this time ethical (i.e. rhetoric is malicious) rather than technical: Sext. Emp. *Math.* 20-40.

attacks made against Hermagoras of Temnos' newly-formulated rhetorical doctrine.[132] Yet, the situation is not that simple, since Charmadas himself appears to have embraced certain rhetorical techniques in the dissemination of his own philosophy.[133] He was, after all, a true pupil of Carneades, and used contrarianism as a heuristic method.[134] In his refutation of the existence of an *ars dicendi*, rather than making the blunt assertion that all rhetorical techniques are useless, Charmadas seems to advocate a different brand of 'philosophical' rhetoric, which he contrasts with the (inferior) offering of the rhetorical schools.[135]

Cicero's Antonius explains that Charmadas' first attack was against rhetoricians rather than rhetoric per se:

> significabat eos, qui rhetores nominarentur et qui dicendi praecepta traderent, nihil plane tenere neque posse quemquam facultatem adsequi dicendi, nisi qui philosophorum inventa didicisset.

Cic. *De or.* 1.84.

> He suggested that those who were called rhetoricians, and who gave instruction in the rules of speaking, had no intelligible grasp on anything, and that no one could attain skill in speaking unless he had learnt about the discoveries of the philosophers.

Charmadas, according to Cicero, was arguing against the practices of teachers who called themselves *rhetores* and dictated lists of rules without any real understanding of the essence of eloquence. This accords perfectly (and unsurprisingly) with one aspect of Cicero's agenda in *De oratore*, to provide a fresh, less prescriptive and more universal formulation of the rhetorical skills required by the ideal orator; it also accords with the stance against Greek *rhetores* adopted by the self-professed philosophy-afficionado, the Auctor *ad Herennium*. Thus, Cicero's Charmadas has more of a problem with contemporaneous rhetoricians than with rhetoric as a discipline – once you have been taught proper philosophy, he says, then you can move on to rhetoric, well-equipped to learn and apply the discipline in the best possible fashion.

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[132] See n. 81 above.

[133] Brittain (2001) 312-9 even speculates that when Charmadas opened his own school, in the Ptolemaeum, it was a school of Sceptical rhetoric.

[134] See Cic. *Orat.* 51.

[135] A strong case for this interpretation is made by Reinhardt (2000) 532-3.

Charmadas' second line of attack against rhetoric as *ars* was, according to Antonius, technical:

> artem vero negabat esse ullam, nisi quae cognitis penitusque perspectis et in unum exitum spectantibus et numquam fallentibus rebus contineretur.
>
> Cic. *De or.* 1.92.

> He denied that anything was a true *ars* unless it consisted of matters that were known and thoroughly comprehended, that targeted a single end, and that were never fallible.

These criteria for *ars* cannot – according to the rest of Charmadas' speech – be fulfilled by oratory. The speaker does not know that everything he puts forward is certain and true (even in a less-than-rigorous non-philosophical sense); and he does not impart true knowledge to his audience, but only fleeting opinion, using persuasive techniques that have no guarantee of success. For Charmadas, then, the orator decides on his truth before he begins arguing and uses rhetorical techniques in a fallible attempt to make that truth seem probable; the Sceptic, on the other hand, accepts fallibility at the outset, before using a rigorous method of arguing pro and contra to finally determine what is truly probable, i.e. what is πιθανόν or *probabile*.[136]

Charmadas' apparent acceptance of the possibility that probable truth might be determined by arguing pro and contra, which follows from the modified Carneadean position potentially advocated by Metrodorus, is considerably at odds with the (earlier) radical formulation of Academic Scepticism, whereby discourse – however rhetorically persuasive – was directed ultimately towards the suspension of all judgement. As Cicero portrays the school's development, Charmadas (and subsequently Philo) began to transform Carneades' ever-equivocal approach into a new method, a Sceptical approach to philosophical questions that they evidently considered a valid *ars*, which incorporated certain rhetorical precepts, but which was superior to and more universally applicable than the superficially-similar Hermagorean doctrine and the methods of contemporaneous rule-loving rhetoricians.[137] This rather vague notion of a distinctly 'philosophical' rhetoric may be all we can safely deduce about the rhetorical practices of the pre-Ciceronian Sceptics. Brittain, however, has gone

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[136] For similarities and differences between philosophical and rhetorical notions of πιθανόν/*probabile,* see Glucker (1995) 122-35.

[137] The Hermagorean approach to ὑποθέσεις involved developing forensic arguments on either side of a contested issue, but did not tackle the more general θέσεις, which was traditionally considered the province of philosophy. For the use (and non-use) of *hypotheses* and *theses* in Roman rhetorical schools of the period, see Wisse (2002a) 359-61.

further, asserting that Charmadas 'turned the ordinary practices of Sceptical philosophy into a reflective procedure for the perfection of rhetorical skills'.[138] This is perhaps one speculative step too far. To return to more solid ground, we can say that, for Charmadas, eloquence was not the true rule-bound *ars* that the schools of rhetoric professed; it was, however, a capacity (*facultas*), that could be grounded on and enhanced by philosophical training.

To complete this outline of the developing incorporation of rhetoric into Sceptical practice, it is necessary to mention Philo of Larissa, who succeeded Clitomachus as the head of the school in 110/9 and, after fleeing Athens in 88/7, arrived in Rome.[139] This is where Cicero heard him talk, which in turn means that Philo probably had the most influence on Cicero's rendering of the philosophy and history of Academic Scepticism; Philo also wrote two controversial volumes, the so-called 'Roman books', a manifesto for the unity of the Academy.[140] Much more can be said with certainty about Philo than his slightly older contemporary Charmadas, but in relation to the integration of rhetoric and philosophy, one key fact stands out: Philo is the first Academic Sceptic to whom the practice of teaching rhetoric can be attributed directly.[141] Cicero states that it was Philo's custom to give instruction in the *praecepta* of the rhetoricians at one time and those of the philosophers at another, and presents this approach as innovative.[142] This means that Philonian Sceptics were most likely disseminating a method of 'rhetorical philosophy' from at least 110/9, when Philo became scholarch.[143] The Academic Sceptics of the late second century, then, seem to have practised what Cicero's Charmadas preached, teaching a productive programme of rhetoric grounded on philosophical wisdom.

We might argue that there was nothing particularly revolutionary in the Sceptics' approach. The argument that philosophical knowledge (especially knowledge concerning moral questions of good and bad, just and unjust, etc.) was a prerequisite for a true rhetorical

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[138] Brittain (2001) 325.

[139] For Philo's life, see Brittain (2001) 38-72.

[140] Morford (2002) 37-9, Reinhardt (2000) 535. On the possible nature of Philo's 'Roman books', see Brittain (2001) 129-68, Glucker (2004) 134-43.

[141] Leeman and Pinkster suggest that Charmadas' view of philosophy as a prerequisite for eloquence may have persuaded Philo to teach rhetoric: Leeman and Pinkster (1981) 173.

[142] Cic. *Tusc.* 2.9: Cicero's phrasing, *instituit alio tempore rhetorum praecepta tradere, alio philosophorum*, indicates novelty (text: Douglas (1990)); Crassus at *De or.* 3.110 implies, with the phrase *nunc enim apud Philonem…*, that Philo's rhetorical practice was a recent innovation (relative to 91 BCE). See also the commentary of Wisse, Winterbottom, and Fantham (2008) 74.

[143] For the possible nature of 'Philonian' rhetoric, see Reinhardt (2000) 535-47, Brittain (2001) 298-342.

τέχνη had a legacy that went all the way back to Plato's *Gorgias* (on which, we should not forget, Charmadas was ostensibly an expert).[144] Similarly, other schools held that only the wise man (i.e. a philosopher) could truly be a good speaker.[145] On the other hand, the evidence we do have seems to indicate that, as the practice of rhetorical schooling spread towards Rome, the Academic Sceptics distinguished themselves by embracing the study and teaching of rhetoric to a greater extent than other philosophical schools, especially during the late second century. In this period, the Sceptical Academy provided an intellectual environment that was open and amenable to rhetorically-inclined philosophers, including Philo, Charmadas, and his coeval Metrodorus of Scepsis.

4.a. Charmadas of Athens as mnemonist

The first sections of this chapter analysed in detail how multiple philosophical concepts of natural memory were invoked by rhetoricians to underpin, explain, and even justify the rules governing the MOL. I also raised the questions of when and where this fusion of natural and artificial mnemonic theory first occurred. Now, I posit the hypothesis that it was philosophers of the late-second-century Sceptical Academy who promoted (and perhaps even pioneered) these philosophically-grounded explanations of the MOL, in accordance with the propaedeutic principles espoused by Charmadas (Cic. *De or.* 1.84). According to this hypothesis, students would have been encouraged to first learn the *inventa philosophorum* (namely, theories of natural memory formation and retention, such as the wax tablet model); subsequently, when the students were being introduced to the MOL, those *inventa philosophorum* would have been used as an exegetic framework for the *praecepta rhetorum* (to explain why the rules for the creation of *loci* and *imagines* work). As for the identity of the Sceptics who engaged most fully with artificial mnemonics, I propose two likely candidates: Charmadas himself, and Metrodorus of Scepsis. These two individuals are examined below.

The hypothesis outlined above is not as radical as it might at first appear – other scholars have come to similar conclusions. As mentioned, Yates identified Metrodorus of Scepsis as a key figure in the development of the MOL; and Marastoni, in her monograph on

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[144] E.g. Pl. *Grg.* 459c-460c. For discussion, see Wisse (2002b) 389-96.

[145] Such as the Stoics, though the evidence is fragmentary: see Reinhardt (2007) 376.

Metrodorus, suggests that the Sceptics took a keen interest in memory and recollection.[146] Marastoni's reasoning is, however, flawed. She posits that the Sceptics were particularly interested in the 'exercise of memory' ('l'esercizio della memoria', p. 63) because it could (in accordance with the Platonic theory of ἀνάμνησις) bring to light the Platonic forms, of which the soul had knowledge before it descended into the body. This is a very curious hypothesis indeed. Platonic ἀνάμνησις concerns the unpremeditated rediscovery of knowledge inaccessible to sense perception, acquired by the soul before birth when it was in a previous state of being; ἀνάμνησις is (for the sake of simplicity) a theoretical explanation of the learning process.[147] It has nothing to do with the active retrieval of premeditated information, like lists of items or the topics of a speech, consciously encoded in memory at some point earlier in *this* life by means of a τέχνη such as the MOL. Metrodorus, and the Academic Sceptics at large, were astute enough to recognise that mnemonic techniques, however intricate, were not going to grant them direct access to the omniscient memories of the divine.

My more prosaic suggestion is that Sceptics like Charmadas utilised and perhaps even taught mnemonic techniques, firstly, because their philosophical doctrine was flexible enough to allow room for the concept of an *ars memoriae*; secondly, because mnemonic techniques helped them to disseminate their philosophical doctrine in a coherent, persuasive lecture format (just as the same techniques might help an orator deliver a speech in the forum); and thirdly, because learning mnemonic techniques genuinely appealed to rhetorically-inclined students (such as Cicero) who might be attracted to study Scepticism.

Charmadas, then, is the first Academic Sceptic whom we know utilised mnemonic techniques. According to Cicero, the orator Marcus Antonius wrote a *libellus* on the *ars dicendi*, in which he stated, on the basis of Charmadas' arguments concerning rhetoric, that the truly eloquent speaker was someone whose *animus* and *memoria* contained all the sources of everything that pertained to speaking.[148] This sentiment, regardless of its partisan origin, sets a high bar for mnemonic capacity – and it was a bar that Charmadas had a reputation for

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[146] Marastoni (2007) 63-4.

[147] Most famously encapsulated by Plato's Socrates at *Meno* 81d: τὸ γὰρ ζητεῖν ἄρα καὶ τὸ μανθάνειν ἀνάμνησις ὅλον ἐστίν. For proper discussion of ἀνάμνησις, start with Scott (1995) 13-85.

[148] Cic. *De or.* 1.94: *omnisque omnium rerum, quae ad dicendum pertinerent, fontis animo ac memoria contineret*. Antonius' *libellus* does not survive: Cicero refers to it regularly in *De oratore*; also, at *Orat.* 18 and 69.

raising. At least (and this must be stressed once again) Cicero accorded Charmadas this reputation, and superlative mnemonic skill became a trait for which he was subsequently known in the Roman world. As mentioned in the first chapter, in the section of *De oratore* that deals with the rhetorical theory of memory, Antonius introduces Charmadas as an *exemplum* to demonstrate the practical efficacy of the MOL and to refute those who say that memorising using *imagines* and *loci* is overly burdensome:

> vidi enim ego summos homines et divina prope memoria, Athenis Charmadam, in Asia, quem vivere hodie aiunt Scepsium Metrodorum, quorum uterque, tamquam litteris in cera, sic se aiebat imaginibus in iis locis, quos haberet, quae meminisse vellet, perscribere.
>
> Cic. *De or.* 2.360.

> For I saw with my own eyes most prominent figures, men with almost superhuman memories, Charmadas in Athens and, in Asia, Metrodorus of Scepsis (who, they say, is still alive today), each of whom affirmed that he recorded completely what he wished to remember thus, by using *imagines* in the *loci* that he retained just as if he were using letters in wax.

We shall return to Charmadas' coeval, Metrodorus of Scepsis (not to be confused with Metrodorus of Stratonicea), shortly. For now, it is essential to note that, according to Cicero's Antonius, Charmadas confirmed that he enhanced his memory by depicting *imagines* in *loci* in a fashion analogous to that of inscribing letters in wax: that is to say, he utilised the MOL. This suggests (a) that Charmadas recognised in the MOL a technique that could reliably improve his natural capacity to retain information, i.e. a technique that met his definition of a true *ars* (from *De or.* 1.92); and (b) that Charmadas talked about the MOL in terms of a philosophical analogy of natural memory formation, likening *imagines* and *loci* to impressions left in wax.

In *Tusculanae disputationes*, Cicero introduces a list of men who reputedly utilised artificial mnemonic techniques to clarify that his subsequent argument does *not* concern individuals who utilise the *artes memoriae* – the list comprises Simonides (poet and legendary inventor of the MOL), Theodectes (tragedian and rhetorician), Cineas (diplomat, ambassador of Pyrrhus), Charmadas (philosopher), Metrodorus of Scepsis (briefly a philosopher, but known primarily as a rhetorician), and Hortensius (orator).[149] Charmadas'

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[149] Cic. *Tusc.* 1.59. Connections between the named individuals and *memoria artificiosa* (or other mnemonic techniques) are discussed elsewhere: for Simonides, see Ch. I p. 47-52; Theodectes, see above, p. 80; Cineas, Ch. IV, p. 163-5; Metrodorus, below, p. 106-10; and Hortensius, Ch. III, p. 138-44, plus Ch. IV, p. 171. The anaphoric repetition of *quanta* (*non quaero quanta memoria Simonides* […] *quanta Theodectes* […] *quanta*

inclusion in the list of mnemonists, and his explicit exclusion from the group of men Cicero goes on to discuss (experts who possess superior *memoria naturalis*), reiterates Charmadas' reputation as a practitioner of the MOL. Beyond that reiteration, the passage is interesting for its context. Cicero eliminates the mnemonists from his subsequent discussion of the extraordinary mnemonic capacities of men who are incredibly skilled in specialist professions: he observes that the superlative mnemonic powers of these other (unnamed) experts, who are not themselves expert practitioners of the *ars memoriae*, is a good indication of the incalculable natural capacity of the human mind.[150] This observation introduces an argument against Platonic ἀνάμνησις, in the course of which Stoic ideas concerning the 'corporeality' of memories, whereby wax-like mnemonic impressions take up space in the soul, are also rejected, on the grounds that a corporeal soul containing a vast agglomeration of corporeal memories would demand a correspondingly (and impossibly) vast physical space.[151]

Charmadas was first and foremost a philosopher; he styled himself as an inheritor of Plato's Academy. It is perhaps surprising, therefore, that Cicero, in a passage of the *Tusculanae disputationes* that deals with Platonic ἀνάμνησις, ignores Charmadas' philosophy entirely and only cites him because of his reputation as a mnemonist. It is worth noting that Philodemus, also writing in the first century BCE, described Charmadas as a skilled and learned individual, φύσει μνήμων: he makes no mention of artificial mnemonics.[152] The 'natural' mnemonic ability Philodemus attributed to Charmadas does not of course preclude the idea that he also utilised the MOL – but it is Cicero who highlights this usage as one of the defining aspects of Charmadas' character and practice. According to the Ciceronian rendering of Academic Scepticism, it was Charmadas' use of artificial mnemonics that made him, and his teachings, stand out. If this portrayal is accurate, the precepts of the *ars memoriae* may well have been a feature of Charmadas' novel style of philosophical rhetoric;

nuper Charmadas […etc.]) once for every mnemonist, emphasises the sheer size and power of the individuals' *memoria artificiosa* (text: Douglas (1985)).

[150] Cicero is apparently referring to experts who have acquired expertise through many years of experience: see 'Concluding remarks', p. 185-7, for discussion.

[151] Cic. *Tusc.* 1.59-61. For Cicero's discussion of the problem of souls, within which this passage appears, see Gildenhard (2007) 242-4, Douglas (1985) 110-2. Re corporeality, the Stoics asserted that impressions (and therefore memories) were corporeal; if this were true, said their critics, older corporeal impressions (and memories) of an object would be obliterated by the formation and superimposition of new impressions. Chrysippus seems to have developed a sophisticated response to this criticism, with which Cicero never engages (deliberately or otherwise): see Ierodiakonou (2007) 52-9.

[152] Phld. *Index academicorum* 32.5.

and he may have explained those artificial precepts using philosophical theories of natural memory.

The ostensible mnemonic prowess of Charmadas' coeval Philo warrants brief mention here. Cicero states that Philo possessed *summa memoria* and could reproduce philosophical *sententiae* verbatim (*iis ipsis verbis quibus erant scriptae*).[153] This statement does not reveal anything about whether Philo utilised *memoria artificiosa*, but it does indicate that both of these prominent Academic Sceptics, Charmadas and Philo, recognised the importance of memorisation in their philosophical practice, whether via natural or artificial means. The instructional method they developed (whether we call it a special brand of 'philosophical rhetoric' or not) had a place for memorisation, and a *locus* for the method of *loci*.

4.b. Metrodorus of Scepsis as mnemonist

Charmadas' reputation as a mnemonist endured and, as we have seen, his name was often mentioned alongside that of Metrodorus of Scepsis. It appears that this Metrodorus, who Cicero tells us was renowned for his mnemonic ability, had a remarkable life.[154] Born in the 140s BCE, he appears to have been a student of the Sceptical Academy at the time when Charmadas and Philo were in their prime, and to have then returned to Asia, where he became a prominent figure at the court of Mithridates VI.[155] Although schooled in Academic Scepticism, he abandoned philosophy and devoted himself to rhetoric, such that Cicero's Crassus calls him 'a rhetorician of the Academic school'; while Strabo states that 'he used a novel style of speaking and astounded many'.[156] In the late 70s, however, Metrodorus appears to have met an untimely end, after unwisely betraying Mithridates to Tigranes.[157]

Metrodorus' notably novel brand of rhetoric was no doubt influenced by the philosophically-oriented approach of Charmadas and Philo, although his later reputation suggests that he put their teachings to a much more practical use than perhaps intended, in the

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[153] Cic. *Nat. D.* 1.113. Text: Dyck (2003). The *sententiae* in question are those of Epicurus.

[154] Attribution is sometimes problematic. Marastoni has collected all the testimonia concerning Metrodorus; she also provides a timeline for his life: see Marastoni (2007) 5-6.

[155] Strabo 13.1.55 is the main source for Metrodorus' life; Metrodorus' allegiance to Mithridates would explain his alleged hostility towards Rome (see Plin. *HN* 34.34 and possibly Ov. *Pont.* 4.14.37-40).

[156] Cic. *De or.* 3.75, *ex Academia rhetor*; Strabo 13.1.55, ἐχρήσατο δὲ φράσεώς τινι χαρακτῆρι καινῷ καὶ κατεπλήξατο πολλούς. Greek text: Radt (2004).

[157] Plut. *Vit. Luc.* 22.

court of Mithridates. Metrodorus' application of artificial mnemonic techniques seems to reflect a shift in focus away from philosophy. Cicero's Antonius, in the passage at *De or.* 2.360 quoted above, states that Metrodorus, like Charmadas, employed mnemonic *imagines* and *loci*, i.e. that he utilised the MOL. There are suggestions, however, that Metrodorus went considerably further than Charmadas and other rhetoricians, developing techniques even more sophisticated and involved than the oratorically-oriented MOL. Quintilian provides the clearest evidence. As an addendum to Cicero's rules for the creation of *loci* (that they should be numerous, clearly defined, etc.) and *imagines* (which should be active, striking, etc.), he writes:

> Quo magis miror quo modo Metrodorus in XII signis per quae sol meat trecenos et sexagenos invenerit locos. Vanitas nimirum fuit atque iactatio circa memoriam suam potius arte quam natura gloriantis.

Quint. *Inst.* 11.2.22.

> This makes me wonder even more how Metrodorus found 360 *loci* in the 12 signs through which the sun passes.[158] Evidently this was the vanity and ostentation of a man who, when it came to his memory, took more pride in *ars* than *natura*.

Quintilian then proceeds to reject Metrodorus' method, which he considers overcomplicated, on the grounds that it is not useful for memorising *oratio perpetua* – continuous, expository speech.[159] This reference to Metrodorus' zodiac-based mnemonic method and the implication that he associated one *locus* with each of the zodiac's 360 degrees has been used as evidence of Metrodorus' meticulous knowledge of astrology.[160] Fine. More pertinent to the role of artificial mnemonics within Metrodorus' novel brand of rhetoric, however, is the fact that he took one technical aspect of the method of *loci* – specifically, the rules for the creation of *loci* – to what was considered (at least by Quintilian) an absurd degree of complexity. The practices of modern mnemonists clearly indicate that the MOL *can* be extended and/or adapted to incorporate an apparently limitless number of *loci* (assuming you have the time, patience, and seemingly single-minded zeal).[161] Accordingly, when considering how Metrodorus' zodiac-mnemonics may have worked, we might envisage a system that designated twelve major *loci* arranged in order of the astrological signs, with the *imago* of a

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[158] I.e. the ecliptic plane of the zodiac.

[159] Quint. *Inst.* 11.2.24-6.

[160] Marastoni (2007) 62.

[161] On modern mnemonists' extensive utilisation and adaptation of *loci* mnemonics, see Foer (2011) 97, 163-8.

ram (Aries) to mark the first, a bull (Taurus) for the second, and so on, before subdividing each of those major *loci* into thirty minor *loci*, demarcated as the Auctor *ad Herennium* advises, by means of suitable *imagines*, such as a golden hand (with, presumably, five golden digits) placed conspicuously in the fifth *locus*.[162] Metrodorus took zodiac-mnemonics to their zenith, elaborating the MOL to create extremely complex subdivisions of *loci*; his approach was not, however, one that rhetoricians recommended for the practical business of speechmaking. His technique was so far above and beyond the complexity involved in the standard MOL that Quintilian not only rejected its practical value but accused those who practice it of vain arrogance.

Pliny the Elder also has something to say about Metrodorus' contribution to *memoria artificiosa*. He includes both Charmadas and Metrodorus at the end of his list of famous mnemonists:

> Charmadas quidam in Graecia quae quis exegerit volumina in bibliothecis legentis modo repraesentavit. ars postremo eius rei facta et inventa est a Simonide melico, consummata a Metrodoro Scepsio, ut nihil non iisdem verbis redderetur auditum.

Plin. *HN* 7.89.[163]

> A certain Charmadas in Greece recited, on demand, any work from the libraries as if he were reading it aloud. Finally, an *ars* of this substance was created, invented by the lyric poet Simonides and perfected by Metrodorus of Scepsis, whereby one might repeat anything one had heard using exactly the same words.

There are several intriguing points about this passage. The origin of Pliny's anecdote concerning Charmadas' ability to quote passages from texts at length is unclear. It does not appear in Cicero: there, Charmadas only 'reads' from memory inasmuch as he explains how his mnemonic technique works using the wax tablet metaphor, in which *imagines* correspond to *litterae*. Typically, as we have seen, students relied on their natural mnemonic ability (and not the MOL) to learn texts verbatim.[164] Hence, in mentioning Charmadas' memory for texts rather than his utilisation of the MOL, Pliny is not necessarily making the same connection as Cicero and Quintilian between Charmadas and artificial mnemonics.[165] Charmadas is

[162] *Rhet. Her.* 3.31. See also Yates (1966) 39-42.

[163] Latin text: Rackham (1942).

[164] See p. 28-32.

[165] Quint. *Inst.* 11.2.26, referring to Cic. *De or.* 2.360.

separated from the sentence that begins *ars postremo*; Pliny admires his memory for texts but does not state that it was aided by *ars*.

When it comes to the origins of *memoria artificiosa*, however, Pliny apparently accepts the 'Ciceronian' chronology fully, attributing the invention of a mnemonic *ars* to Simonides. He then credits Metrodorus with its technical perfection. Can we, therefore, conclude that it was Metrodorus who completed the codification of *memoria artificiosa*, the oratorical MOL, as it appears in first-century-BCE rhetorical handbooks? I have my doubts. As discussed above, Quintilian rejected Metrodorean mnemonics because they were too complex – even more complex than the MOL (of which he was no ardent adherent) and entirely unnecessary for the orator. Further, Pliny states that Metrodorus' *ars* enabled the repetition of 'anything one had heard using exactly the same words'. On the one hand, an *ars* that enables you to remember what you have heard is reminiscent of the MOL as it was used in the forum by the orator who wanted to make a mental note of all his opponent's talking points, in order that he might refute them in a coherent, though largely improvised, response.[166] On the other, the oratorical MOL was seldom, if ever, used for verbatim memorisation – so if Pliny does mean to imply that Metrodorus helped codify the oratorical MOL, then he is vastly overexaggerating the efficacy of the method in relation to word-for-word repetition.[167]

Combining the available evidence leads to the conclusion that Metrodorus took significant, potentially novel steps in the advancement and codification of sophisticated artificial mnemonic techniques involving *imagines* and *loci*.[168] Yet if Quintilian's assertion that Metrodorus effectively broke the normal rules for the creation of *loci* by adding astronomical complexity reflects the truth of his mnemonic practice, then we can say with certainty that he did not use the MOL in the way that the Auctor *ad Herennium* advises. So what was the purpose of Metrodorus' intricate *ars consummata*? My own view is that the answer probably lies in his professional life as a rhetor in the court of Mithridates. Quintilian, referring to a passage of Cicero that no longer survives, states that Metrodorus, like Hortensius, was adept at using mental instead of written preparation to deliver a speech from

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[166] For detailed explanation of this usage, see Ch. III, p. 139-42.

[167] Alternatively, Pliny's concept of verbatim reproduction may simply be less exacting than modern standards: see Harris (1989) 32.

[168] Based on the Pliny passage, the OCD^5, s.v. *Metrodorus (5)*, even asserts that Metrodorus 'wrote a treatise expounding his system': see Scullard and Badian (2016). There is no solid evidence for such a conclusion.

memory.[169] The key difference between the two speakers is obviously that Hortensius was a forensic orator while Metrodorus was a court rhetorician. We should therefore envision Metrodorus employing mnemonic techniques in the production and delivery of epideictic speeches – royal encomium even – rather than defence speeches on behalf of a *cliens*.

Metrodorus could have even used his skills to impress the Mithridatic court with astonishing feats of memory in much the same way as modern professional mnemonists still impress audiences today; after all, we know that Hortensius, an upstanding Roman orator, was not averse to showing off the strength of his *memoria artificiosa* occasionally outside of the forum.[170] In order to perform bravura feats of memory for his royal audience, just as modern mnemonists take the 'simple' oratorical MOL and add complexity to perform more esoteric tasks, so Metrodorus could have adapted the MOL to incorporate his 360 astrological *loci*. Thus, we might say that Metrodorus created a true *ars consummata* in the same way as a modern mnemonist who adapts the MOL to memorise the order of several thousand playing cards might be said to have 'perfected' the technique. The feats of memory that modern mnemonists perform are astonishing in part because they lack real-world application; because most people would never dream of putting in the effort required to memorise such a superfluity of meaningless information.

Metrodorus' methods were most likely at the extreme end of a spectrum of techniques used by more oratorically-inclined practitioners of the discipline, a spectrum that included basic word- and place-association mnemonics as well as what became the standard oratorical MOL. That said, the basic premise of Metrodorus' practice of using astrological signs to denote the order of *loci* was probably in more widespread use.[171] Most importantly for this study, the fact that Metrodorus developed his advanced mnemonic techniques either during or subsequent to his time as a philosopher of the Sceptical Academy is another strong indication that a rhetorical theory of memory resembling the Auctor's MOL may have featured among the *praecepta rhetorum* disseminated by the Sceptics in this period.

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[169] Quint. *Inst.* 10.6.4.

[170] I allude to the 'auction' episode: full discussion, Ch. III, p. 139.

[171] Astrological symbolism may feature in the Auctor's exemplar *imago* at *Rhet. Her.* 3.33: see Ch. I, n. 17.

5. A new chronology of *memoria artificiosa*

This chapter has attempted to assimilate many centuries of developing and divergent philosophical and rhetorical theories of memory into a multifaceted narrative by unpicking the patchwork testimonia that, combined, represent our knowledge of the Greco-Roman discourse on mnemonics, before re-weaving common threads. The result is, perhaps inevitably, still a patchwork, but one that I hope retains coherent form. This final section summarises the findings and ties up certain loose ends, although the precise details of when and where the fully-fledged oratorical MOL was integrated into the *ars rhetorica* cannot, based on the evidence we have, be ascertained with absolute certainty. Fig. 3, p. 116, represents what we *can* ascertain, in graphical format, based on the analysis presented in this chapter and a certain amount of interpolation on my part, as explained below.

My chronology begins with a revocation of the Muse: although Mnemosyne may have inspired the poets, she did not inspire rhetoricians and orators to develop the MOL.[172] The notion that Simonides had anything to do with the invention of the technique is misleading; the MOL was not invented by a poet faced with too much written material, nor was its development driven by the spread of ink, parchment, literacy, and libraries.[173] If we are to use the lexicon of memory in relation to the transmission of early Greek written poetry, then conceptualising the texts of poets as vehicles of that transmission is probably best done through the theoretical framework of communicative and cultural memory.[174] There is no evidence, however, that the MOL was utilised by poets or storytellers to preserve and then disseminate their texts in poetic or any other form, and we should avoid framing *memoria artificiosa* as a mechanism of cultural transmission. Oral poetry certainly demonstrates features that render it memorable and the 'mnemonics of poetry' are a worthy subject of study in their own right, but they concern structures of language – of formulae and scripts and meter and sound – rather than the imaginary visual constructs, the *imagines* and *loci*, of the

[172] The question of *why* Mnemosyne, Memory, was originally installed as mother of the Muses (and hence the Arts) is an interesting one: see e.g. Ahearne-Kroll (2014) 103-6; Castagnoli and Ceccarelli (2019) 9-12, 17-20. My own view is that the Mnemosyne-Muse link probably originated with ritual invocations of the goddess, performed to confer rights of authoritative speech onto the invoker – be he poet, priest, or judge – as a guardian of orally-transmitted knowledge: we are thus straying into the realms of communicative and cultural memory.

[173] Per Small's chronology: see my summary, p. 65-6.

[174] À la Agócs, who starts from the premise that early poetic texts were defined by their role in a 'culture of memory' based on the spoken word, and that poets who composed in writing (e.g. Pindar) continued 'the ancient ideology of song as commemoration and memorialisation': Agócs (2019) 69-71 (quoted p. 69).

MOL.[175] The MOL was, from the outset, the province of rhetoricians and orators. That is not to say rhetoricians and orators were uninterested in what rendered poetic language memorable – they were heavily invested in discovering what made some linguistic constructions intrinsically more memorable than others. Ancient orators, like modern speechwriters and advertisers, wanted their words to stick in the minds of the audience. But slogans are no substitute for substance. Sometimes orators needed to talk in prose, to move systematically through a series of topics, making their own arguments or refuting their opponent's arguments one-by-one. To help them remember the structure and arrangement of those arguments, the MOL was devised.

The MOL combined two groups of mnemonic techniques in what eventually came to be a standardised set of rules. The first group involved the principles of associative mnemonics – that is, the simple association of words, objects, or abstract concepts with mental images. Associative mnemonics were employed by Sophists at least as far back as the era of Hippias; our earliest evidence is probably the *Dissoi logoi*. The second group of techniques might be described collectively as 'τόποι-mnemonics' – by which I mean techniques based on the principle that the incorporation of place and space into simple associative mnemonics can improve the retention of mnemonic content dramatically. When Aristotle was writing on natural memory, some of his contemporaries appear to have been using some form of τόποι-mnemonics. The fact that there is a large blank area in the left (blue) portion of Fig. 3, however, which would otherwise feature individuals who are key to our understanding of how τόποι-mnemonics developed, demonstrates the sparseness and uncertainty of our evidence for artificial mnemonics in this period.

At some point after the two groups of mnemonic techniques described above were fused into what we now know as the fully-fledged MOL, a system of instruction was devised. The result was a standardised set of rules designed for pedagogic dissemination in the rhetorical schools of the late second and early first centuries BCE – the set of rules for the creation of *imagines* and *loci* that we see in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Our understanding of where and why this set of rules emerged can be supplemented by turning to the philosophical models of *memoria naturalis* presented in the middle (green) portion of Fig. 3. The analogy of memory as a wax block or tablet, which influenced both Plato and Aristotle, was adopted and adapted by multiple later philosophical schools. Eventually, when it came to

[175] The intrinsically memorable features of meter are discussed by Aristotle, *Rh.* 3.1409b. For other examples of memorable poetic structures, see Rubin (1995) Ch. 9 (Homeric epic), Ch. 10 (counting-out rhymes).

the place of memory within philosophy and rhetoric, a divergence appears to have occurred, between the Stoics, who excluded artificial memory from their conceptualisation of rhetoric, and the Academic Sceptics, who gradually incorporated it into their teaching. Certain Sceptics, like Charmadas of Athens, believed all rhetorical disciplines should be well-grounded on proper philosophical principles. Consequently Charmadas, as illustrated in Fig. 3, was most likely influenced by, and had influence upon, conceptualisations of both *memoria naturalis* and *memoria artificiosa*. The Sceptics' insistence that rhetorical precepts be preceded by philosophical knowledge may have led them to invoke theoretical concepts – the wax tablet, the mind's eye, the *ars/natura* axiom – to explain and justify the rules for the creation of *loci* and *imagines* in the MOL.

As for the development and incorporation of architectural elements into the MOL, with *loci* featuring rooms, columns, and corners, although we have no evidence for them in Greek texts, there is no reason to suppose that they were unique to a Latin codification.[176] Most probably, these 'architectural' *loci* developed as a logical extension of the rules for the creation of *loci*, which the Auctor explains using the concept of the mind's eye: to be perceived properly, mental objects, just like physical objects, had to be placed at an appropriate distance, in an uncluttered environment, in good light, and so on. For mnemonists, fabricating imaginary architecture that possessed these 'Goldilocks' properties, rather than relying on their own memories of real places that possessed them by chance, would have been an obvious step.

Further, the role of individual mnemonists in the development of the MOL should not be overlooked. It seems likely that the evolution of mnemonic techniques was iterative, each mnemonist adopting, discarding, adapting, or elaborating the techniques developed by previous practitioners to create more sophisticated techniques, or techniques designed for a specific purpose, just as modern-day mnemonists adapt and develop their techniques today.[177] This iterative developmental process created hybrid offshoots of the MOL that were utilised by some practitioners but dropped by others, such as Metrodorus' complex zodiac-mnemonics. Accordingly, in the case of the MOL, recognising that spatial associations can

[176] Cf. Baroin (2007) 135-60, who sees something uniquely Roman in the architectural vocabulary sometimes attached to *loci* in Latin sources, chiefly Quintilian; yet even Quintilian states that there is no requirement for *loci* to include architectural elements, and an *iter longum* or other imaginary *regiones* will suffice (see Quint. *Inst.* 11.2.20-1). Regardless, in the absence of Hellenistic mnemonic treatises, the contention is ultimately unprovable.

[177] Foer (2011) 165-6.

improve mnemonic retention of *imagines* may have led practitioners to place *imagines* in an individual *locus*; then, to string together multiple *loci* to improve sequential recall; then, to develop detailed rules for creating those *loci* with optimal dimensions and for populating them with memorable features; and so on and so forth, with the result that multiple iterations of personalised mnemonic methods were produced and, at various points, there existed a range of *artes memoriae*. It is probable that Metrodorus' zodiac-mnemonics, as one of these *artes memoriae*, coexisted alongside multiple different variations of less complex *loci*-mnemonics that were being used by contemporaneous rhetoricians. The *ars memoriae* that we know as the MOL thus represents the codified result of generations of practitioners reiterating and developing what they knew had worked before.[178]

As for the question of exactly when the final codification of the MOL occurred, circumstantial evidence points towards the end of the second century BCE, around the same time as Charmadas and Metrodorus were building their reputations as innovators in the discipline. Such a dating is compelling, but ultimately speculative. The Sceptical Academy, through the incorporation of current rhetorical teaching practices into its philosophical method, provided the intellectual environment to make such developments possible; this does not mean that they occurred. Nevertheless, with the fusion of natural and artificial, the pedagogic codification of the MOL was complete. This codification laid the groundwork for subsequent Latin treatments of *memoria artificiosa*, including those in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and *De oratore*.[179]

It is worth stressing, for a final time, that our perception of the developing conceptualisation of *memoria* as *ars* is, by and large, Cicero's.[180] Although Simonides' reputation as a mnemonist no doubt existed beforehand, the invocation of Simonides to justify rules that had previously been explained via the wax tablet metaphor, the *ars/natura* axiom, and so on, represents a Ciceronian innovation. The picture we have of the development of the MOL in the second century, populated by figures such as Charmadas and

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[178] Interestingly, Cicero (via Crassus) posits a similar iterative model for the development of the rules of the *ars dicendi* at large: Cic. *De or.* 1.107-9.

[179] Calboli hypothesises that Marcus Antonius' rhetorical *libellus* may also have dealt with all five subdisciplines, including *memoria*. He argues that many elements connect the historical Antonius to the Auctor *ad Herennium*, including their treatments of *memoria artificiosa* and their (inferred) preference for the philosophical principles of Academic Scepticism. His arguments are not unproblematic but, if the Auctor did prefer the philosophy of the Academic Sceptics, it may add weight to the idea that his codification of the MOL was drawn at least in part from Sceptical rhetoric. See Calboli (1972) 120-77, esp. 144-9.

[180] Wisse even believes that the innovative brand of 'philosophical rhetoric' Cicero attributes to Charmadas and Philo was, in fact, largely his own: see Wisse (2002b) 396-7.

Metrodorus, is Ciceronian. The very events of Crassus' and Antonius' lives, concerning their visits to Athens, Asia, and their studies with Charmadas and Metrodorus, could (for all we know) be Ciceronian inventions.[181] As Long puts it, reflecting more broadly on Cicero's rendering of the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, Philo, and Antiochus: 'It all fits together a bit too well'.[182] As the format of Fig. 3 on the next page suggests, one of the main results of the analysis presented in this chapter – perhaps even the most important – is the introduction of complexity into that satisfyingly-coherent, but probably misleading, Ciceronian chronology. If we are to understand how the MOL was utilised in practice, we must do away with Cicero's Simonidean invention and see the MOL for what it really was: a sophisticated mnemonic system designed to aid a speaker when memorising either the main talking points of his own speech prior to delivery (to aid what remained a largely improvised performance) or the main points of an opponent's speech during delivery (in order that he might produce a targeted response). To this end, the next chapter moves away from the theory of *memoria artificiosa* to examine how the technique was used by orators in practice, in the fora of late-republican Rome.

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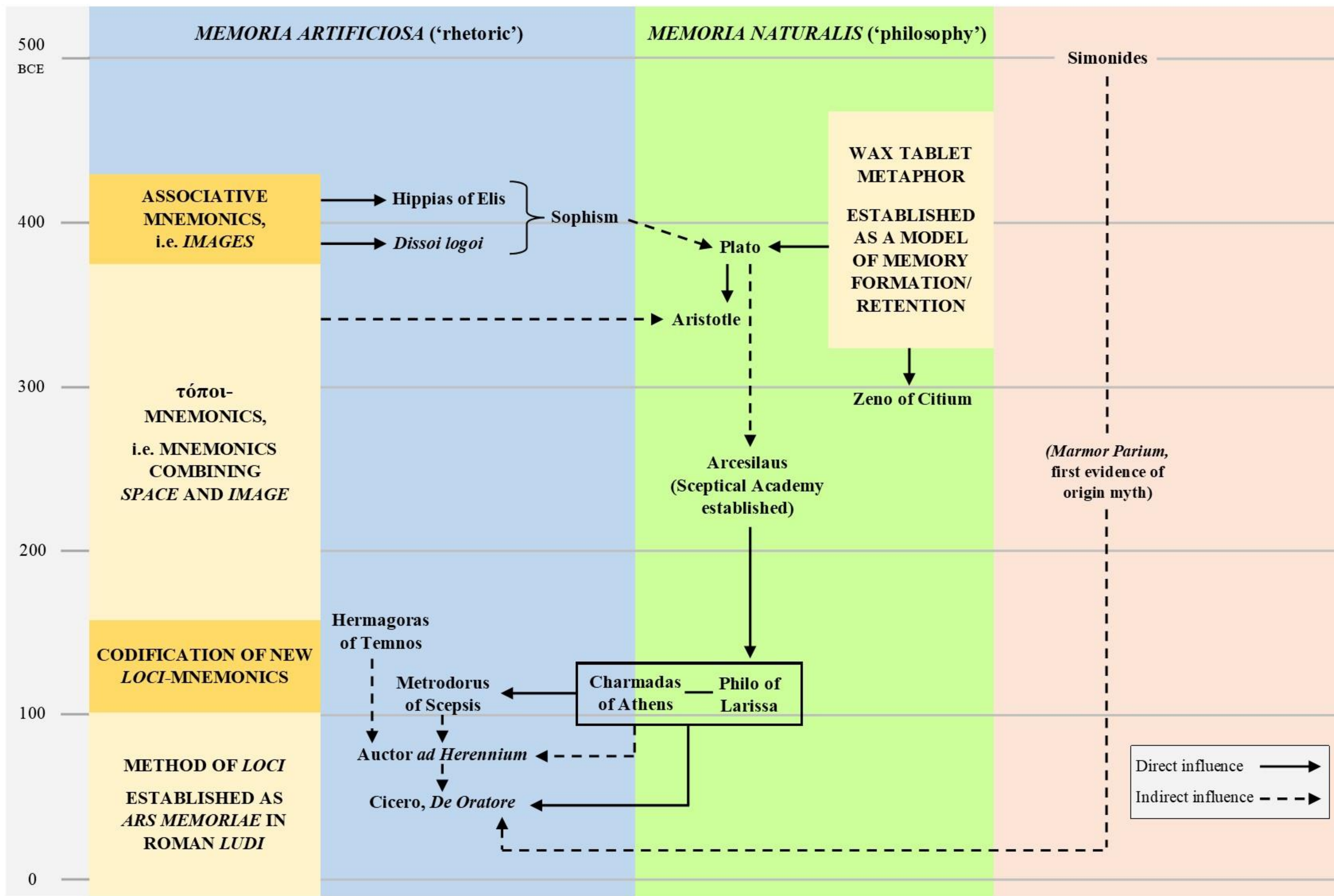
[181] May and Wisse (2001) 17-8 raise this possibility.

[182] Long (2006) 305.

Fig. 3 The development of *memoria artificiosa* (all date ranges approximate)



III

Memory in the forensic process

The first two chapters of this thesis explored how the theory of *memoria artificiosa* developed to meet the didactic requirements of rhetoricians and the practical needs of orators. This chapter shifts focus away from theory to the MOL in practice, examining the role of memory in the activities of late-republican orators. It explores the utilisation of mnemonic skills (natural and/or artificial) in the practical business of oratory, in the preparation of speeches before trial and in the performance of speeches during trial.[1] Accordingly, I divide the 'forensic process' into two stages: first, the preparation phase, when the orator was compiling his arguments and composing his speech outside of the forum; and second, the trial phase, when he was delivering a pre-prepapost reditumred speech and/or devising a response speech to counter his opposition live in front of an audience.

Cicero provides our main evidence of how various orators utilised their mnemonic skills as they dealt with these two phases; as becomes clear from works such as *Brutus* and (to a lesser extent) *De oratore*, there was a considerable diversity of approach. Nevertheless, common themes emerge. The MOL was implemented by some (though by no means all) orators in the late Republic in various specific instances, at least one of which – when an orator executed the MOL while his opponent was speaking – has so far gone unrecognised in modern scholarship. Outside of the forum, during the preparation phase, there are two basic scenarios in which the MOL was used: the commonly cited scenario involved an orator encoding prepared material in his memory for a set-piece speech; but there are some indications that an orator may have utilised the MOL in other instances, when he was talking to his *cliens* or a witness, to memorise key facts for later reference. Not dissimilarly, inside the forum during the trial phase, two uses of the MOL are apparent: the first, again well-known, was when the orator was in the act of delivering a speech, to retrieve pre-prepared material from his memory; the second was when he was listening to witness testimony and the arguments of his opposition, to memorise the key points for a subsequent largely improvised response and/or refutation.

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[1] I deal here with forensic speeches. The different demands of speaking before the senate or *contio* may have led to different approaches, notably greater utilisation of prepared statements and less improvisation: for senatorial speeches, see below, p. 125-7; for contional speeches, Mouritsen (2013) 63-82.

We might add a third phase to the typical forensic process in addition to the two outlined above: namely, 'publication', the process by which the orator set down the individual words of his speech for circulation to a wider audience (which of course includes us).[2] Although I have considered the role of memory, broadly defined, in this phase in some depth, I do not discuss it in this chapter for several reasons. First, space and scope: *memoria artificiosa* was of little use during the publication phase, whether the orator had used the MOL to memorise the broad outline of his speech during the preparation phase or not. During the writing-up process, the emphasis switched from an orator's own mnemonic capacity to consideration of what the audience had found most memorable about his speech, as well as how the orator wanted the speech to be remembered (or, indeed, forgotten) by a wider audience in the long term.[3] These are fascinating areas of study, but do not concern the exercise of mnemonic theory in practice; rather, they relate to the transformation of a live performance into text. A second reason is simply that the publication phase has long been the most studied stage of forensic oratory, with many scholars addressing the thorny question of the extent to which the words in certain oratorical speeches, almost exclusively Cicero's, reflect those that were delivered live.[4] Even though the publication phase was not necessarily one that orators typically undertook (Cicero gives us a list of reasons why other orators did not pursue his own practices of publication), paucity of evidence means that less work has been devoted to the preparation and trial phases of the forensic process.[5]

My contention is that *memoria* was, like *actio*, an inherently performative discipline, unique because it had necessarily to be enacted both before and during the performance of a speech.[6] Consequently, focussing on how *memoria* enabled and aided an orator's preparation

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[2] I use the anachronistic 'publication' as convenient shorthand for writing-up and circulation. Starr advises that the term's unavoidable modern implications mean it should never be used: Starr (1987) 215, n. 18. I tend to agree, but an alternative is yet to catch on. For what it meant to 'publish' a speech, see Crawford (1984) 2 and Phillips (1986) 228.

[3] We see this shift in focus in Cicero's written speeches. For recent book-length studies on Cicero's apparent desire for *memoria sempiterna*, an 'everlasting posthumous reputation', see Bishop (2019), esp. Ch. 6 and Conclusion; and La Bua (2019), esp. Ch. 1. For further thoughts, see my 'Concluding remarks', p. 191-2.

[4] Contributions to this debate include Humbert (1925), esp. 13-20; Stroh (1975) 31-54; Lintott (2008) 15-32. There are many more. I highlight Alexander, however, who notes the role that memory played in Cicero's process of 'reconstructing' a speech post-delivery: Alexander (2002) 15-26, esp. 19.

[5] Cic. *Brut.* 91-2. Crawford enumerates 80 extant, fragmentary, and lost Ciceronian speeches versus 83 unpublished: see Crawford (1984) 11, with broader discussion p. 1-21.

[6] Although we might also expect orators to have rehearsed gesture and movement pre-trial. Balbo approaches the discipline of *actio* in a similar fashion to this chapter, likewise emphasising the diversity of late-republican practice: see Balbo (2018) 227-246.

and delivery can provide additional insights into the practical stages of the forensic process that cannot be gleaned from the text of an oration, however complete. In current scholarship, it is not unreasonably assumed that the advice given by Quintilian in the late first century CE holds good for orators of the Ciceronian period also.[7] That advice highlights the important mediating role of *memoria* in the process of moving from preparation to trial: crucial parts of speeches, says Quintilian, especially the openings, should be written out and memorised for delivery; as for the rest, it should be planned as fully as practicable, while leaving plenty of room for possible improvisation, as circumstances dictate.[8] But what and how much material, exactly, did the orator memorise before a trial? And how did he prepare himself, while listening to the speeches of his opponents in the forum, to deliver a largely improvised response?

1. The preparation phase

For a Roman orator, the preparation phase of the forensic process lasted from the moment he took on a case to the commencement of his first speech at trial.[9] As well as collecting the relevant facts, he would work out what he was going to say using methods outlined by the preparative rhetorical subdisciplines: *inventio* ('invention', the discovery of arguments), *dispositio*, ('arrangement', the structure of the speech), and *elocutio* ('linguistic style', the type of language to be used in the speech).[10] He may also have planned and rehearsed his delivery, *actio*, which encompassed both modulation of the voice and movement of the body.[11] Consequently, to retain all of this extensive preparative work in his mind, ready for trial, the orator relied upon memory, whether natural or artificial, meaning that the preparation phase also involved a significant amount of mnemonic encoding. In what follows, I first investigate the type and quantity of material that an orator typically had to memorise pre-trial, as well as asking how much of that material (if any) was written. Second, I examine whether there is any evidence to suggest that some late-republican orators flouted forensic

[7] E.g. Small (2007) 203, Alexander (2002) 16-7.

[8] Quint. *Inst.* 10.7.30.

[9] For procedural details of forensic trials, from the bringing of charges to the structure of the trial itself, see Alexander (2002) 7-8.

[10] For definitions, see May and Wisse (2001) 29-38. It should be emphasised that *elocutio* refers to the 'style' of the orator's spoken language, rather than written style: see Kirchner (2007) 181-94.

[11] See Hall (2007) 218-34.

'best practice' by composing a written speech and reading from a script aloud, rather than relying on memory. Finally, I consider two of Cicero's exemplary orators, Crassus and Antonius, and how their ostensibly superior mnemonic abilities are depicted as enhancing their oratory overall.

1.a. How did an orator prepare for his speech?

I begin my discussion of the preparation phase with a story Cicero tells us about Servius Sulpicius Galba, who, with only one day to prepare for a case, stayed up all night and continued working until the last possible minute *cum servis litteratis*, to whom he would dictate his thoughts in turn. His enslaved assistants emerged exhausted, while Galba himself went on to perform at trial with the same passionate intensity that he had displayed during preparation.[12] Galba's method is highlighted as atypical because he got so worked up while preparing the case, rather than saving himself for the forum.[13] The incident suggests that the preparation phase was ideally construed as one of considered deliberation. Indeed, the verbs commonly used by Cicero to denote the activities undertaken in this period, such as *commentari* and the closely-related *meditari* or *cogitare*, imply as much – the preparative process was not one of emotion-driven action but of mental reflection, during which an orator might gather his resources rather than expend them.[14]

As for the activities pursued during the preparation phase, the distinction between verbs like *meditari* and *cogitare* on the one hand and *commentari* on the other, while by no means a strict or exclusive one, is broadly indicative of two different preparative modes, the former relating to mental preparation and the latter including some written element: that is to say, in an oratorical context, *commentari* implies the production of preparatory *commentarii*.[15] The nature of these *commentarii*, which we might rather vaguely refer to as

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[12] *Brut.* 85-8. Galba's oratorical style was notorious for playing on the emotions of his audience: see *Brut.* 89-90 and *De or.* 3.28, plus commentary on the latter passage in Leeman, Pinkster, and Wisse (1996) 161. Notably, Cicero says Galba's case-winning passion was not evident from his published orations: *Brut.* 91-4. For Galba's fragmentary orations, see ORF^3 109-15.

[13] Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.55: Cicero always maintains his inner calm(!).

[14] Both *commentari* and *meditari* are used in the Galba passage. As well as denoting preparation, they are sometimes used in the context of regular extra-forensic practice exercises: e.g. [*Hortensius*] *meditaretur extra forum*, *Brut.* 302; *magister hic Samnitium* […] *cotidie commentatur*, *De or.* 3.86. See also discussion of the use of *commentatur* in the Galba passage in Leeman, Pinkster, and Wisse (1996) 296.

[15] The TLL, s.v. 1. *commentor* 1.a-b, lists *meditari* (alongside *comminisci*, *commemorare*, etc.) to define *commentari* (hence, it is comparable with Greek μελετάω). I would argue, however, that many of the

'preparatory material', is important when it comes to the question of what precisely an orator would write down and subsequently memorise during the preparation phase.[16] Did a *commentarius* include complete paragraphs of a speech, or only the briefest of notes? As discussed in the first two chapters, there is a big difference between attempting to memorise a complete speech verbatim and memorising the outline, the main 'headers' or 'topics': the latter is a task for which the rhetorical MOL is ideally suited; the former is not.

A little too much emphasis has, I think, been put on the idea that cases were worked out in great detail *in writing* before trial in the republican period. Although various oratorical *commentarii* from the late Republic survived into the Principate, they tend to be overshadowed by the now lost *commentarii* of Cicero, which were probably circulated after his death.[17] If we trust Quintilian's report that Cicero's *commentarii* contained 'especially the essentials and, at the very least, the introductions' (*maxime necessaria et utique initia*) for his speeches, we might envision a wide range of written material in these texts, from one-word reminders, to carefully-crafted phrases, to multiple opening sentences.[18] Asconius, who also had access to Cicero's *commentarii*, supports this notion with the suggestion that they might sometimes include a *principium* (a 'preface', in some form or other).[19] Cicero's *commentarii* certainly did not resemble anything approaching complete scripts – those were composed after delivery, if at all.[20]

Quintilian does recommend the budding orator compose speeches more fully in writing, but not in order to memorise them; the purpose is (perhaps counterintuitively) to improve his facility for improvised expression when speaking extempore (*Inst.* 10.7.28-33). Without wanting to repeat my discussion of Quintilian's discourse on *cogitatio* in *Inst.* 10 (see Ch. I, p. 34-5), in the context of written versus mental preparation, it is worth highlighting that when Quintilian returns to the theme of *cogitatio* in *Inst.* 11, he highlights how written composition is an inefficient method of preparing for a speech (11.2.10).

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subsequently cited instances of Ciceronian usage certainly indicate the production of something written, esp. *Brut.* 87, 305, and *Fam.* 12.2.1. Cf. TLL s.v. *meditor* I.B1.a.

[16] The written works Latin authors referred to as *commentarii* are many and varied: I refer to the oratorical *commentarius*, which falls within the categories defined at TLL s.v. *commentarius* I.B1-2.

[17] For Tiro's conjectured role in the publication of Cicero's *commentarii* (among other works), see McDermott (1972b) 277-86.

[18] Quint. *Inst.* 10.7.30-1.

[19] Asc. *Tog. cand.* 87C. Text: Clark (1907).

[20] See Cic. *Brut.* 91, *pleraeque enim scribuntur orationes habitae iam, non ut habeantur*; also, *Tusc.* 4.55, *cum iam rebus transactis et praeteritis orationes scribimus…* (text: Fohlen (1931)).

Quintilian advises nothing be written that is not to be memorised; and, if longer chunks of prose *must* be memorised verbatim, he states that the MOL is of little use and that less sophisticated techniques, mainly rote repetition, work best (11.2.23-8). Ultimately, while confessing that he does not personally possess the strongest natural mnemonic capacities, Quintilian asserts that if he had enough time to devote to *memoria*, written preparation would be rendered entirely unnecessary (11.2.39, 11.2.45). Thus, we observe again how rhetorical *memoria* is designed to liberate the orator from written scripts both prior to and during his oratorical performance. Finally, Quintilian stresses that during delivery the orator must avoid at all costs the appearance that he has written out a speech and learnt it by rote beforehand (11.2.46-7).

To return to the late Republic, the advice given by the Auctor *ad Herennium* is essentially in agreement. As discussed in the first chapter (p. 23-4), although the Auctor gives an extremely laboured explanation of how one might theoretically go about memorising a single line of poetry verbatim using the MOL, he makes three things clear: first, we must rely on *ingenium*, natural ability, more than on *ars* to memorise passages word-for-word; second, even if we use the MOL, it will not work unless combined with rote repetition; and third, *memoria verborum* is of little use in the forum.[21] Cicero likewise denotes *memoria rerum* (in the form of the MOL) as the orator's special skill, in opposition to *memoria verborum*.[22] This observation, that the MOL was considered the most useful memorisation technique for the practical business of speechmaking and of little use for memorising text verbatim, is itself a good indication that the amount of text late-republican orators typically memorised was extremely limited and, hence, that relatively few words of their eventual speeches were composed in advance.[23]

Such a conclusion is further supported by the evidence we have for the contents of *commentarii* produced by orators other than Cicero. Quintilian tells us that there exist other *commentarii* 'found by chance, just as the orator had composed them before he was about to speak' (*inventi forte, ut eos dicturus quisque composuerat*); he distinguishes the *commentarii* of the republican orator Servius Sulpicius Rufus from these chance discoveries on the

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[21] *Rhet. Her.* 3.34, 3.39.

[22] Cic. *De or.* 2.359.

[23] Cf. McDonnell (1996) 489: 'Roman orators were often called upon to memorize long passages or whole speeches verbatim'. The passages cited by McDonnell (from the Auctor, Quintilian, and the elder Seneca) fail to support this statement, since they all refer to exercises of rote memorisation undertaken by boys and young men in the *ludus*, not by professional orators.

grounds that they appear so 'finished' (*exacti*) they must be the product of revision post-delivery, collected in a book for posterity.[24] A typical *commentarius*, by contrast, was brief, undeveloped, and unpolished.

I note that, although we have no proper surviving examples of oratorical *commentarii* from the late Republic, it seems likely the practice of producing them was carried over into the imperial period, though it was no doubt transformed somewhat outside of the forensic sphere by the growing popularity of declamation. This hypothesis is borne out by the production of collections of eminently-quotable material such as the elder Seneca's *Controversiae* and *Suasoriae*.[25] In his preface to these declamatory extracts, Seneca laments the lack of *commentarii maximorum declamatorum* – by which he means the preparatory notes produced by the great declaimers included in his collection, a number of whom were respected orators of the late Republic in their own right.[26] These speakers presumably continued the practice of preparing their speeches with *commentarii* and, like their earlier counterparts, most saw no good reasons to publish. As a result, Seneca took it upon himself to collect memorable sayings, witticisms, and *sententiae* of all forms from these speakers, as they were recorded during or after delivery, in a manner not dissimilar to Sulpicius Rufus, who collected his rough *commentarii* and worked them up post-delivery into polished oratorical gems. Both he, and later the elder Seneca, thus attempted to provide something more than a cursory *commentarius* for posterity, a work that possessed literary worth – or (if that is too grand) at least a work that others considered worth reading for pedagogic purposes.

In this connection, to posit an earlier example of a *commentarius* that underwent such a transformation from rough notes to polished extracts, I turn to the remnants of an oration delivered in 106 in defence of the *lex Servilia* (a law aimed at abolishing the exclusive right of *equites* to act as *iudices* in certain courts) by Cicero's former mentor and role model, Lucius Licinius Crassus, whom Cicero set on a pedestal as the orator *par excellence* of his generation.[27] A good deal has been written about this speech, especially since Cicero, in the

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[24] Quint. *Inst.* 10.7.30-1.

[25] For the increasing popularity of declamation in this period, see Bloomer (2007) 297-300.

[26] Sen. *Contr.* 1.pr.11. The careers of the Senecan orators-cum-declaimers are discussed in turn by Bornecque (1902).

[27] Cicero states that he and his brother were educated by Crassus' favoured instructors and had frequent interactions with Crassus, since they were often at his home: *De or.* 2.1-3. We may, however, doubt the extent of this interaction, given that Crassus died before Cicero was sixteen. For the surviving fragments of Crassus' orations, see ORF^3 237-59; for a summary of Crassus' career, Steel (2007) 242-3; and for Crassus as Cicero's personal role model, van der Blom (2010) 226-30, 251-4.

Brutus, tells us it was so celebrated that it was preserved and used as a model text, *quasi magistra*.[28] Yet, it seems that even this exemplary speech was only partially recorded: much was left out, as Cicero infers 'from certain headers, which are set down but not developed' (*ex quibusdam capitibus expositis nec explicatis*).[29] It is possible that the text simply represented Crassus' preparatory material, circulated post-trial. Alternatively, Crassus may have undertaken to polish the text, choosing which *capita* to develop more fully.[30] Hence, the circulated text would represent a fleshed-out *commentarius*, containing the juiciest sections of the speech, while the original preparatory material only contained the barest bones – those *capita*, maybe, and nothing more. Another possibility is that the initial circulation of the speech was beyond Crassus' control – perhaps some eager listener got hold of the original *commentarius* and elaborated it with highlights heard in person. This seems less likely but, again, would imply a minimalistic *commentarius*. Yet another (more remote) alternative is the expansion of Crassus' original *commentarius* as a rhetorical exercise by a third party who had not heard the original; this possibility is conceivable if, as Cicero claims, the *commentarius* was being used as a teaching text.

As Cicero continues his lament for the fact that Crassus wrote so little, he tells us that another speech, the significant attack that Crassus had made during his censorship against his fellow censor Domitius, 'is not a speech, but hardly any more than, as it were, the headers for talking points and the *commentarius* of the speech' (*non est oratio, sed quasi capita rerum et orationis commentarium paulo plenius*).[31] This assessment reinforces the idea that Crassus typically composed very little in writing before delivering an oration, and we must conclude that his *commentarii* were customarily skeletal, mere lists of talking points. Much of Crassus' preparatory work was presumably conducted mentally; his approach is a good illustration of

[28] Cic. *Brut.* 164. Cicero's Brutus has a lower opinion of the speech, although Cicero reasserts its merits: *Brut.* 296-8. Fantham asserts that the text was being 'circulated and memorized among student orators': Fantham (2004) 27. The speech was clearly controversial and influential (see Morstein-Marx (2004) 235-7), but I see no evidence of widespread memorisation, unless we count the various fragments quoted by Cicero – and he could have been consulting a copy.

[29] Cic. *Brut.* 163-4.

[30] Interestingly, Pliny seems to have concluded, from the existence of undeveloped *tituli* in a number of Ciceronian speeches (including *Pro Murena* and the now-lost *Pro Vareno*), that Cicero sometimes omitted chunks of his speeches in a not dissimilar fashion, although there are certainly other plausible explanations: see Plin. *Ep*. 1.20.7, and Dyck (2012) 54. My own view is that Cicero was on rather the opposite end of the spectrum to Crassus – if Cicero decided a speech was worth circulating post-delivery, instead of releasing a revised *commentarius*, he generally elaborated every talking point fully (unless there were good reasons for omission).

[31] Cic. *Brut.* 164.

why we should not attach too much weight to Cicero's own habits of post-delivery publication, nor assume orators memorised chunks of material in the preparation phase.

To sum up, in the republican period oratorical *commentarii* were generally the roughest of notes – key words and simple reminders of what to talk about. These notes served essentially the same purpose as the *imagines* in the MOL, but in written form. They acted as mnemonic triggers. We might envision an orator transforming the bullet points contained in his *commentarius* into *imagines* and subsequently memorising them using the MOL: whether a given orator did this was, however, no doubt a case of training, personal preference, and individual mnemonic skill. Cicero gives us several examples of orators who clearly did make use of the MOL during the preparation phase; but before introducing them, I want to briefly consider the alternative possibility, that an orator might sometimes deliver his speech with text in hand.

1.b. The alternative to the MOL: composing a script

The question of whether an orator in the late Republic would ever write a script and then read it aloud before his audience has provoked considerable debate in relation to Cicero himself, and to one speech in particular: *Post reditum in senatu*. At *Pro Plancio* 74, Cicero cites *Red. sen.* as evidence that he had publicly declared the depth of his gratitude to Plancius (who was standing trial accused of electoral corruption) for the help that Plancius had given him when he was in exile. Cicero makes the following key statement: 'Let the speech be read aloud – a speech that, because of the importance of the affair, was delivered from a script' (*recitetur oratio quae propter rei magnitudinem dicta de scripto est*).[32] The implication seems clear: here is a situation where we know Cicero wrote out a speech in full beforehand and recited it word-for-word on delivery. Bücher and Walter, however, have argued both on textual grounds, and on the grounds that a script would have constrained Cicero's ability to speak freely, that Cicero never performed 'mit Manuskript'.[33] Vössing, in direct response, has explicitly rejected their thesis, arguing that Cicero mentions this instance when he read from a script precisely because it was exceptional; it only happened once, in a crucial period after

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[32] The statement refers directly to *Red. sen.* 35. For the phrase *de scripto*, cf. *Phil.* 10.5, where Cicero criticises Q. Fufius for a statement he read from a script in the senate. The bibliography on *Planc.* is extensive: see Grillo (2014) 216, n. 8.

[33] Bücher and Walter (2006) 237-40.

his return from exile.[34] I tend to agree – *Red. sen.* was a set-piece speech, Cicero's 'comeback moment' in the senate, while the occasion and setting afforded him the chance to perform an epideictic oration of the highest polish (although we obviously cannot rule out the idea that he used a text on other equally stage-managed occasions).

We are still left with the question of why Cicero did not memorise the script word-for-word as, given enough time, he presumably could have done. I have no answer, only a possible analogy. It is common practice for modern politicians to circulate the text of a speech pre-delivery and to then deliver it using a teleprompter. If they are not going to use a teleprompter, preparing a full written version of their speech in advance is (as certain high-profile mishaps have illustrated) unwise, since as and when that written version is released or leaked to the press, deviations or (worse) major omissions will be noticed.[35] The politician's mnemonic failings become the story, rather than the content of the speech. Walters has suggested that Cicero pre-circulated the contional oration *Post reditum ad populum*.[36] We should not rule out the possibility that Cicero did the same with the corresponding senatorial speech, *Red. sen.*, to stoke anticipation and for the benefit of those senators who could not attend on the day. A pre-circulated text would have enabled Cicero to broadcast his return to the political stage as widely as possible in advance, while eliminating any delay between delivery and 'publication'.[37] As in the modern political scenario, however, a pre-circulated text could also have drawn attention to any deviations or omissions, even if (as in the case of the gratitude Cicero expressed to Plancius) they were minor. The need to avert such pitfalls on this rare and highly-anticipated occasion may have prompted Cicero to speak from a script.

Further, to return to a less speculative line of reasoning, in the context of Cicero's defence of Plancius, the broader argument at *Planc.* 74 would be completely undermined if *Red. sen.* had in fact only been written up after delivery. Cicero references the earlier speech in the senate as evidence precisely because it bears witness to the exact words of a public declaration. Hence, as evidence, the reference can only have been probative if Cicero's

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[34] Vössing (2008) 143-50

[35] The plight of Ed Miliband, lambasted for stilted delivery and forgetting the national deficit in a 'memorised' speech of 2014, provides a suitably cautionary *exemplum*: see Wintour (2014) and Watt *et al.* (2014).

[36] Walters makes this suggestion during an interesting attempt to explain inconsistencies in the speech that seem to suggest it was never delivered: Walters (2017) 79-99.

[37] Mouritsen thinks it likely that Cicero would have desired to avoid delays in the circulation of his post-consular speeches too: Mouritsen (2013) 66.

listeners knew that *Red. sen.* represented a premeditated version of the speech, rather than a published revision, which may have included additional votes of thanks that had originally gone unvoiced. If it were widely known that *Red. sen.* had been delivered extempore and its contents revised before publication, Cicero would have opened himself up to accusations of falsification or disingenuousness. Indeed, considerable importance was attached to the difference between what one was willing to say in public and what one wrote down for subsequent circulation. Take the case of the orator Asinius Pollio (a notorious detractor of Cicero, even after Cicero's death): in the revised and published version of his speech *Pro Lamia*, Pollio apparently included the statement that Cicero had been willing to renounce the *Philippics*, yet he had been too afraid to tell such a barefaced lie when delivering the same speech at trial.[38] This incident illustrates how an orator could include all kinds of statements, however controversial, in the published version of a speech, which he had not uttered in the original, with few (if any) immediate consequences. The process of revising an oration delivered extempore in the forum allowed, effectively, for the subtle massaging or reshaping of history because written oratorical composition freed the orator from the possibility of immediate protest or refutation by anyone present. In his argument at *Planc.* 74, Cicero needed to neutralise the possible counterargument that his gratitude towards Plancius was a retroactively applied revision. Consequently, he made sure to highlight the fact that he had departed from his typical preparation-delivery-publication routine in the case of *Post reditum in senatu*.

To move the focus of debate away from *Red. sen.* and back to the forensic sphere, while *Planc.* 74 indicates that Cicero was speaking with a script in the formal environment of the senate, conversely, it suggests that he was speaking extempore when defending Plancius, since the statement is designed to magnify the significance of the earlier senatorial occasion by highlighting Cicero's divergence from his normal (and present) forensic practice. We can glean from Cicero's letters that *Pro Plancio* was only written up for circulation after the event, which all but confirms it was originally delivered *sine scripto*.[39] Here, then, we have an instance of two speeches with very different modes of preparation: one written, and one conducted using *commentarii* and *cogitatio*.

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[38] See Sen. *Suas.* 6.14-5. The date of Pollio's speech is unknown: see Treggiari (1973) 249-51.

[39] Cic. *QFr.* 3.1.11, written September 54 (the exact date of Plancius' trial is unknown, but is estimated at late August/early September: see Marinone (2004) 132, *ad loc.* B9).

As for the difference between speeches composed in writing and those delivered extempore, in *De oratore* Cicero has Crassus tell us that the preparative act of writing out a speech in full will make it strongest, which means written exercises are crucial – but they do not reflect conditions in the forum, where the orator must rely on his extempore speech to carry the day:

> caput autem est quod ut vere dicam minime facimus – est enim magni laboris, quem plerique fugimus – quam plurimum scribere. […] nam si subitam et fortuitam orationem commentatio et cogitatio facile vincit, hanc ipsam profecto adsidua ac diligens scriptura superabit.
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> […] et qui a scribendi consuetudine ad dicendum venit, hanc adfert facultatem, ut etiam subito si dicat, tamen illa quae dicantur similia scriptorum esse videantur; atque etiam, si quando in dicendo scriptum attulerit aliquid, cum ab eo discesserit, reliqua similis oratio consequetur.
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> Cic. *De or.* 1.150; 1.152.
>
> But the principal activity is one that, to tell the truth, we do the least (since it is really hard work, which most [orators] avoid): writing as much as possible. […] For if careful preparation and premeditation easily beat an improvised speech made on the spur of the moment, an assiduous and careful written composition will undoubtedly outclass that premeditated speech.
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> […] And he who comes to make a speech via a habit of writing brings this ability to bear, so that even if he is improvising, nevertheless the words spoken appear much like those written; and further, if he ever makes use of some written text while he is speaking, when he departs from that, the rest of his speech will proceed similarly.

When Cicero delivered the highly stage-managed, set-piece *Red. sen.*, he needed to avoid omissions and to ensure that he expressed gratitude to all who had helped him, so he composed it beforehand. This scenario was unrepresentative of his typical forensic practice.[40] Nevertheless, in the passage above, Cicero recommends that the diligent orator still do plenty of composition practice so that, when giving a typical extempore speech – a scenario in which the orator will rely only on *commentatio et cogitatio* to carry his words – he will instinctively reproduce the superior written style; and if he composes a few choice phrases in writing beforehand, likewise, the rest of the speech will match their tone. This advice is effectively in accordance with Quintilian's, mentioned above, p. 121-2. Yet, as is made clear

[40] For Cicero's perception of the different tone and content required in senatorial (as opposed to forensic) oratory, see Lopez (2013) 291-2.

from Crassus' introductory statement, Cicero did not consider that his advised approach actually reflected the standard practices of his contemporaries. The majority work exclusively on improvisation exercises, which only reinforces their bad habits; the labour involved means written composition is a neglected skill. In other words, most orators tended to prepare by simulating live performance, training themselves to memorise the outline of a speech rather than its minutiae, improvising the details rather than painstakingly writing them out.

For Cicero, then, speaking with a script was a departure from the norm; he resorted to the practice only when he wanted to be witnessed reproducing premeditated texts like *Red. sen.* verbatim. For the initial delivery of a forensic speech in the forum, he could rely on his specific preparation for the case (probably including the production of a *commentarius*) and his rigorous rhetorical training (which included exercises in written composition) to render his improvised words both persuasive and eloquent. By way of an addendum, I note that the perception of speaking with a script appears to have changed somewhat in the early imperial period. At the end of the first century CE, Quintilian, at least, accepts that 'brief annotations and little notebooks' (*brevis adnotatio libellique*) might be held while speaking, to be referred to occasionally (although this still excludes the possibility of recitation from a full script).[41] Whether we can identify a narrower period in which a substantial shift in practice occurred is an open question. According to Suetonius, Augustus was famously reluctant to speak extempore after he came to power, despite being a proficient improviser in his youth. Augustus made it his practice to recite everything from a script, 'so that he might not fall foul of the hazard of memory or waste time learning things by heart' (*ne periculum memoriae adiret aut in ediscendo tempus absumeret*).[42] Did Augustus instigate a trend for watching one's words? The elder Seneca describes the approach of the (eventually exiled) Augustan orator-cum-declaimer Cassius Severus, who never spoke *sine commentario*, and 'was not satisfied with the kind of *commentarius* that contains the bare bones of a case, but used one in which the case is written out more or less in full'.[43] Yet at the same time, when speaking live in a trial scenario, Seneca tells us that Cassius felt quite happy improvising, and in fact spoke at his best when doing so. Why Cassius therefore felt any need to have his *commentarius* to

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[41] Quint. *Inst.* 10.7.31.

[42] Suet. *Aug.* 84.2. Latin text: Kaster (2016).

[43] Sen. *Contr.* 3.pr, quote from 3.pr.6: *nec hoc commentario contentus erat in quo nudae res ponuntur, sed ex maxima parte perscribebatur actio*. Cassius' defamatory writings appear to have made him many enemies. He was apparently tried for *maiestas*, exiled, and had his works burnt (though not every copy was lost), before dying circa 35 CE. See Tac. *Ann.* 1.72, and Rutledge (2002) 89.

hand is a matter for speculation; more significant is the fact that he felt it acceptable to take a substantial *commentarius* with him into the forum in the first place. For Seneca, the practice is neither a target for criticism, nor is it entirely unremarkable. He highlights it as unusual, but it does not in his eyes diminish the other praiseworthy points of Cassius' eloquence.

I have picked Cassius Severus here as an exemplar for the noteworthy reason that Tacitus later identified him as a transitionary figure, who was at the vanguard of the move away from the 'old-fashioned' republican style of oratory to a more directed, purposeful one, which did away with constant digressions and a lack of brevity.[44] It is notable that Tacitus also aligns a change in oratorical practice with the introduction of the *lex Pompeia de vi et ambitu* of 52 BCE, which imposed strict limits on the amount of time for which a defendant or prosecutor could speak; Cicero also highlights this change, explaining how it meant the orator had to prepare and dispatch more cases in a shorter time, a challenge that could only be met by speakers (such as himself and Hortensius) who maintained rigorous discipline and trained constantly.[45] From 52 onwards, therefore, the length of time an orator had to persuade his audience was restricted and, consequently, speeches had to become more direct. With this change in mind, Cassius' habit of having a fuller *commentarius* to hand may even demonstrate that he, like Augustus, simply wanted to stick to the point, to avoid the *periculum memoriae* and the risk of engaging in verbose, time-consuming, circumlocutory meandering, until he recalled and arrived at the next major talking point in his speech.

1.c. Cicero's exemplary orators and superior mnemonic ability

Many of the orators whom Cicero most admires in works such as *Brutus* and *De oratore* are, perhaps by way of deliberate contrast with more mediocre speakers, portrayed as relying on their *memoria* rather than on *commentarii*, *notae*, or *scripta*. We must, of course, remain aware that, at this point, we enter the land of Ciceronian exemplary fiction. Although Eckert puts great faith in Cicero's assurance that the speakers in *De oratore* were presented authentically, given how freely Cicero shaped his interlocutors' views in other dialogues, I see no reason to hold fast to the notion that the text represents 'what each individual would

[44] Tac. *Dial.* 19.

[45] Tac. *Dial.* 38; Cic. *Brut.* 324. The law prescribed a maximum of three hours for the defence and two for the prosecution. For discussion, see van den Berg (2019) 596-7.

have said'.[46] Likewise, Cicero's attribution of superior *memoria* to any given orator in the *Brutus* may, to some extent, represent the manipulation of historical reality to strengthen the overall probative force of an individual exemplar.[47]

Lucius Manlius Torquatus, as portrayed by Cicero's brief character-sketch in the *Brutus*, is a case in point. He provides an example of a speaker who, in Cicero's estimation, could apply his general knowledge and intelligence, including superior (natural) memory, to compensate for a lack of formal training. Cicero states that Torquatus was not someone to whom you would have applied the term *rhetor* but, rather, πολιτικός ('a statesman'); he was still able to make a good speech since he was well-read, he possessed superhuman *memoria*, and his words were extremely powerful and well-chosen.[48] In reality, however, Torquatus' 'amateur' oratory was evidently not good enough to convict Sulla, who was defended successfully by Cicero and Hortensius in 62 BCE.[49] Consequently, if readers of the *Brutus* knew the details of Torquatus' career, they would be drawn to conclude that even noble birth, plentiful natural talent, and superhuman mnemonic ability (*divina memoria*) were not enough to overcome a professionally-trained dream team (consisting, of course, of Hortensius and Cicero himself).

A more complex exemplary model of an orator who relied more on natural talent than on rhetorical technique is Cicero's Crassus, whose character is developed throughout *De oratore*. Crassus' superior *memoria* appears, according to Cicero's portrayal, to be the result more of *natura* than *ars*. Perhaps most notably, Cicero's Antonius groups Crassus with Themistocles, who is said to have rejected the *ars memoriae* entirely on the grounds that his unaided memory was already so powerful that it came close to 'total recall'.[50] This rather suggests that Crassus' *ingenium* was likewise so great that did not need *ars* to enhance his natural ability. When it comes to Crassus' view of the rhetorical *artes* in general, Cicero portrays him as indifferent to Greek theory (*De or.* 2.4) and has him lambast rhetoricians as a group (3.75-6). This is apparently in line with the more conservative actions of the historical

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[46] Eckert (2018) 22-3, esp. n. 20 and 21.

[47] In his introduction to the *Brutus*, Kaster notes that *memoria* generally goes unmentioned in the dialogue 'since it is regarded as a given': Kaster (2020) 13, n. 26. Perhaps this is, generally, true – making the instances when Cicero focusses on *memoria*, discussed in the following sections, all the more interesting. For non-rhetorical usage of the term *memoria* in the *Brutus*, see Gowing (2000) 42-51.

[48] Cic. *Brut.* 265: *erant in eo plurimae litterae [...] divina memoria, summa verborum et gravitas et elegantia*… See also *Fin.* 2.113, where Torquatus' *memoria* is described as *infinita*.

[49] For the historical circumstances of *Pro Sulla*, see Berry (1996) 14-42.

[50] Cic. *De or.* 2.298-300. For Themistocles' exemplary *memoria*, see Ch. IV, p. 172-4.

Crassus, who issued the infamous censorial edict condemning Latin rhetorical *ludi* (see *De or.* 3.93, and Introduction, p. 15-6). Somewhat incongruously, however, the Crassus of *De oratore* elsewhere accepts that rhetorical *praecepta* and *ars*, while requiring a great deal of practice, certainly can be used as a powerful aid to natural talent, especially in the performative subdisciplines of *actio* and *memoria* – and he says he has even (unlike Themistocles) learnt the basic rules of the MOL (1.144-5). This view is more in line with what we know of the fundamentals of Latin rhetorical pedagogy from the 80s onwards, chiefly in relation to the principle that *ars*, although no substitute for *ingenium*, can always enhance *natura*, so long as you are prepared to put in the work.[51]

The ambivalence of Cicero's Crassus towards artificial techniques is encapsulated in a passage at *De or.* 3.74-5. In the same breath as he states that his own *disciplina* was the *forum*, and that his *magister* was *usus et leges et instituta populi Romani mosque maiorum*, he admits that he had a great longing for certain *artes*, only getting a taste of them when he was in Asia, from the brilliant mnemonist Metrodorus of Scepsis no less. In this sense, Cicero wants to have his cake and eat it. His Crassus encapsulates both the proud Roman orator whose natural ability needs no Greek τέχναι and the new wave of practitioners who recognised the utility of those τέχναι. Cicero's Crassus professes to resolve the contradiction as follows:

> petam a vobis, ut ea, quae dicam, non de memet ipso, sed de oratore dicere putetis. ego enim sum is, qui […] non possim dicere me haec, quae nunc complector, perinde ut dicam discenda esse, didicisse…

Cic. *De or.* 3.74.

> I shall ask of you that you consider what I am saying not to be said about me personally, but about the orator generally. For I am myself a man who […] cannot say that he studied these subjects that I am now embracing in the same manner as I shall say they *should* be studied…

Thus, Cicero's Crassus is in no way inferior to the Greeks with their manifold τέχναι, but he does not reject them entirely. To focus on the *ars memoriae* specifically, he does not, like Themistocles, refuse to learn it, and he understands how to use it, yet he proudly epitomises the virtues of aristocratic Roman 'amateurism': because Crassus is exceptional, he can rely on his natural memory instead. Overall, Cicero's portrayal of Crassus as a Roman orator born and bred, a speaker who could rival the greatest Greeks without the aid of *ars*, strengthens his

[51] See e.g. *Rhet. Her.* 3.28-9, 3.40.

overarching argument that the 'ideal orator', whoever he may be, will be a Roman, steeped in Roman virtues, but one who has grasped a diverse range of subjects (many of them 'imported' from the Greek-speaking world), who uses *ars* judiciously to enhance his *ingenium*. Unsurprisingly, Cicero himself seems to fit the bill. Does Cicero's portrayal mean that the historical Crassus was in any way exceptional at using his memory to prepare for his speeches? Naturally, it does not (and if Crassus' *commentarii* were indeed as sparse as suggested on p. 124-5, above, they may not have taken much memorising at all). Nevertheless, the balance Cicero attempts to strike in *De oratore* between wholeheartedly endorsing Greek-inspired mnemonic techniques and maintaining a certain façade of old-school, noble Roman amateurism comes to the fore in his portrayal of Crassus' view of Greek τέχναι, including the *ars memoriae*.

In *De oratore*, Cicero seems to strive for an ideal balance between natural mnemonic talent and technical training: normal orators should not, like the superhuman Themistocles, dismiss *memoria artificiosa* entirely; and even orators of vast natural talent, like Crassus, might wish to learn about and benefit from mnemonic techniques. The balance is illustrated well by his depiction of Marcus Antonius (the consul of 99 BCE), whom he often places alongside, and in juxtaposition with, Crassus.[52] It is through the voice of Antonius that Cicero delivers his exposition of the MOL. At *De or.* 2.350, Antonius rounds off his discussion of the rhetorical subdisciplines *inventio* and *dispositio* and states that he will add something about *memoria*. Cicero's Crassus expresses delight that Antonius has finally exposed himself as an expert practitioner (*artifex*) of mnemonic techniques, stripped bare of the cover of pretence.[53] Thus, by allocating the exegesis of *memoria* to Antonius, Cicero reaffirms his portrayal of Crassus, who is no expert in the rules of the *ars memoriae*, and with Crassus' comment also reveals the most important aspect of his portrayal of Antonius' attitude towards the MOL: that it is a useful *ars*, but that its use should be concealed. This is consistent with the attitudes of Cicero's Crassus and Antonius to rhetorical techniques based on Greek learning throughout *De oratore*. Cicero asserts that while both men were well-versed in Greek rhetorical τέχναι,

[52] For Antonius' speeches, see ORF^3 221-36.

[53] *De or.* 2.350: *libenter enim te, cognitum iam artificem aliquandoque evolutum illis integumentis dissimulationis tuae nudatumque perspicio*.

they used them to enhance their oratory covertly – in public, they either disparaged Greek theory (Crassus) or claimed to be ignorant of it entirely (Antonius).[54]

The extent of the disparity between the views of the historical Antonius and Cicero's fictional Antonius is no doubt considerable – although there are few non-Ciceronian sources for Antonius' life on which to base any judgements, and he is yet another orator who did not publish his speeches.[55] In *Brutus,* Cicero ranks Antonius in the same tier as Crassus; he says that Antonius was Crassus' equal in the subdisciplines of *inventio, dispositio*, and *memoria*, that he excelled in *actio*, but that when it came to putting them all together into an *oratio*, Crassus shone more brightly.[56] Cicero also gives us some particularly pertinent information regarding Antonius' use of *memoria* in the preparation phase of the forensic process:

> Erat memoria summa, nulla meditationis suspicio; imparatus semper aggredi ad dicendum videbatur, sed ita erat paratus ut iudices illo dicente non numquam viderentur non satis parati ad cavendum fuisse.

Cic. *Brut*. 139.[57]

> His *memoria* was supreme, there was no suggestion of premeditation; he appeared always to approach his speeches unprepared, but was in fact so prepared that the judges, upon hearing him speak, frequently seemed insufficiently primed to be on their guard.

Here, then, we have the successful result of Antonius' ability to conceal his use of the mnemonic techniques that Cicero had him describe in *De oratore*. Cicero says that Antonius managed to embrace everything relevant to the case within his memory, while giving the impression that he had not done so, that he was speaking *imparatus*. The sentences quoted above sit in the middle of a string of military metaphors, in which Antonius the *orator* is likened to an *imperator* (this metaphor is discussed fully in Chapter IV, p. 175-7). Antonius gave his listeners the impression that he was unarmed – his weapons being, in this case, the orator's *artes*. The *iudices* are implicitly placed in the position of an opposing army, even, insufficiently on their guard to defend against Antonius' attack. Significantly, Cicero highlights how it is Antonius' superlative mnemonic ability that enables him to execute this act of dissimulation; his *memoria* allows him to perform a speech into which he has sunk a

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[54] *De or.* 2.1-4.

[55] For Antonius' rationale for non-publication, see Cic. *Clu.* 140.

[56] Cic. *Brut.* 138, 215.

[57] Latin text: Hendrickson (1962).

great deal of preparative effort as if he were speaking extempore. Cicero thus uses Antonius to exemplify a key tenet of how the orator should use his mnemonic skills, natural or artificial, as a preparative tool: their use must be hidden and directed always towards the ultimate goal, winning over the audience.

This audience-centric concern for outward appearance in fact provides a specific rationale for the orator's concealment of the *ars memoriae*, over and above the idea that he should maintain a façade of the 'noble amateur', which is a nebulous notion, difficult to pin down, and bound up with Roman aristocratic hostility towards mercenary Greek professionalism.[58] The Auctor *ad Herennium* refers to the need for concealment when discussing *enumeratio* – referring, in this context, to recapitulation of the main points of a case at the end of a speech. He states that special care must be taken in order that the whole *oratio* might not appear to have been fabricated 'for the purpose of demonstrating one's craft, advertising one's natural talent, and showing off one's memory' (*artificii significandi, ingenii venditandi, memoriae ostendendae causa*).[59] Thus, in the eyes of an audience, an orator making an overt show of his powerful memory, natural or artificial (it was presumably all the same from the spectator's point of view), was bad form, to the extent that it might even be injurious to a case. One potential risk was that the orator might reveal his enthusiasm for techniques that were still (in Wisse's words) 'too Greek' for the tastes of the average Roman audience.[60] Another, as hinted at by my earlier discussions of memorisation in the *ludus*, that he might appear wet behind the ears. Cicero warns his readers about this risk explicitly at *Part. or.* 59-60, again with reference to *enumeratio*. On the one hand, says Cicero, the practice of *enumeratio* (which relies on displaying a certain mnemonic prowess) can sometimes be extremely useful: he specifies one of the situations where an orator *should* recap his arguments, namely in a long speech, when he mistrusts the memories of his listeners.[61] Care must be taken, however, 'so that undertaking a display of memory does not appear childish' (*ne ostentatio memoriae suscepta videatur esse puerilis*).[62] 'Childish' here is evidently a reference to the memorisation exercises undertaken by the youngest students; and

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[58] Eckert makes sound points about how perceived enthusiasm for Greek *paideia* could damage an elite Roman's *auctoritas* in the late Republic: Eckert (2018) 19-32.

[59] *Rhet. Her.* 2.47.

[60] Wisse (2013) 183.

[61] Cicero shows similar awareness of the limits of an audience's memory when discussing how to summarise arguments at *Inv. rhet.* 1.99.

[62] *Part. or.* 60. Latin text: Bayer and Bayer (1994).

perhaps also to the kinds of exercises recommended for budding orators learning the MOL in rhetorical *ludi*.[63] It was unbecoming for an experienced orator to be seen enjoying such mnemonic games during a speech, showing off how much he could remember as if he were a child in the *ludus* proudly reciting reams of poetry.[64] Cicero explains that the speaker can avoid the danger of mnemonic ostentation by touching lightly upon the main facts of the case, rather than assiduously repeating all the minutiae.

The recurring themes in these passages are, firstly, an awareness of the audience's mnemonic limitations and, secondly, the need for an orator to avoid flamboyant feats of memory, which carry the suggestion of *ars memoriae gratia artis*.[65] As discussed in Chapter I, Cicero's treatment of *memoria* in *De oratore* is designed to move the focus away from the technical rules of the MOL, and hence elevate the subdiscipline above the *ludus*. Accordingly, as we have seen, Cicero buries the technical rules within Antonius' discourse at *De or.* 2.358, dispatching them in a few brief sentences, such that they are overshadowed – if not concealed entirely – by his retelling of the Simonidean origin myth, his discussion of men with excellent memories (such as Themistocles, Charmadas, and Metrodorus), and even philosophical propositions concerning the intrinsic relationship between memory, vision, and space. Thus, although Cicero's Crassus is initially delighted (at *De or.* 2.350) by Antonius' stated intent to reveal the technical details of his *ars memoriae*, in many respects, Cicero has Antonius maintain the façade of concealment throughout. Cicero's Antonius continues, in short, to play the role of the consummate orator addressing an audience, distracting the attention of his listeners (or in this case, his readers) from the rhetorical *praecepta* that apparently underpin his mnemonic prowess, just as the consummate orator should displace the attention of his audience from his feats of memory during a speech. With this discussion of the orator's audience, however, I have slipped from the 'preparation phase' into the 'trial phase'. Accordingly, I now move on to discuss how the orator utilised his mnemonic skills during live performances in the forum.

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[63] See Ch. I, p. 28-32.

[64] *Pace* the elder Seneca, who boasts as much at *Contr.* 1.pr.2.

[65] Cf. Quintilian's objections to Metrodorus' 'ostentatious' zodiac mnemonics, Ch. II, p. 107.

2. The trial phase

The worked examples of *loci*- and *imago*-creation presented by the Auctor and Quintilian illustrate how the MOL enabled an orator to encode and retrieve *loci* and *imagines* in a predefined sequence to remind himself of the main talking points of his speech.[66] Based on these expositions, it is generally assumed that, if a Roman orator used the MOL at all, he used it to memorise a pre-prepared speech before trial and, subsequently, to recall and deliver that speech. In this scenario, the encoding process – by which I mean the creation and initial memorisation of *imagines* in *loci* – occurs in private, where the orator has plenty of time to rehearse the sequence. It is only the retrieval process – the recalling of the *imagines* in their *loci* – that occurs in public, during final delivery at trial. The MOL was certainly designed to be used in this situation. The technique was also, however, ideally suited to meet the requirements of a second scenario, which demanded the orator undertake both the encoding and the retrieval processes in public, during the trial itself. This second scenario, despite being relatively well-attested in our sources, has been underappreciated in modern scholarship, if not overlooked entirely. In this section, therefore, I focus on *memoria artificiosa* as a performative discipline, analysing how the MOL was utilised to enhance an orator's performance during trial.

In *De oratore*, Cicero's Antonius provides a list of reasons why superlative mnemonic skill is useful to the orator. First in this list is the idea that superior *memoria* enables you (the notional *orator*) to 'retain that which you learnt when being briefed about the case, and what you personally thought about it'.[67] Hence, this use of *memoria* occurs during the preparation phase, as the orator encodes, stores, and retrieves his initial impressions of the case. After listing generic uses of *memoria* (in sum, the well-structured retention of vocabulary and ideas), Antonius then goes on to state that strong *memoria* enables you 'to listen either to the individual by whom you are instructed [i.e. the *cliens*] or to the man to whom you must reply [i.e. the opposing advocate], such that he seems not to pour [*infundere*] his speech into your ears but to inscribe [*inscribere*] it in your mind'.[68] Here, then, we have evidence that, in theory at least, the MOL might have been used in two 'live' scenarios: during the preparation

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[66] *Rhet. Her.* 3.33, Quint. *Inst.* 11.2.20-1.

[67] *De or.* 2.355: *tenere quae didiceris in accipienda causa, quae ipse cogitaris*.

[68] *De or.* 2.355: *ita audire vel eum, unde discas, vel eum, cui respondendum sit, ut illi non infundere in auris tuas orationem, sed in animo videantur inscribere*.

phase, to memorise the words of a *cliens*; or, during the trial phase, to memorise the speech of an opponent as he was speaking.[69] The verbs Cicero chooses create a deliberate contrast between the fallibility of natural mnemonic capacity, with the fluid *infundere*, which puts the information heard at risk of flowing in one ear and out of the other, and the retentive potential of mnemonic ability enhanced by *ars*, with the more permanent *inscribere*, a verb immediately reminiscent of the wax tablet metaphor, which Cicero has just introduced at the end of the previous passage.[70]

Cicero provides us with a fictional representation of Antonius' theory in practice in the dialogue *De natura deorum*, where, in response to Balbus, he has Cotta proclaim, 'I have committed to memory not only the number but the order of your arguments'.[71] Cotta then proceeds to address each of the arguments posited by Balbus in turn, in just the same way as we might imagine an orator addressing each of his opponent's arguments in the forum. The question of whether the MOL was used by some orators for on-the-fly memorisation at trial in this same manner is trickier, but can, I think, be answered in the affirmative, since we have multiple attested instances of the MOL being used for real-time memorisation, to encode information presented orally and in public, rather than in writing and in private. The most detailed accounts of the MOL in action involve Quintus Hortensius Hortalus.

2.a. The practical application of the MOL

Hortensius is perhaps most famous for his rivalry with Cicero, although, as with other late-republican orators, few non-Ciceronian sources concerning his life survive.[72] As mentioned previously, in the *Brutus*, Cicero compares Hortensius favourably to the oratorical greats of past eras, but there is one area in which he seems to surpass everyone: *memoria*. When it comes to the application of the MOL at trial, Cicero's portrayal of Hortensius is probably our

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[69] Cf. Quintilian, whose explanation of why memory is so vital for the orator also lists memorising everything an opponent has said (he does not mention interaction with the *cliens*): *Inst.* 11.2.2-3.

[70] *De or.* 2.354. I note that the 'fluidity' Cicero associates with an unretentive memory is reminiscent of the philosophical notion that the wax-like fabric of memory must be of the correct consistency: see Ch. II, p. 72-3.

[71] Cic. *Nat. D.* 3.10: *mandavi enim memoriae non numerum solum sed etiam ordinem argumentorum tuorum*. Text: Gigon and Straume-Zimmermann (1996).

[72] Hortensius (cos. 69) was some eight years Cicero's senior. For instances where the two variously clashed and collaborated, see Dyck (2008) 149-67; for Hortensius' prominent position in the *Brutus*, van der Blom (2010) 254-6; and for Hortensius' speeches, ORF^3 310-30.

most lucrative source. I begin, however, with an anecdote that is not found in Cicero, but the elder Seneca:

> Hortensius, qui a Sisenna provocatus in auctione persedit per diem totum et omnes res et pretia et emptores ordine suo argentariis recognoscentibus ita ut in nulla re falleretur recensuit.
>
> Sen. *Contr.* 1.pr.19.[73]
>
> Hortensius, challenged by Sisenna, sat through the whole day in an auction and then enumerated every item and its price and its buyer in order, while the bankers certified that he was not mistaken in any detail.

This story is repeated by Quintilian, who had read Seneca.[74] Both treat the feat as something of a party trick, Seneca dismissing the skill (and thus the MOL) as quick and easy to learn (*Contr.* 1.pr.19: *hoc* […] *non operosa arte tradi potest*). From our perspective, however, the interesting point is that Hortensius memorised information (items, prices, buyers) while the auctioneer was speaking; he did not write notes and then memorise them from the page. The auctioneer presumably delivered extraneous information that Hortensius did not bother to memorise (like full descriptions of the items and other losing bids). Instead, Hortensius selected the important details as he heard them, linked *imagines* to those details, and then encoded them in *loci*, memorising what was essentially a list of *res*. Modern mnemonists perform similar feats, encoding orally-presented information spontaneously at the start of a performance and reproducing it at the end.[75] Whether or not the auction anecdote is apocryphal, and whether or not Hortensius actually won his bet, a skilled practitioner of the MOL could certainly have accomplished the auction challenge successfully.

An ability to memorise using the MOL in real time would have proved extremely useful in a trial scenario, to help an orator prepare for the *altercatio* (the stage after the set-piece speeches, when orators would engage with each other's arguments in point-by-point

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[73] Latin text: Winterbottom (1974).

[74] Quintilian references the elder Seneca explicitly twice, *Inst.* 9.2.42, 9.2.98; and reproduces the auction story at 11.2.24. Dyck views the anecdote as independent (i.e. non-Ciceronian) confirmation of Hortensius' mnemonic prowess: Dyck (2008) 145. His statement that Hortensius had 'what today would be called a photographic memory' is, however, thoroughly misleading. Hortensius was using the MOL, an artificial technique, while the (supposedly natural) phenomenon of 'photographic memory' has never been shown to exist (although it remains widespread in today's popular culture): see Foer (2006).

[75] E.g. Harry Lorayne, for whom see Ch. IV, n. 51; the World Memory Championships also demand spontaneous memorisation of orally-presented information, e.g. in the 'Spoken numbers' event, see www.world-memory-statistics.co.uk/disciplines.php

exchanges).[76] As an orator was sitting listening to his opponent's set-piece speech, thinking about how to respond to each of the arguments presented in turn, he could have used the MOL to memorise those arguments in a list. This would have enabled him to then address them all comprehensively in a response speech, or to bring them up during the *altercatio* itself.[77] The difference, of course, is that extracting a list of salient features from a lengthy and rhetorically complex *oratio* sounds like it might be considerably less straightforward than extracting a list of items, prices, and buyers from an auction. The MOL, however, can be utilised to meet the challenge. Demonstrative proof of this comes from the same modern studies discussed in the first chapter, which show that the MOL works well when subjects are asked to memorise the salient features of expository prose passages, and especially well when the passages are presented orally rather than in writing.[78] Test subjects appear capable of condensing a large amount of information into its key details, which they then memorise using the MOL. Note that the participants who take part in these modern experiments must be trained in the MOL – they are not proficient beforehand. Expert orators, however, could spend years practising their mnemonic skills and using them in live performance. Consequently, even if they did not devote themselves to the MOL with the same intensity as professional mnemonists and modern 'memory athletes', we might expect the capacities of ancient practitioners to vastly exceed those of inexperienced modern test subjects.

The encoding process would run as follows: during a trial, an orator would listen intensely to the set-piece speech of his opponent; while doing so, he would mentally reduce it to what was essentially a sequential list of talking points, just as before trial he had reduced his own set-piece speech; next, he would memorise the resulting list of talking points using the MOL, by creating *imagines* associated with each point in turn, and placing them in *loci*. The retrieval process would work in the same way as when he delivered his own set-piece speech, the *imagines* acting as mnemonic triggers that enabled him to recall each point in turn. Finally, once he had recalled a point, the orator could then elaborate upon it, delivering an extempore response.

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[76] Some high-profile orators apparently only delivered the initial set-piece speeches, leaving the scrappier *altercatio* to their less-prestigious co-counsel: see Quint. *Inst.* 6.4.6-7.

[77] Note that Quintilian states (quite logically) that *memoria* is not an issue during the *altercatio* proper, since it comprises a set of immediate back-and-forth exchanges, where there is no chance of forgetting what has just been said: *Inst.* 6.4.1.

[78] See Ch. I, p. 25.

That Hortensius was capable of utilising the MOL during trial in this way is indicated by Cicero's description of his mnemonic prowess:

> Primum memoria tanta quantam in nullo cognovisse me arbitror, ut quae secum commentatus esset, ea sine scripto verbis eisdem redderet quibus cogitavisset. Hoc adiumento ille tanto sic utebatur ut sua et commentata et scripta et nullo referente omnia adversariorum dicta meminisset.

Cic. *Brut.* 301.

> Firstly, he [Hortensius] had *memoria* of such magnitude, the power of which I believe I have not seen in anyone else, that he could reproduce material that he had prepared by himself in the same words he had thought it out, without a written prompt. He would utilise this great means of support to memorise his own material, things he had prepared both mentally and in writing, and, without referring to any notes, everything his opponents said.

Cicero's first observation relates to set-piece speeches. Hortensius was able to use his memory such that, after he had thought through his speech, he stored it mentally rather than in writing, before reproducing it *sine scripto*. Cicero in fact states that Hortensius could reproduce his material 'in the same words' (*verbis eisdem*) as he had initially thought it out – an odd statement, given that Hortensius prepared mentally and in private, and no one save Hortensius himself could know exactly which words he had originally planned to use. The phrasing is perhaps deliberately hyperbolic, to stress the accuracy of Hortensius' recall. Cicero then qualifies this initial statement somewhat, by indicating that Hortensius also memorised some written material (*et commentata et scripta*).

So much for the preparation phase. During the trial phase, Hortensius would memorise everything his opponents said, without external assistance. I think we must interpret *omnia adversariorum dicta* rather loosely, reading *dicta* as a reference to 'talking points' or 'arguments', rather than as a synonym for *verba*.[79] Cicero is here describing a scenario in which Hortensius is memorising on the fly, as his opponents are speaking, while preparing to respond to their arguments: in this situation, verbatim retention of the opposition's every word would have been entirely unnecessary. If Cicero does mean to imply that Hortensius could reproduce his opponents' speeches word-for-word, he was probably overexaggerating. Aside from the sheer difficulty of the task, it is highly unlikely that anyone could have verified the flawless accuracy of Hortensius' rendition of his opponents' exact

[79] Cf. *ad loc.* 301, Hendrickson (1962) 'all that was said by the other side'; Kaster (2020) 'everything his opponents said'.

verba. We should envision Hortensius memorising at trial in much the same way as he memorised during the auction, but instead of memorising a list of the auctioneer's sales, he would have been reducing his opponent's speech to its salient points and memorising them in order. Yet, Hortensius' mnemonic ability is portrayed as something quite exceptional: accordingly, we should conclude that while a skilled practitioner of the oratorical MOL such as Hortensius might utilise the technique for spontaneous memorisation during trial, others no doubt resorted to notetaking when listening to their opponents and working out a response.

Cicero continues, giving us information about Hortensius' approach that reinforces the notion that his methodology was somewhat unusual and in parts innovative:

> Attuleratque minime vulgare genus dicendi; duas quidem res quas nemo alius: partitiones quibus de rebus dicturus esset et collectiones eorum quae essent dicta contra quaeque ipse dixisset.[80]

Cic. *Brut.* 302.

> He [Hortensius] brought to bear a brand of speechmaking that was far from common; two things, in fact, which no one else used: divisions of the topics about which he was going to speak and recapitulations of what had been said by the other side, and of what he himself had said.

The historical accuracy of the idea that Hortensius' practices of topical adumbration (in *partitiones*) and recapitulation (in *collectiones*) were rare is doubtful – both were standard components of contemporary rhetorical theory.[81] Nevertheless Cicero's exaggeration of Hortensius' (almost overly) methodical approach contributes to the portrait of an orator who was extremely focussed on careful *dispositio*.[82] It is even plausible that the *partitiones* Hortensius delivered to his audience in fact represented a list of talking points that he had memorised using the MOL – a possibility I raise because of the nature of oratorical *partitiones*. Contemporaneous and later rhetorical treatises stress that *partitiones* should be strictly ordered, clear, and complete.[83] Quintilian, for instance, explains that a good *partitio*, devised carefully in this way, makes the 'path of one's speech' (*via dicendi*) itself the greatest

[80] Note that the Teubner text (Malcovati (1970) 93, ln. 30) reads *conlectiones,* ***memor et*** *quae essent…* I follow Jahn (1962) and Hendrickson (1962) with *eorum quae*.

[81] For details, see Kaster (2020) 156, n. 462.

[82] To the extent that Cicero, according to Quintilian, teased Hortensius for counting off his *partitiones* on his fingers: Quint. *Inst.* 4.5.24. I note also that Hortensius' 'innovative' *collectiones* are another instance of an orator's awareness of the mnemonic limitations of his audience.

[83] For Cicero's definition of and stipulations for *partitiones*, see *Inv. rhet.* 1.31-3.

aid (*auxilium*) to *memoria*.[84] Subsequently, when discussing the subdiscipline of *memoria*, he refigures and reiterates this idea, stating that (apart from practice) *divisio* and *compositio* are the most important aids to the retention of a speech: if you have arranged your arguments logically, they remain well-ordered in memory, enabling progression from one to the next without error.[85] At this point, it is worth reintroducing Moè and De Beni's modern cognitive study, which found that the MOL was most effective at aiding the retention of expository passages, as opposed to descriptive or narrative passages – the difference being that expository passages follow 'some logical processes such as induction, classification and comparison'.[86] *Partitiones*, along with the *genera* into which they are divided, fall under this definition of 'expository': they structure a case by creating logical and sequential classifications of the relevant material. Hence, the process by which an orator would arrange and divide the arguments in his speech resulted, if done properly, in the production of information that was ideally suited for memorisation using the MOL.

During the preparation phase, then, when Hortensius had devised his *partitiones*, he might well have memorised them using the MOL. Afterwards, by rapidly rehearsing the sequence of *loci* and *imagines* in his mind, he could quickly summarise an entire speech for his listeners. The advantage that such a method conferred would have been significant. In memorising and summarising not only his own arguments, but those of his opponents, Hortensius would have been able to spin and counter his adversaries' words, giving his audience the impression that he had covered the case from every angle. Similarly, by cultivating a reputation for infallible mnemonic expertise, an orator such as Hortensius could no doubt bolster his authority in the forum, encouraging jurors to be ultimately persuaded by his version of what had been said.

Cicero's portrayal of Hortensius' *memoria* and his innovative application of *ars* to Latin oratory in general remains largely consistent in works other than the *Brutus*. Hortensius is numbered among Cicero's list of expert practitioners of the MOL at *Tusc*. 1.59. In *Lucullus*, Cicero states that Hortensius possessed unrivalled *memoria verborum*.[87] As discussed previously, in contrast to *memoria rerum*, the subdiscipline of *memoria verborum* was, in the minds of Cicero's contemporaries, a somewhat ostentatious practice, suited to the

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[84] Quint. *Inst.* 4.5, quoted at 4.5.3.

[85] Quint. *Inst.* 11.2.36-8.

[86] Moè and De Beni (2005) 97.

[87] *Luc.* 2: full discussion, Ch. IV, p. 171-2.

ludus rather than the forum; and if an orator's mnemonic performance appeared too artificial, he risked alienating his audience. In this sense, by highlighting how Hortensius practised *memoria verborum* as well as the more oratorically-justifiable *memoria rerum*, Cicero's depiction of Hortensius' use of the *ars memoriae* accords with his general criticisms of Hortensius, that he utilised certain *artes* to a somewhat excessive degree, notably in the performative discipline of *actio*.[88] Overall, however, Hortensius (in his prime) conforms to the Ciceronian paradigm of an expert orator whose skills are based on both great natural talent and unremitting technical practice, that is, on both *natura* and *ars*. Consequently, this depiction of Hortensius' skills may tell us as much about Cicero's vision of the oratorical ideal as it does about the historical Hortensius: in highlighting his skilful application of mnemonic theory, Cicero manipulates Hortensius' oratory so that it conforms with his own gold standard and is raised ever closer towards his notional ideal.

Interestingly, the legend that Cicero constructed around Hortensius' *memoria* seems to have spawned a later literary legacy, which might justifiably be compared to the legacy of Cicero's Simonidean origin myth: this legacy is explored further in Chapter IV.[89] Here, I note only that even if some of Hortensius' writings survived beyond the classical era, his reputation as an exemplary practitioner of the MOL could not have been created by the text of his speeches alone.[90] That reputation was down to the influence of Cicero.

Excellent mnemonic skill was, of course, only one of the abilities that Cicero believed a good orator should possess: in *Brutus*, he makes a point of evaluating every aspect of a given orator's performance, usually by commenting on his proficiency in the five subdisciplines of *inventio, dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria*, and *actio*. The well-rounded orator should be competent in all these subdisciplines, of course, although Cicero appears to see some skills as more interdependent than others. This is the case with *memoria*. An orator's mnemonic skills, however impressive, cannot ever carry his performance in the same way that certain other skills might. Specifically, Cicero never gives us an example of an orator who makes up for

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[88] E.g. *Brut.* 303: *motus et gestus etiam plus artis habebat quam erat oratori satis*. Garcea and Lomanto argue that Cicero's criticisms of Hortensius' limits, while never overly harsh, are intended to align Hortensius' own decline with the diminishing effectiveness of his style of oratory, while juxtaposing Cicero's own (increasingly effective and superior) approach: Garcea and Lomanto (2014) 141-60, esp. 152-5.

[89] See p. 183-4.

[90] We know that some of Hortensius' speeches were preserved until at least Quintilian's day: *Inst.* 11.3.8-9.

his deficiencies in other subdisciplines with his expertise in *memoria*; but he describes multiple speakers who manage to conceal manifold flaws by impressing their listeners with their performances, by means of dazzling delivery (*actio*) or superficially erudite expression (*elocutio*).[91] Turning this observation on its head, while Cicero praises some orators for *actio* or *elocutio* and nothing else, as a rule, he never attributes superlative *memoria* to an orator if that orator does not also possess ability in the subdiscipline of *dispositio*: Cicero's portrayal of Hortensius is a case in point.

The end goal of the rhetorical theory outlined in treatments of *dispositio* is the optimal arrangement and division of talking points to create a well-structured and persuasive speech. As we know, order and structure are crucial components of the MOL. I concluded above that Hortensius could utilise the MOL effectively in part because he maintained a strict, ordered sequence of talking points in his speeches. It follows that, for Hortensius to demonstrate his proficiency in the MOL, he had also to be proficient in the prerequisite subdiscipline of *dispositio*. Cicero confirms this when describing Hortensius' skills, stating that 'he would embrace the case accurately in his memory, divide it intelligently'.[92] The two acts, memorising the case and dividing the case, balance each other. Cicero, utilising asyndeton to stress the connections, closely aligns the intelligent division and organisation of arguments with their memorisation.

The idea that Cicero saw positive correlation between good *dispositio* and effective application of *memoria* is reinforced by his portrayal of Publius Antistius.[93] As with Hortensius, when describing Antistius, Cicero implies a close association between the careful construction of an argument and its memorisation; but in this case, he adds on another skill, *inventio*. Antistius 'would discern the matter at hand keenly, construct his argument carefully, his memory was strong'.[94] Here, there is a progression through the three subdisciplines of *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *memoria*: Antistius observes the salient points, he arranges them effectively, he memorises them accurately. Again, the asyndetic association implies some degree of sequential interdependency. Proficiency in *inventio* is a prerequisite for effective

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[91] Such as Gnaeus Lentulus and Publius Lentulus, whose impressive delivery (*actio*) covered for their general lack of ability, *Brut.* 234-5; or Curio, who relied on linguistic style (*elocutio*), see below, p. 146-51.

[92] *Brut.* 303: *rem complectebatur memoriter, dividebat acute…*

[93] For analysis of Antistius in the *Brutus*, see Balbo (2018) 240-1, and for the little we know of his speeches, ORF^3 283-4.

[94] *Brut.* 227: *rem videbat acute, componebat diligenter, memoria valebat.*

dispositio, since if the orator has not discerned his arguments clearly, he cannot hope to arrange them in a percipient and logical manner. Good *dispositio* is in turn a prerequisite for effective *memoria*, for the same reasons outlined above. Of the five rhetorical subdisciplines, then, *memoria* (and the MOL) was arguably the most dependent on the effective execution of the preparative subdisciplines *inventio* and *dispositio*, which preceded it in the process of moving from the preparation of a speech to the delivery of that speech at trial.

2.b. Cicero's exemplary orators and inferior mnemonic ability

So far, I have discussed the numerous orators Cicero lauds for *memoria*. His portrayal of Gaius Scribonius Curio (*pater*) is particularly intriguing for the opposite reason: Curio is the only orator whom Cicero highlights for a *lack* of mnemonic ability. We must be appropriately sceptical when it comes to trusting Cicero's portrayal of Curio's abilities, since it seems that Cicero bore him a considerable grudge. The origins of this enmity are somewhat obscure.[95] Probably relatively early in his career, Cicero had successfully defended a woman named Titinia against Curio; the two clashed again when Curio attempted to defend Cicero's archenemy Publius Clodius Pulcher in the *Bona Dea* trial by discrediting Cicero's sworn testimony; shortly afterwards, in 58 BCE, Curio appears to have circulated a fierce criticism of Cicero, to which Cicero replied in a heated *Invectiva in Curionem*.[96] In his correspondence, Cicero implies this invective was never intended for public consumption, but 'leaked' when he was in exile, causing him considerable regret and embarrassment when it transpired that he needed Curio's support to be recalled.[97] Cicero's portrayal of Curio in *De oratore* (55 BCE) is, conversely, relatively positive.[98] Curio died in 53, a number of years before Cicero wrote the *Brutus* (46 BCE) – so this time, Cicero could portray Curio as he wished, without fear of needing subsequent favours.[99]

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[95] For Curio's life up to his clash with Cicero, see McDermott (1972a) 381-94.

[96] The Titinia case is tentatively dated to 79 BCE: see McDermott (1972a) 395. For further discussion of Cicero's motives for disliking Curio, see Tatum (1991) 369-70.

[97] *Att.* 3.12.2, 3.15.3, 3.20.2.

[98] *De or.* 2.98.

[99] See Douglas (1966) *ad loc.* 216, p. 156. Lopez suggests that this negative change in attitude towards Curio *pater* may even be attributable to Cicero's disappointment with Curio *filius* (died 48), for siding with Caesar: Lopez (2013) 294-5.

It is with this background in mind that we must interpret Cicero's depiction of Curio's oratory, which begins at *Brut.* 213-4 with an estimation of the depths of Curio's ignorance: he had no knowledge of poetry, history, law; he did not even read published speeches.[100] Thus, Cicero highlights how Curio made no effort to acquire knowledge to remember in the first place. At *Brut.* 216, Cicero evaluates Curio's oratorical prowess. He was 'both slow in thinking things through and disorganised in arranging them', hence, he was poor at both *inventio* and *dispositio*.[101] Further, when it came to *actio* and *memoria*, Curio was so lacking in ability that 'he would provoke the derisive laughter of his ridiculers'.[102] Curio's only saving grace, says Cicero, was his *elocutio*, for which he received a disproportionate level of praise: this, Cicero believes, proves that an orator is esteemed above all for the 'abundance' (*copia*) and 'brilliance' (*splendor*) of his words.

Cicero clearly considered Curio's reputation for being a good speaker unwarranted, founded on style rather than substance. As Cicero's hypercritical portrait develops, its focus narrows to Curio's lack of mnemonic ability:

> Memoria autem ita fuit nulla, ut aliquotiens, tria cum proposuisset, aut quartum adderet aut tertium quaereret.
>
> Cic. *Brut.* 217.
>
> Moreover, his memory was so non-existent that sometimes, when he had proposed three talking points, he would either add a fourth or go searching for the third.

Curio, then, is presented as the antithesis of Hortensius, an *exemplum* to illustrate the detrimental effects of poor *memoria* on an orator's speech. Whereas Hortensius devised, ordered, and memorised the sequence of his arguments so effectively that he could rapidly run through the *partitiones* of his speech at both its start and finish, by contrast, Curio seems to begin his orations by merely hazarding a guess at the division and number of his arguments, before meandering blindly through the rest. This remarkable ineptitude stems

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[100] The phrase at *Brut.* 214 that I have glossed as 'history' reads [*ille*] *nullam memoriam antiquitatis collegerat*, rather literally, 'he [Curio] had accumulated no *memoria* of ancient times'. Here, rather than the rhetorical subdiscipline, *memoria* denotes a certain type of mnemonic content – the semantic knowledge of the past that the Roman orator might draw on to provide *exempla* when making his argument. Cf. *Brut.* 322: *memoria rerum Romanarum*, which denotes knowledge that the orator can draw on to produce the most credible witnesses (*locupletissimi testes*) from the dead to support his case.

[101] *Brut.* 216: *cum tardus in cogitando tum in struendo dissipatus fuit*.

[102] *Brut.* 216: *cachinnos irridentium commovebat*. Curio earned the nickname 'Burbuleius' for his gestures, which apparently resembled those of an eccentric actor of that name: Sall. *Hist.* bk. 2, fr. 25 (Maurenbrecher); Val. Max. 9.14.5.

from his failure to encode the information relevant to the case in his *memoria* during the preparation phase; in the trial phase, he can retrieve nothing.

We cannot know, of course, whether listeners who were less technically critical than Cicero cared about Curio's inability to deliver the number of arguments he had promised. Wisse believes that the emphasis rhetoricians placed on the need to stick to the number of points outlined at the start of a speech implies audiences regarded deviations as 'serious faults'.[103] Possibly; they certainly seem to have been deemed so by experts.[104] I think it probable, however, that one such fault alone is unlikely to have been a cause of major criticism for a less-discerning audience; but if that fault were followed by further lapses, it doubtless would have contributed to undermining trust in the orator. This gradual and insidious effect, whereby flaws compound to weaken an audience's confidence in a speaker, is exactly what Cicero suggests happened in the case of Curio's forgetful rambling: in one speech, it became so bad that the whole *contio* simply got up and left.[105] This anecdote, then, represents the worst case scenario: Curio's inferior *memoria* made him appear so incompetent, it robbed him of the title *orator*, for what is an *orator* without an audience?

Cicero rounds out the picture of Curio's inferior *memoria* with several further anecdotes, including one concerning the Titinia case, when his lack of mnemonic capacity not only made him look incompetent, but actually (as Cicero would have us believe) lost him the trial. When making a speech in response to Cicero, Curio allegedly forgot all of his talking points and then blamed the defendant, saying she had poisoned or bewitched him.[106] This suggests that Curio's *memoria* proved defective not only when he was preparing for a set-piece speech, but also in this live trial scenario, when he should have been paying attention to and memorising the sequence of Cicero's arguments, in order to improvise a response and be ready for the *altercatio*. Instead of the well-ordered rebuttal speech of a skilled oratorical mnemonist such as Hortensius, Curio met Cicero's arguments with silence engendered by forgetting (*oblivio*), and then a lame excuse.[107]

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[103] Wisse (2013) 186-7, citing e.g. *Rhet. Her.* 1.17.

[104] E.g. Quintilian, who calls deviation from set order *turpissimum*, *Inst.* 4.5.28. Cicero would also have us believe that, as regards good speakers, the opinions of *vulgus* and *intelligentes* coincide: *Brut.* 190.

[105] *Brut.* 192, 305. On this incident, see Wisse (2013) 176.

[106] *Brut.* 217.

[107] Cf. *Orat.* 129, where Cicero presents this anecdote in a somewhat different light, implying that it was the force of his own oratory that left Curio dumbstruck, though Curio still blamed potions for erasing his memory.

Finally, Cicero lambasts Curio's attempts at writing dialogues, citing his disordered composition and his inclusion of anachronisms to prove that his memory was so poor, he could not even recall what he had written down shortly beforehand.[108] Tatum views this passage as an attempt by Cicero to ameliorate the 'literary embarrassment' of his *Invectiva in Curionem*, with Cicero stressing not only his own rhetorical superiority but also Curio's 'literary carelessness' – that is to say, we should construe Curio's lack of *memoria*, in this context, as a simple lack of concern for narrative consistency (and for the need to proofread).[109] Cicero certainly wants to criticise Curio's composition skills, but his primary objective here is to build on the previous anecdotes and bring the attack on Curio's inferior mnemonic ability to a head: Cicero highlights how Curio's inexcusable mnemonic failings when performing live run so deep, they can even be witnessed in his literary compositions. Thus, Curio is incompetent as both *orator* and *auctor*. Consider the concluding sentence of the anecdote:

> Iam, qui hac parte animi, quae custos est ceterarum ingeni partium, tam debilis esset ut ne in scripto quidem meminisset quid paulo ante posuisset, huic minime mirum est ex tempore dicenti solitam effluere mentem.

Cic. *Brut.* 219.

> Now, if the man was so weak in that part of his mind, which is the guard of all the other parts of his intelligence, that he could not even remember what he had set down a little earlier in his writings, it is no wonder that his intellect usually vanished when speaking extempore.

Cicero's point is evident: if an orator cannot utilise his *memoria* effectively when composing in private, what hope does he have when speaking extempore in the heat of the forum? Again, we see how Cicero stresses the importance of *memoria* to successful execution of the orator's duties during the trial phase, when the pressure is on, in addition to its role during the calmer preparation phase.

In this same passage, Cicero also introduces the role of *memoria* as *custos*, guardian or protector, of the rest of one's abilities. The interdependency of an orator's faculties is, in the case of Curio, clear: he was poor at inventing and arranging arguments and, even if he did manage to find some, his memory was so bad that he would fail to retain them for

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For comparison, see Tatum (1991) 364-71. Equally, Curio's quip about the potions could have been intended as a joke, presented literally by Cicero to make Curio look pathetic.

[108] *Brut.* 218-9.

[109] Tatum (1991) 371.

deployment in the forum. As is explored fully in the next chapter, Cicero's use of the metaphor of *memoria* as *custos* singles out memory as the defensive element in the ideal orator's arsenal.[110] For now, we can observe that whereas, at *Brut.* 139, the exemplary *orator-imperator* Antonius utilised his superior mnemonic ability to enhance his offensive capacities and conceal the nature and strength of his verbal attacks from the opposition, by contrast, Curio's mnemonic failings undermine his capacity to both attack and defend. The starkest example is again the Titinia trial, when Curio failed, as oratorical *imperator*, to spearhead attacks and, as oratorical *custos*, to defend his *cliens*: his inability to respond to Cicero left his own arguments and Titinia herself exposed to the full force of Cicero's oratory.

Did Curio's mnemonic defects prevent him from pursuing a successful career? On the one hand, if the achievement of high office is any measure of success, they did not: he was consul in 76, was granted a triumph in 73 for fighting in Macedonia, and became censor in 61.[111] On the other, if his oratorical achievements are the basis for our judgement, we have little to go on save Cicero's word, at *Brut.* 220, that 'very few cases were allotted to him' (*perpaucae ad eum causae deferebantur*).[112] Yet, in the same passage, Cicero admits that in terms of ranking Curio on the oratorical tier list, *propter verborum bonitatem*, Curio's contemporaries classed him as belonging to the A-rank, if not the S-rank.[113] Cicero even grudgingly concedes that Curio's speeches might be worth a look, if only for the strength of his *elocutio*, the faculty that gave him the 'façade of an orator of some sort' (*speciem oratoris alicuius effecerit*). Consequently, if we are to conclude anything from Cicero's portrayal of Curio about how much mnemonic ability mattered to an orator in the late Republic in reality, there are two options. One is that if an orator did not bother to cultivate his *memoria* (natural or artificial), he could nevertheless 'wing it' in the forum, perhaps relying on written memoranda and the fluency of his speech to impress his audience, even if he had little idea of what to say. This option, while nonsensical if taken to the extreme, must contain some degree of truth, at least to the extent that mnemonic skills on a par with those of Hortensius cannot have been the determining factor in an orator's ability to win a case – not every speech had to be made *sine scripto* of any sort. The cultivation of *memoria* clearly was important to the

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[110] See Ch. IV, p. 175.

[111] Holding important offices such as these appears to have required some oratorical skills, even if they were not of the highest calibre: see Lopez (2013) 287-8, 297.

[112] This is not necessarily the conclusion one would draw from other authors' allusions to Curio's oratorical activity: see ORF^3 297-302.

[113] This impression of Curio's reputation is reinforced by Cicero's Antonius at *De or.* 2.98.

production of a good performance in the scenarios I have described, both before and during trial; but in the case of Curio, it did not matter as much as Cicero would have us believe.

The alternative option is that Cicero's whole account of Curio's absolute lack of mnemonic ability is a fiction, another line of attack by which Cicero could denigrate the reputation of a longstanding (and safely deceased) opponent. This, in my view, certainly seems plausible: perhaps Curio was somewhat scatter-brained, an orator who placed style over substance, but in order to effect the victories we know he achieved (whether by fair means or foul), he cannot have been quite as unlearned and mnemonically incompetent as Cicero suggests.[114] The key point is that Curio did not possess the abilities that Cicero considered a competent Roman advocate *should* possess. In terms of superlative *memoria*, therefore, Curio provides the counterexample to the rest of Cicero's brilliant speakers with brilliant memories. Curio's mnemonic failures denied him, in Cicero's estimation, the right to call himself a proper *orator*.

In summation, the analysis presented in this chapter reinforces the argument made in Chapter I regarding the goal of *memoria artificiosa* in late-republican oratory: namely, that the MOL was designed to free the orator from the need for a script. Superior mnemonic ability meant that the orator had no need to compose his speech fully in writing before delivery, nor to keep any kind of script to hand when he took to the oratorical stage. Instead, during the preparation phase, he would mentally arrange and rehearse his arguments (signified in oratorical texts by deliberative verbs such as *meditari/cogitare*) before memorising them using the MOL; he may also have produced limited written preparatory material, an oratorical *commentarius*, typically a list of topics, talking points, or arguments (a list of *loci*, in fact), which was ideally suited to memorisation via the MOL. During the trial phase, relying on the MOL to negate the risk of forgetting any crucial points, the orator could then elaborate the detail of the *loci* in his speech as he retrieved each one from memory in turn, utilising his extensive improvisational experience and practice. He had no need to worry about retrieving the words of his speech verbatim, since a written version had never existed.

[114] As for Curio's learning, note that, as well as the dialogue to which Cicero refers, Pliny the Elder lists *Curio pater* among his authorities for the third book of *Historia naturalis*, which perhaps suggests he wrote on geographical themes.

The MOL was (and remains) a technique ideally suited for on-the-fly use in time-pressured scenarios. Some orators took advantage of this strength of the MOL during forensic performances to memorise the arrangement and/or details of the arguments covered by their opponents, ready for response or rebuttal. There is also limited evidence that orators may have used the MOL when listening to *clientes* (although I suspect it may have been easier for most to use *scriptores* or *librarii* to take notes). While speaking in front of a live audience, whether the orator chose to utilise artificial mnemonic techniques or not, he had to ensure that his performance maintained a natural air. He did not want to look like a child reciting his lessons in the *ludus*. This requirement for 'artful artlessness' obviously extended beyond the subdiscipline of *memoria*, into the similarly performative realm of *actio*. Further, in his assessment of orators' skillsets, Cicero seems to have observed a positive correlation between the subdisciplines of *dispositio* and *memoria*, which might be explained quite straightforwardly, since it was commonly understood that intelligent division and arrangement of arguments could aid structured mnemonic retention. More broadly, this chapter has highlighted a considerable number of orators to whom Cicero attributed superior mnemonic ability: Torquatus, Crassus, Antonius, Hortensius, and Antistius; and also, how Cicero exemplified the perils of poor mnemonic ability using Curio. Curio is an important exemplar because he is the antithesis of Cicero's model of the ideal *orator* who possesses superior *memoria*. Cicero's grudging admission that Curio was relatively successful, despite his ostensible mnemonic deficiencies, is a suitable reminder that attainment in late-republican oratory was not predicated upon superhuman powers of memory. Accordingly, my final chapter examines the extent to which Cicero's portrayals of individuals with superior mnemonic ability have skewed our perceptions of *memoria* in the late Republic and beyond.

IV
Cicero's memory men

Throughout this thesis, I have made references to a wide range of individuals who purportedly possessed superior mnemonic skills, either natural or artificial. Most of these references come from Cicero, who attributes impressive powers of memory to no fewer than fifteen named individuals across his surviving works.[1] The purpose of this final chapter is to examine Cicero's approach to *memoria* as a personal attribute or skill by considering these many 'memory men' as a group: who they were; what they have in common; and why Cicero chose to single out their powers of *memoria* as worthy of praise. Cicero portrays many of these men and their characteristics as exemplary – though not necessarily as *exempla* in the technical rhetorical sense.[2] Consider the Simonidean origin myth.[3] The story fulfils many of the requirements of a technical *exemplum*: it is probative, proving the value of the *ars memoriae*; it is didactic, ostensibly explaining why the MOL works; and, while it is more myth than history, it is historical in the sense that it is based on historical figures (like *exempla* drawn from the mythic history of early Rome). Whereas the traditional *exemplum* contains moral teaching, however, the lesson Cicero draws from the Simonidean myth is technical in nature. That is not to say that the narrative does not contain potential moral teachings ("do not be like Scopas, respect the gods"; "be like Simonides, remember the dead") but they are ignored by Cicero and later rhetoricians. Similarly, whereas traditional *exempla* were familiar, oft-repeated stories, when Cicero first told the Simonidean origin myth, it was unfamiliar to his Roman audience. Cicero himself helped establish Simonides' status as the inventor of the *ars memoriae*.

Another traditional role of the *exemplum* was as a model of behaviour, to be emulated by current or future generations. A few of Cicero's memory men fall into this category. In the first section of this chapter, I lay the groundwork for the argument that, in general, Cicero invoked the legendary mnemonic skills of certain men because he believed superior *memoria*

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[1] Orators (see Ch. III): Torquatus, Crassus, Antonius, Hortensius, Antistius (plus Curio, who cannot be included, since he is criticised for inferior memory). 'Intellectuals' (see Ch. II, and below): Simonides, Theodectes, Philo, Charmadas, Metrodorus, Trebatius. Leaders (see below): Themistocles, Cineas, Caesar, Lucullus.

[2] For technical definition, see Cic. *Inv. rhet.* 1.49; discussion, van der Blom (2010) 65-72. For the purposes of this study, I subscribe to Roller's general model of Roman exemplarity: Roller (2018) 4-23.

[3] See Ch. I, p. 47-8.

enhanced leadership and that it was, therefore, a capacity worthy of cultivation. To use van der Blom's terminology, Cicero construed some leaders from the past as 'personal' *exempla*, selecting exemplary aspects of their characters to inform and illustrate his own views on good leadership.[4] More specifically, according to the Ciceronian paradigm, superior *memoria* contributes to the ideal leader's capacity to acquire, store, and act on information about the people he governs; it is often epitomised in the leader's ability to recall and address individuals by name. A combination of factors can explain Cicero's philosophy of *memoria* and leadership, including the influence of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* on Cicero's thought, and the significance that was attached in Roman politics at large to the practice of remembering and greeting individuals by name (*nomenclatio*).

The second section of this chapter examines Cicero's powerful leaders with powerful memories in greater detail. After positing possible explanations for Cicero's attribution of superior *memoria* to Julius Caesar, I identify two of Cicero's memory men, Lucius Licinius Lucullus and Themistocles, as case studies of special importance. Set in the context of Cicero's broader discourse on the relative merits and similarities of the *orator* and the *imperator*, Cicero's attribution of superior *memoria* to orators and military generals alike illustrates his conflation of various exemplary ideals – the ideal speaker, the ideal statesman, the ideal general – into a single persona, a civilian leader who could use his oratory to effect action, and who was therefore worthy of as much praise and renown as any military commander.

The final section of this chapter examines, in brief, the legacy of Cicero's conceptualisation of *memoria* as an attribute of the ideal leader. Although a full study is outside of the scope of this thesis, I suggest that superior *memoria* became an identifiable (if relatively rare) topos of imperial praise. Various authors throughout the Principate highlight the superior *memoria* of different emperors to illustrate great intellect, quasi-omnipotence, and/or leadership skills in much the same way as Cicero had highlighted *memoria* as a praiseworthy attribute of powerful men in the late Republic. In certain cases, the references to Cicero's memory men are explicit; in others, we may simply be witnessing the persistent influence of Ciceronian precedents on the traditions of encomiastic rhetoric.

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[4] See van der Blom (2010) 175-286.

1. Superior *memoria* as an exemplary attribute

To begin, it is worth briefly reviewing the numerous instances discussed in the previous three chapters where Cicero attributes superior *memoria* to specific individuals. For the purposes of this study, I have divided these individuals into three broad categories. Unsurprisingly, given Cicero's proclivities, the first, large group consists entirely of orators, including all those featured in Chapter III. Cicero generally invokes these speakers to illustrate how memory contributes to and can enhance an orator's ability; some are credited with superlative *memoria naturalis*, some with superlative *memoria artificiosa*, and others with both. The second group of excellent memorisers includes the kind of articulate, scholarly men we might reasonably expect to possess good mnemonic capacity – a group that I have gathered under the suitably non-specific rubric of 'intellectuals', consisting of poets, philosophers, and rhetoricians, including Simonides, Theodectes, Philo, Charmadas, and Metrodorus. Cicero generally credits the Greeks in this group with proficiency in the MOL – that is to say, they provide examples of how *memoria naturalis* might be enhanced using *memoria artificiosa*. I discussed the role that these Greeks may have played in the historical development of *memoria artificiosa* in Chapter II.

As for Roman 'intellectuals', there is one profession that stands out. Cicero attributes superior *memoria naturalis* (unenhanced by artificial techniques) to legal experts (*iurisconsulti*) collectively. In *De oratore*, for instance, the idea that the mnemonic abilities of the legal expert were seen as something of a gold standard is suggested by Cicero's Antonius, who states that the ideal orator must possess *memoria iurisconsultorum*.[5] The proverbially renowned mnemonic powers of the *iurisconsultus* may ultimately stem from the ancient role of priestly pontiffs who acted as guardians of the law, and who were required to memorise and recite the relevant legal formulas verbatim.[6] Of course, by Cicero's day, legal texts were no longer kept under religious guardianship and were accessible for consultation, so there was no absolute need for verbatim memorisation.[7] Cicero, in fact, complained that whereas he had himself learnt the Twelve Tables as a *carmen necessarium*, young men no longer

[5] *De or.* 1.128. Cf. *Leg.* 3.41, where Cicero stipulates that the senator, in his role as a lawmaker, must possess excellent *memoria* so that he can produce relevant legal knowledge at will.

[6] See Pharr (1939) 258-9, Riggsby (2015) 444-6.

[7] For the 'professionalisation' of jurists in the later republican period, see Frier (1985) 269-84.

bothered with such burdensome tasks.[8] Good mnemonic capacity nevertheless remained a prerequisite for those who would specialise in the acquisition and application of legal knowledge (rather as it does today). We see this requirement in a letter of recommendation Cicero sent to Caesar in Gaul, praising the work and talents of Trebatius Testa, who would go on to become one of the most influential legal experts of the late Republic and early Principate.[9] Cicero commends Trebatius' virtues as a good and honest man, then states, 'he is the cream of the crop in civil law, a man of exceptional *memoria* and supreme learning'.[10]

The third group of exemplary men with exemplary mnemonic capacities is the main topic of discussion in this chapter. The group is, in my view, more surprising than either of the first two, in that it consists of an interesting selection of leaders (*rectores*) and generals (*imperatores*), including Themistocles, Caesar, and Lucullus. One obvious question arises: unlike orators and intellectuals, leaders and generals did not *prima facie* rely on the cultivation of mnemonic capacity to be successful in their professions, so why did Cicero single them out? Small has suggested that it was relatively common for leaders in ancient Greece and Rome to attach importance to the possession of a strong memory, especially for names, and believes that their motives were the same as those of modern politicians.[11] Below, I argue that this observation, while unobjectionable, misses the uniqueness of the Roman (and more specifically, Ciceronian) phenomenon entirely.

Stories about powerful men with powerful memories must have always existed in the Greek and Roman worlds – most frequently cited in modern scholarship is the elder Pliny's list of brilliant memorisers, which stretches back to Simonides.[12] References to these stories are, however, all post-Ciceronian and, in a surprisingly large number of cases, they replicate stories that first appear in the Ciceronian corpus. Obviously, Cicero predominates our texts and to state that no other late-republican authors attributed superior *memoria* to leaders or generals would be to risk arguing *ex silentio*. Nevertheless, superior *memoria* is not commented upon in those near-contemporaneous works that do survive. Cornelius Nepos, for instance, never mentions it in the lives of his many generals and statesmen, even when

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[8] *Leg.* 2.59.

[9] For Trebatius, see Bauman (1985) 123-36.

[10] *Fam.* 7.5.3: *familiam ducit in iure civili, singulari memoria, summa scientia*. For the letter as a commendation, see Cotton (1985) 333-4.

[11] Small (1997) 113-4, and (2007) 203-4; see also Yates (1966) 55, Baroin (2007) *ad loc.* 26-7.

[12] Plin. *HN* 7.88-9.

writing about a leader such as Themistocles, whose legendary mnemonic prowess Cicero highlights repeatedly.[13] Rather, the stories appear more frequently in texts from the early imperial period onwards, in which Ciceronian precedents abound.[14] These initial observations hint at the argument outlined below: that Cicero's attribution of superior *memoria* to powerful leaders was innovative and perhaps also unique.

As in the case of Simonides, I am not suggesting that Cicero was the originator of legends regarding exemplary leaders from the Greek past (although in the case of certain contemporaneous Romans, like Lucullus, he is certainly the original source). Cicero collected, elaborated, and repeatedly cited stories of powerful men with powerful memories in a way that others did not. What we see across a range of Cicero's works is the amplification of pre-existing stories about Greeks with fabulous mnemonic skills and the adaption of those Greek models to fit Cicero's own Roman *exempla*. In the same way as the Simonidean origin myth first became widespread in the Roman world, Cicero's works popularised these other legends and the stories proliferated.

I begin with the only prominent (surviving) pre-Ciceronian model of the 'powerful man with a powerful memory': Xenophon's Cyrus the Great. Plato, in the *Republic*, included memory in his lists of the attributes that should be sought in a ruler, alongside others such as diligence and aptitude for learning – in this context, good (natural) memory is one of the hallmarks of general intelligence and a quick mind, which are deemed essential leadership traits.[15] The only surviving attribution of good memory to a leader from third- and second-century texts follows this Platonic paradigm: Polybius, when enumerating the virtues of Philip V, lists intelligence, memory, and charisma together.[16] Xenophon, however, went much further than Plato, separating memory from the other generic intellectual attributes of an ideal ruler and

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[13] Note that Nepos does highlight Themistocles' impressive language-learning ability (*Them.* 10), in an anecdote that perhaps exaggerates Thucydides' account (Thuc. 1.138.1). He does not associate Themistocles' linguistic skill with superior mnemonic ability; although Quintilian (*Inst.* 11.3.50) and Pliny (*HN* 7.88) apparently assume a connection. Regardless, Cicero was the first to popularise specific stories about Themistocles' powers of recollection. As for the absence of superior memory as a trait of good leadership in Nepos' lives, we may perhaps consider *Artaxerxes Mnemon* an exception, simply for his name: Nep. *Reg.* 1.3. Nepos does not tell us why Artaxerxes II deserved the title Μνήμων, 'of good memory', although I would (cautiously) posit a link to the ancient official role of μνήμονες as authoritative arbiters or judges: see Thomas (1992) 69.

[14] See below, p. 179-84.

[15] Pl. *Resp.* 486c-487a, 535c, with the caveat of 503b-c.

[16] Polyb. 4.77.3.

formulating a story to explain the importance of superlative (not merely good) mnemonic skill. The key passage is *Cyropaedia* 5.3.34-51, where Xenophon explains why Cyrus was admired for his ability to remember the names of the men in his vast army. The episode occurs after Cyrus has allied himself to an Assyrian eunuch, Gadatas, as he readies his army to march against the Assyrian king. Cyrus calls upon Chrysantas by name, to march with the heavy infantry at the front; next, Cyrus names Artabazus, to lead the archers; Andamyas, the Median infantry; Embas, the Armenian infantry; Artuchas, the Hyrcanian infantry; Thambradas, the Sacian infantry; and Datamas, the Cadusian infantry. Cyrus then specifies that all should maintain strict formation, before beginning another similar catalogue of names and races, in which 'infantry' is replaced with 'cavalry'. Finally, he emphasises that their ordered arrangement must be preserved (ἡ τάξις φυλακτέα). This speech leads Cyrus' soldiers to comment upon how he named and arranged his leaders and their units μνημονικῶς, that is, by demonstrating good mnemonic ability, or recalling them accurately in an ordered fashion.[17]

I have included this somewhat repetitive context for several reasons. First, Cyrus' lists of infantry and cavalry are instantly reminiscent of the epic catalogues upon which the passage might be modelled: as mentioned elsewhere, the ordered and programmatic arrangement of such catalogues acts as a mnemonic device, inasmuch as the formulaic structure aids retention and reproduction.[18] Here, Cyrus (and, I suppose, Xenophon himself) performs as the rhapsode, using his powerful memory to conjure and create a structured army out of disordered and unwieldy constituent parts.[19] More prosaically, Cyrus' well-ordered memory produces order in his army. There is, I should stress, no suggestion that Cyrus was using any kind of mnemonic device to aid his memory. Rather, the passage provides an illustration of how order and memory were understood to be intimately connected even outside of the realm of artificial mnemonics. The natural link between order and memorability is also highlighted elsewhere in Xenophon's oeuvre. In the *Oeconomicus*,

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[17] Although μνημονικῶς does not *necessarily* imply structured recollection, the context in which it appears here links Cyrus' excellent memory to the well-ordered arrangement of his troops.

[18] See Ch. I, p. 31-2. Cataloguing an army in this fashion was not uncommon in prose. Herodotus provides a prime example when enumerating the Persian forces in book 7: he catalogues nations, captains, and generals, moving from the infantry (7.61-83), to cavalry (7.84-8), to navy (7.89-99). The distinct feature of Xenophon's (much shorter) catalogue is that it is produced from (and retained in) Cyrus' memory; in Herodotus, Xerxes instructs scribes to make written records of the arrangement of his massed troops (7.100). For other military catalogues, see Courtney (1988) 3-8.

[19] Cf. Tatum, who posits that Cyrus' talent for naming is a revealing commentary on how Xenophon 'confers narrative importance on a character' by choosing 'to name or not to name': Tatum (1989) 176-7.

Xenophon's Ischomachus asserts that men and women have been endowed with equal mnemonic ability because memory is equally essential for their 'divinely-allotted' functions. He says that for women, maintaining order in the household is useful for several reasons, most notably because order allows a wife or housekeeper to remember where things are kept. Ischomachus explains at length (and with the use of multiple analogies) how there should be a place in the household for everything, and everything should be kept in its place.[20] Thus, extrinsic order aids intrinsic natural memory.[21] The link between order and memory remains, but the domestic scenario in the *Oeconomicus* inverts the relationship exemplified by Cyrus: in the household, control of external order promotes the wife's internal mnemonic retention; for Cyrus, excellent mnemonic retention promotes external control of the army.

The enhancement of power and control is in fact the key benefit that superior mnemonic capacity – and specifically, superior mnemonic capacity for names – bestows upon Xenophon's Cyrus. As modern studies have shown, putting names to faces is a mentally burdensome task.[22] Just as today, individuals in the ancient world needed strategies to alleviate the difficulty; as we have seen, one of the earliest examples of basic associative mnemonic techniques involves name-memorisation.[23] The easiest strategy for a king or general to keep track of his underlings would have been to employ aides. Xenophon, however, tells us that Cyrus retains every man's name in his own memory. This personal knowledge allows him to inspire either confidence or fear in his soldiers; it promises individual recognition and spurs them on to greater deeds; and it forces each of them to take responsibility instead of seeking refuge in collective anonymity.[24]

Although this lesson in leadership was the original reason Xenophon included the anecdote in the *Cyropaedia*, it seems to have been generally overlooked by Roman authors of the first century CE who referenced the story. Pliny and Quintilian simply cite Cyrus' memory for names as one example in a list of prodigious mnemonic feats, intended both as a measure of the astonishing mnemonic capacity of the human mind and, in Quintilian's case, as an

[20] Xen. *Oec.* 7.26, 8.3, 8.10-7.

[21] Purves argues that Xenophon's *oikos* provides space for the categorisation of items in a similar way to ancient mnemonic techniques such as the MOL: Purves (2010) 196-234. While the resemblance exists, it is entirely incidental.

[22] Brédart provides a full review of the many studies that have shown proper names are more difficult to recall than common nouns, before formulating hypotheses to explain the relative difficulty: Brédart (2017) 145-54.

[23] *Dissoi logoi* 9.4-5: see Ch. II, p. 66-8.

[24] Xen. *Cyr.* 5.3.46-50.

inspirational precedent.[25] Valerius Maximus, in an earlier retelling of the episode, reproduces more of the original focus, mentioning that Cyrus needed no *monitor* to help him greet his army.[26] Moreover, all three authors mention Cyrus' memory for names alongside another legend about the king Mithridates' linguistic ability, stating that Mithridates knew twenty-two languages, which enabled him to communicate with his subjects without an interpreter. The repeated co-incidence of the stories is likely indicative of more than simply superficial similarity between the two kings and their great intellectual powers. Just like Cyrus' cultivation of his memory for names, Mithridates' language-learning enhanced his ability to communicate with men of lower rank without aid (or aides). The similar leadership lessons that can be drawn from each story therefore suggest that they were (originally at least) as much about celebrating superhuman powers of memory and intellect as attributes in and of themselves as they were about highlighting how such abilities enabled powerful rulers to influence and govern their subordinates effectively.

We should treat Cyrus' extraordinary memory for names accordingly, as a fictional attribute designed to illustrate certain aspects of Xenophon's 'ideal' ruler.[27] Although Pliny *et al.* gloss the fictional context, it is clear that Cicero read the *Cyropaedia* in a more nuanced, allegorical fashion. Although Cicero never cites the mnemonic prowess of Xenophon's Cyrus explicitly, I believe we can state with relative certainty that he was the original paradigm for Cicero's powerful man with a powerful memory. There are several reasons to be confident that this was the case. First, multiple references to the *Cyropaedia* appear throughout Cicero's works, suggesting that he had detailed knowledge of the text. The references have led numerous scholars to examine the influence of the *Cyropaedia* on Ciceronian conceptualisations of the ideal ruler in works such as *Pro lege Manilia* and *De re publica*.[28] The fact that Cicero mentions the *Cyropaedia* in his correspondence several times suggests that the work was also familiar to his contemporaries. Writing to his brother Quintus (who was serving as *propraetor* in Asia), Cicero draws extensively on the *Cyropaedia* in a discussion of how one ought to exercise power as an elected official. The ideal model is, he says, 'Cyrus, as described by Xenophon, not according to historical fact but as a portrait of

[25] Plin. *HN* 7.88, Quint. *Inst.* 11.2.50.

[26] Val. Max. 8.7.ext.16. The *monitor* must, in this context, indicate someone performing the role of *nomenclator* – a decidedly Roman concept (discussed further below), anachronistically applied to the Cyrus story, which illustrates how Valerius was adapting his material for a Roman audience.

[27] For a summative portrait of Xenophon's 'ideal', see Tatum (1994) 21-4.

[28] E.g. Gruber (1986) 27-46 and (1988) 243-58; Radford (2002) 7-9; Caspar (2011).

just rulership'.[29] He tells Quintus that Xenophon covers every duty of the scrupulous and fair ruler and, for that reason, the *Cyropaedia* was a favourite text of the great Scipio Africanus.[30] He consequently urges Quintus to use the 'Education of Cyrus' as an education in the art of governance.[31] Elsewhere, in a letter (to Paetus) written around a decade later, Cicero jokes that he consulted the *Cyropaedia* so much while executing his duties as *proconsul* and *imperator* in Cilicia that he wore it out with reading.[32] Yet another example comes in a letter to Atticus, where Cicero makes a pun (of questionable comedic merit) involving an architect named Cyrus, whose work Atticus has criticised – he has, says Cicero, criticised the 'Education of Cyrus'.[33] So Cicero cracks bad jokes about Xenophon's work – but they are not jokes made at the expense of the text. Rather, they suggest that the *Cyropaedia* loomed large in Cicero's mind as an important point of reference in discourse with his peers. Indeed, Cicero's affection for the *Cyropaedia* is consistent with his attitude towards Xenophon's works in general, which he recommends studying in depth (*studiose*), on the grounds that they contain a wealth of the most useful information.[34]

When it comes to the idea that Cicero took Xenophon's Cyrus as a model for the powerful leader with a powerful memory, the evidence presented above is essentially circumstantial. Plutarch's biography, however, provides an explicit indication that the passage about memorising names at *Cyr.* 5.3.46-51 left a lasting impression on Cicero. Plutarch gives a detailed report of Cicero's (typically scholastic) approach to starting out in Roman politics. Cicero, he says, believed it a matter for reproach that, while craftsmen (οἱ βάναυσοι) know the name and details of every one of their inanimate tools, the statesman (ὁ πολιτικός) should care so little about knowing the names and details of his fellow citizens. Consequently, Cicero apparently made a practice of memorising not only the names of important men, but where they lived, who their friends were, and so on.[35] This philosophy, taken in the context of Cicero's emerging magisterial aspirations, is reminiscent of the advice

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[29] Cic. *QFr.* 1.1.22-3: *Cyrus ille a Xenophonte non ad historiae fidem scriptus sed ad effigiem iusti imperi*. Latin text: Shackleton Bailey (1980).

[30] Cf. *Rep.* 1.43, where Cicero has Scipio's character recommend Cyrus as the 'most just' and 'wisest' king (*iustissimus fuit sapientissimusque rex*, text: Powell (2006)).

[31] For discussion, see Tatum (1989) 9-11.

[32] *Fam.* 9.25.1, discussed fully below, p. 168.

[33] *Att.* 2.3.

[34] *Sen.* 59. Cf. *Brut.* 112, where Cicero suggests that lots of modern orators also like to read the *Cyropaedia*, although Scaurus' autobiography might do them more good.

[35] Plut. *Cic.* 7.1-2.

given in certain sections of the *Commentariolum petitionis* (for which, see below).[36] More closely than that, however, it mirrors the rationale for memorising names that Xenophon attributes to Cyrus: Cyrus, says Xenophon, believed it strange that, while craftsmen (οἱ βάναυσοι) know the names of all their tools (and while the doctor, ὁ ἰατρός, knows the names of his medicines and instruments), the general (ὁ στρατηγός) should care so little about knowing the names of his soldiers.[37] It is easy to see how Plutarch's formulation of Cicero's analogy between οἱ βάναυσοι and ὁ πολιτικός could well be an adaptation of Xenophon's analogy between οἱ βάναυσοι and ὁ στρατηγός. Assuming that Plutarch's reproduction of Cicero's view is authentic, and taking Cicero's extensive knowledge of the *Cyropaedia* into account, I do not think the close parallel is merely coincidental. Cicero took Xenophon's explanation of why a ruler should cultivate his memory to heart, transferring the skills of Xenophon's ideal military general onto his own ideal civilian governor. According to this formulation of the Ciceronian archetype, leaders both of soldiers and of citizens need a strong memory for names to make best use of the (human) resources at their command.

Cicero's philosophy that a good leader ought to know the names of the men he leads must also be understood in the context of late-republican social and political customs, which vested great significance in the act of greeting people by name. In particular, *nomenclatio* (the skill and practice of greeting by name) was essential for candidates who were canvassing for support before magisterial elections.[38] The importance of remembering names is stressed in the so-called *Commentariolum petitionis*, a text that is, or purports to be, an essay written in the early part of 64 BCE by Quintus Cicero, advising his brother on how to campaign for the upcoming consular elections.[39] The *Commentariolum* sets out how the candidate must win over certain 'men of special influence' (*homines excellenti gratia*) from every walk of life,

[36] As observed by Lintott (2013) 142.

[37] Xen. *Cyr.* 5.3.46-7.

[38] Note that the technical term *nomenclatio* was rare: *Comment*. 41 is its only use in an electoral context (cf. Columella *Rust*. 3.2.31). The preferred construction is *aliquem nomine salutare, vel sim*. I use *nomenclatio* here as a convenient shorthand for the practice.

[39] The debate over authenticity is inconclusive and ongoing: for a summary, see Morstein-Marx (1998) 259-61. Gruen stresses the work's accuracy and avoidance of anachronism: Gruen (1974) 138-9, n. 76. For this reason, the *Commentariolum* is generally understood to provide accurate information about Roman electioneering.

turning them into *amici* to advocate on his behalf with their peers in the voting assemblies.[40] If a candidate is unable to greet potential supporters by name, asks the *Commentariolum*, how will he ever get them to commit to his side?[41] The size of the task is significant: the candidate must consider the whole of Rome, with all its districts and neighbourhoods, groups and colleges; then, he must map out the whole of Italy tribe-by-tribe, securing it all *in animo ac memoria*; finally, he must identify the key men in each location – that is to say, he must make a list of influential names.[42] *Nomenclatio* is, according to the *Commentariolum*, particularly effective when attempting to win over *homines municipales ac rusticani* – a group of voters from outside the city, whose details and interests some candidates ignore.[43] Thus, the practice of learning and recalling names was positioned as a prerequisite for recruiting and developing key supporters.

Further, we have an intriguing anecdote (of third-century origin, but first alluded to by Cicero) involving an impressive feat of name-memorisation performed by the ambassador Cineas, which illustrates how (and perhaps also why) superior memory for names was considered an admirable skill and a potentially powerful political tool. Cineas was an ambassador of Pyrrhus who, during the Pyrrhic war (in 280 BCE), was famously dispatched to Rome to negotiate with the senate.[44] He was a Thessalian pupil of Demosthenes and a skilled orator who seems to have held considerable power in Pyrrhus' court; we know that he also wrote an epitome of a military handbook by Aeneas Tacitus of Stymphalus and a historical work, which probably involved Pyrrhus himself. Cineas' writings were still being read in the first century BCE: Cicero, for instance, refers to Cineas' military books in the aforementioned letter he wrote to Paetus from Cilicia, joking that Paetus must have acquired his own military knowledge from the treatises of Pyrrhus and Cineas.[45] But more than this literary legacy, it was Cineas' negotiations with the senate that made a lasting impression at Rome. Pyrrhus wanted Cineas to persuade the Romans to agree the terms of a peace treaty and, to aid

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[40] *Comment.* 18, but see also 3-4, 16-7, 29-30. These *homines* were not *patroni* who mobilised *clientes* to vote, but 'middlemen' (Morstein-Marx dubs them 'vote-brokers') who could deliver the vote of the groups (centuries, tribes, *sodalitates*, etc.) to which they belonged. See Yakobson (1992) 32-52; Morstein-Marx (1998) 259-88.

[41] *Comment.* 28: the question is framed as an attack on Cicero's rival Antonius.

[42] *Comment.* 30.

[43] *Comment.* 31-2.

[44] For the chronology of Cineas' negotiations, see Lefkowitz (1959) 147-77, Kent (2020) 62-81.

[45] *Fam.* 9.25.1.

Cineas' powers of persuasion, he attempted to bribe influential senators.[46] Appius Caecus, vehemently opposed to Cineas' presence in the city, made a speech that was so impressive it was handed down (according to Cicero's chronology) as one of the earliest preserved Latin orations.[47] The numerous later historical accounts of the negotiations tend to emphasise how individual senators selflessly refused the gifts that Cineas offered them on Pyrrhus' behalf, while Roman historians find Cineas' attempts to win over Roman women with presents particularly worthy of note.[48]

As well as bribery, Cineas' embassy to the senate apparently included an astonishing display of name-memorisation. Although the story is divorced from the historical narrative and seldom (if ever) mentioned in discussions of the Pyrrhic negotiations, that is the context in which it must be understood. The first full surviving version comes from the elder Seneca:

> qui missus a Pyrrho legatus ad Romanos postero die novus homo et senatum et omnem urbanam circumfusam senatui plebem nominibus suis persalutavit.
>
> Sen. *Contr.* 1.pr.19.
>
> He [Cineas] had been dispatched by Pyrrhus as ambassador to the Romans and, on the day after he arrived as a newcomer, he greeted in succession and by their proper names the senate and all the plebeians of the city who were crowded around the senate.

First, it is important to note that this story concerning Cineas' remarkable memory for names must have been current long before the elder Seneca told it. Cicero provides the first surviving reference, when commenting on the sheer magnitude of Cineas' mnemonic skill.[49] It may even be the case that Cicero was one of Seneca's primary sources.[50] The story does not, however, appear in subsequent historical accounts of the Pyrrhic negotiations.

Second, the nature of Cineas' feat of memory is key. He memorised names (rather than a speech, or poetry, or a list of items) and this allowed him to engage in an act of mass

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[46] Ennius' *Annales* 6 focussed on the Pyrrhic war and was an influential source for later historians. For surviving accounts of the negotiations, see e.g. Livy *Epit.* 13, Plut. *Pyrrh.* 18-9, etc.

[47] *Brut.* 61.

[48] For Cineas' gifts (to women in particular), see e.g. Livy 34.4.6-11, Val. Max. 4.3.14, Plut. *Pyrrh.* 18.2. Discussion in Lefkowitz (1959) 158-9.

[49] Cic. *Tusc.* 1.59: for discussion, see Ch. II, p. 104-5. Seneca seems to believe that Cineas was memorising using artificial techniques, since he states that the ability can be acquired by learning a relatively simple *ars* (*Contr.* 1.pr.19: *hoc* […] *non operosa arte tradi potest*).

[50] Cicero may have told the anecdote in a lost work, or it may have been known to Seneca from other sources. The esteem in which Seneca held Cicero and the plentiful Ciceronian intertexts in his work render the former a distinct possibility: see e.g. Sussman (1978) 32, esp. the long n. 66; Pingoud and Roller (2020) 281-3.

nomenclatio. As I discussed earlier, for Romans looking to win the favour of influential men, the practice of *nomenclatio* could initiate and facilitate social interactions; it was a sign of respect and the first building block in the construction of trust. So, when it comes to interpreting Cineas' mnemonic feat, we should lay aside the speculative question of feasibility (difficult; not impossible) and avoid being too distracted by the impressive, though superficially arbitrary, size of the feat itself.[51] For a Roman audience, memorising and greeting hundreds of people by name was more than just a party trick. As is also indicated by the stories regarding Cineas' gift-giving to influential Roman men (and women, who could influence their husbands), Cineas was attempting to endear himself to his Roman hosts. A savvy orator and the ultimate diplomat, he also recognised that greeting individuals by name was an important practice in Roman politics – a practice that he could exploit to his own advantage with a demonstration of superior *memoria*. He even went beyond learning the names of only the most powerful men in the senate and (like a good magisterial candidate) paid attention to the lower orders as well. Thus, Cineas demonstrated that he had achieved mastery of a skill that was valued highly in contemporary politics. From the surviving sources, we can see that the anecdote survived until the late Republic, was picked up by Cicero, told in full by the elder Seneca, and revived again by the elder Pliny.[52] Cineas' feat of memory retained this lasting appeal because it was impressively grand, certainly; but more than this, it demonstrated an outsider's immediate engagement with the important social convention of *nomenclatio*.[53] It was not only Cicero who believed that a strong memory for names was a praiseworthy attribute.

Whether Cicero, or any of the other late-republican Roman elite, devoted time to cultivating their ability to remember names is, however, another matter entirely – and the widespread presence of *nomenclatores* would indicate that they did not. *Nomenclatores* were specialists, typically enslaved, whose main role was to provide their master with the names

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[51] On feasibility, the OCD[5] suggests a maximum size of 300 for the senate in this period (see Momigliano and Cornell (2016)) – a number significantly eclipsed by the feats of modern mnemonists, e.g. Harry Lorayne, a professional mnemonist, who recounts meeting up to 400 audience members before a show and, as its finale, addressing each one by name in turn: Lorayne and Lucus (1974) xv, 66, 199. Thus, Cineas' feat is theoretically within the realms of possibility, even with quite an additional crowd.

[52] Plin. *HN* 7.88: Cineas' story is told alongside the Roman example of one L. Scipio (possibly the consul of 190 BCE), who apparently knew the names of all the *populus Romanus* (cf. Themistocles knowing *nomina omnium civium*, Cic. *Sen.* 21, discussed below). How many people Pliny imagined in said *populus* is unclear. Harris (1989) 31-3 is extremely sceptical of the Scipio story. I would argue that Scipio was, like Cineas, invoked as an *exemplum* because of the importance attached to *nomenclatio*, regardless of how many names he actually knew.

[53] The social appeal of name-memorisation may help explain why the elder Seneca (who came to Rome as an 'outsider' from the provinces) overexaggerates his own superlative memory for names at *Contr.* 1.pr.2.

and details of any influential or important men he might meet but embarrassingly fail to recognise.[54] They were utilised especially during election season by candidates canvassing for magisterial offices. Cicero personally kept a *nomenclator* among his permanent retinue – whether this was normal practice is difficult to determine.[55] The presence of Cicero's *nomenclator* outside of election season is nevertheless revealing. On the one hand, it indicates the importance that Cicero attached to *nomenclatio* even when he was not campaigning. On the other, it suggests that the practice was, in many respects, just a façade. Roman 'politicians' did not really keep innumerable names and details in their heads any more than politicians do today – they used aides. The appearance of infallible *memoria* had nevertheless to be sustained, to maintain relationships and status, to give the impression of being well-connected and widely recognised.[56]

Perhaps the social pressures created by the traditional Roman practice of *nomenclatio* were, therefore, part of the reason why Cicero considered superior *memoria* a useful leadership attribute. Xenophon's Cyrus memorised the names of his soldiers to enhance his ability to communicate with them directly, to influence and control them. The *Commentariolum* stresses that the candidate must memorise the names and details of influential electors to influence them, to win them over, to control their votes and the votes of their peers. Cineas too utilised his superior memory for names in an attempt to win over the senators and the Roman people. Personal recognition endears support, whether for candidate or king, and it seems that Cicero took this tenet of leadership on board and incorporated it into his own conceptualisation of the ideal leader.

2. Cicero's leaders and generals

Cicero attributes superlative *memoria* to two of the most powerful individuals of the late Republic, L. Licinius Lucullus and Julius Caesar. I shall deal with Caesar first, since the allusions to his *memoria* are brief and illustrate how Cicero might attribute strong *memoria* to a powerful individual as an incidental, not defining, character trait. One reference appears in *Pro rege Deiotaro*, where Cicero addresses Caesar directly, asking on behalf of Hieras (a

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[54] See the monograph by Kolendo (1989).

[55] Cic. *Att.* 4.1.5. Quintus Cicero also kept a permanent *nomenclator*: *QFr.* 1.2.9.

[56] Hence Cicero's attack on Cato for betraying his 'Stoic' ideals by using a *nomenclator* focuses on the 'deceptive' nature of the practice: *Mur.* 77.

representative of Deiotarus) that Caesar remember the events that had transpired in Galatia, where the king had allegedly attempted to assassinate him: 'he [Hieras] appeals,' says Cicero, 'to your *memoria*, which is exceptionally strong'.[57] Cicero then recites a carefully edited version of events to try and establish Deiotarus' innocence. Thus, the praise of the strength of Caesar's memory, while superficially flattering, is rhetorically designed to prime Caesar for the ensuing narrative, to increase the likelihood that he will be persuaded by it: since Caesar's powers of recall are so *very* impressive, he will of course remember that events transpired just as Hieras claims they transpired. Cicero dismisses any concerns Caesar might have about the fallibility of his memory and then immediately tries to exploit that fallibility by reinforcing the desired narrative with a repeated retelling.[58] While Cicero's apparently implicit grasp of the potential effect of *post factum* narrative on eyewitness experience is certainly interesting, it hardly contributes to a portrayal of Caesar as mnemonically gifted. His memories, like the memories of everyone else, are potentially subject to external influence.

Cicero makes another reference to Caesar's *memoria* in the second Philippic, building Caesar up at Marcus Antonius' expense: Cicero says that Caesar was an exemplary intellectual, leader, and general; Marcus Antonius, on the other hand, possesses none of Caesar's qualities, except lust for despotism (*Phil.* 2.116-7). Among other traits, Cicero states that Caesar possessed *ingenium*, *ratio*, *memoria*, and *litterae*, before moving directly on to his ability to wage successful wars (which were, Cicero admits, bad for the *res publica*). As mentioned previously, Plato had included a retentive memory among the other generic intellectual virtues of the good leader. In the rhetorical tradition, 'good memory' was sometimes listed among the 'goods of the mind', the virtuous hallmarks of wisdom to which upstanding individuals should aspire: Aristotle, for instance, includes μνήμη alongside other praiseworthy natural intellectual capacities, while Cicero himself lists *memoria* similarly in *De inventione*.[59] Likewise, in *De finibus*, Cicero cites *memoria* as one of the virtues that define someone as *ingeniosus*, 'innately talented'.[60] In the second Philippic, Cicero bestows the virtuous aspects of wisdom upon Caesar not so much to praise or defend him, as to set up a character assassination of Antonius. In this instance, therefore, the attribution of strong

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[57] *Deiot.* 42: *memoriam tuam implorat, qua vales plurimum*. Latin text: Gotoff (1993).

[58] Memories produced in eyewitness accounts have a strong tendency to be influenced by subsequent retellings of events: this 'misinformation effect' has been well-documented in studies since the 1980s, see e.g. Loftus and Hoffman (1989) 100-4 and, for a more up-to-date survey, Weingardt, Toland, and Loftus (2010) 3-26.

[59] Arist. *Rh.* 1.6.15, Cic. *Inv. rhet.* 2.160.

[60] *Fin.* 5.36.

memoria to Caesar is part of a carefully planned rhetorical construct – a contrast of characters (*dissimilitudo animorum*, if we want to assign it a label), designed to denigrate Antonius. Good memory only contributes indirectly to Caesar's leadership, as one component of his sharp intelligence.

In stark contrast, in the preface to the *Lucullus*, Cicero takes the notion of superior *memoria* as an attribute of a strong leader and general to the absolute extreme: Lucullus, he says, used his impressive memory, which had been enhanced by training in *memoria artificiosa*, to turn himself into the ideal *imperator*, simply by reading and memorising information.[61] Earlier, I referenced how Cicero, in a jocular letter to Paetus, had entertained the idea that reading might have the power to improve a man's leadership skills. The relevant sentences are worth quoting in full:

> Summum me ducem litterae tuae reddiderunt. plane nesciebam te tam peritum esse rei militaris […] sed quid ludimus? nescis quo cum imperatore tibi negotium sit. Παιδείαν Κύρου, quam contrieram legendo, totam in hoc imperio explicavi.

Cic. *Fam.* 9.25.1.[62]

> Your letters have turned me into a supreme leader. I was wholly unaware that you were so experienced in military affairs […] But why are we clowning around? You don't know which *imperator* you're dealing with: in this command, I have put into practice the entire *Cyropaedia*, which I've worn out with reading.

Here, Cicero treats the idea that reading could turn a *tiro* into an *imperator* as a conceit for his joke. Paetus has evidently included some discussion of military matters in his letters to Cicero, perhaps congratulating him on his victories as *proconsul* of Cilicia; now Cicero responds that he has no need of additional input from Paetus (thank you very much) because he has already learnt everything there is to know about leadership from his close reading of the *Cyropaedia*.[63] Moreover, he has put that close reading into practice to achieve his victories and be hailed *imperator* by his troops.[64]

In reality, of course, no self-respecting Roman *imperator* would have attributed his military prowess to book-learning – rather, he would point to prior experience, successes, and

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[61] *Luc.* 1-4. For the philosophical content of *Luc.* that relates to memory, see Ch. II, p. 93-6.

[62] Latin text: Shackleton Bailey (1977).

[63] For the jocularity of Cicero's epistolary relationship with Paetus, see Leach (1999) 169-77.

[64] After laying waste to hostile encampments in the Amanus range: see *Att.* 5.20.3-4, where Cicero writes in cheerful tones to Atticus, referring to the title bestowed upon him as an *appellatio inanis*.

victories. We see this approach in Cicero's more serious dispatches from Cilicia, which magnify the gravity of his victorious military operations in a bid to launch his (ultimately unsuccessful) campaign for a triumph.[65] Much earlier in his career, and long before any personal triumphal aspirations, Cicero had likewise highlighted experience and success as hallmarks of the great general. In *Pro lege Manilia*, when explaining why Pompey should replace Lucullus in command of the war against Mithridates, Cicero lauds Pompey for joining his father's army when he was barely more than a boy; for becoming a teenage *imperator*; for waging more wars than most men have read about; and for learning *scientia rei militaris* ('knowledge of military matters') not from the instruction of other men but from his own successful campaigns and commands.[66] Conversely, in *Pro Fonteio*, Cicero criticises the Roman youth at large because they no longer desire to gain military experience on the front line. By contrast, men like Pompey and Fonteius were, he says, educated in *scientia rei militaris* during successful campaigns, not from books. Cicero argues that the safety of the people depends upon such military men and, for that reason, Fonteius must not be exiled.[67] *Scientia rei militaris* is itself one of Cicero's four prerequisites for the *summus imperator*.[68] Ideally, it is knowledge acquired on campaign and in the line of battle, not (as Cicero jokes with Paetus) from reading. Campbell believes that Cicero's stance on the acquisition of *scientia rei militaris* suggests that 'senators of conventional mediocrity' did indeed learn how to command troops from handbooks and *exempla*.[69] Such texts cannot have been their only source of knowledge, however, and practical experience remained the gold standard.

When attempting to persuade the public, then, Cicero fully subscribed to the primacy of military experience over and above theoretical instruction, even if in his personal correspondence he joked about his own tendency to reach for the *scrinium* before the *gladius*. In the opening to the *Lucullus*, however, he overturns this paradigm completely. Cicero wrote the letter to Paetus quoted above in 50 BCE. In 45, when he was composing the *Lucullus*, he took his 'joke' (that he had been transformed into an *imperator* by reading) and made it integral to a sincere portrayal of Lucullus' military prowess. Lucullus' natural talent (*ingenium*) was so great, says Cicero, that he did not require the 'unteachable lessons of

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[65] See e.g. Cicero's exchange with Cato, *Fam.* 15.4-6. Discussion, Leach (2016) 503-23.

[66] *Leg. Man.* 28. For the speech and its context, see Steel (2001) 113-35.

[67] *Font.* 42-3.

[68] *Leg. Man.* 28.

[69] Campbell (1987) 21, and 13-8 on military manuals.

experience' (*indocilis usus disciplina*). Instead he spent the voyage to Asia interrogating experienced military men and reading military accounts, with the result that 'he arrived a ready-made *imperator*, though he had set out from Rome ignorant of military matters'.[70] According to this conceit, Lucullus' conversations and the accounts that he read brought about the same transformation in him as Paetus' letters and the *Cyropaedia* had in Cicero. The conceit implies that even though experience cannot be taught, a deficit of experience can be overcome by the power of the intellect – and Lucullus overcame it, thanks, as Cicero goes on to say, to his *divina memoria rerum*.

The conceit that opens the *Lucullus* is both remarkably imaginative and fairly absurd.[71] In reality, Lucullus had acquired plenty of military experience before he was appointed to lead the fight against Mithridates, serving under Sulla and later during campaigns in Africa.[72] He did not need to use a mnemonic technique – and moreover, *memoria rerum*, a technique that was the speciality of orators – to memorise facts as if he were about to make a speech in the forum. Yet Cicero would have us believe that Mithridates was awed by Lucullus' hastily-acquired military expertise and recognised him as the greatest leader in history.[73] So why did Cicero attribute Lucullus' practical military proficiency to his ostensibly superhuman *memoria* and, specifically, to *memoria rerum*? Scholarly explanations generally (and quite rightly) focus on the role of Lucullus in the ensuing philosophical dialogue. Cappello, for instance, argues that Lucullus' extraordinary *memoria* readies him for his role as a faithful reproducer of the conversations he had with Antiochus about philosophy.[74] Listening, reading, and the same mnemonic technique that turned Lucullus into an *imperator* will, in the context of the dialogue, transform him into a philosopher of sorts. Yet he remains, in Cappello's words, an 'uncritical memorizer', and this 'Lucullan' approach is at odds with the one that Cicero advocates through his own persona, as he refutes the uncritical acceptance of doctrine and holds that debate is a necessary part of philosophical

[70] *Luc.* 2: *in Asiam factus imperator venit, cum esset Roma profectus rei militaris rudis*.

[71] Cicero himself seems to have recognised the absurdity of using Lucullus in a philosophical dialogue, since he reassigned Lucullus' speeches (notably to Varro) in his revised versions of the *Academici libri*. See Cic. *Att.* 13.19.3-5 and Hatzimichali (2012) 18.

[72] For an outline of Lucullus' life and career, see Brittain (2006) 129.

[73] *Luc.* 3.

[74] Cappello (2019) 229-33. *Luc*. 10 makes it clear that Lucullus is simply rehearsing Antiochus' arguments. Antiochus (a student of Philo) attempted to reintroduce Stoicism into Scepticism: Polito (2012) 31-54. For Lucullus' involvement with Antiochus, see Hatzimichali (2012) 16-24.

development.[75] For Cicero, as in rhetoric, so also in philosophy: verbatim reproduction of ideas is not enough. Strong *memoria* is necessary to retain a firm grasp on the fundamentals, but what must accompany *memoria* is an ability to think critically, to adapt arguments to circumstance; not dissimilarly, in oratory, the ultimate benefit of strong *memoria* is not that it enables the speaker to unthinkingly reproduce a speech but that it allows him the freedom to improvise according to circumstance.[76]

The opening of the *Lucullus* is necessarily at odds with the subsequent content: in establishing Lucullus' philosophical credentials, Cicero engages not with the abstract modes of argument that follow, but with the much more concrete modes of Roman exemplarity. He invites us to consider Lucullus' merits by invoking contrasts – with Hortensius, Themistocles, and Mithridates – and by referencing various exemplary attributes, such as intellectual ability and leadership skills. Most interestingly for this study, the attribute Cicero chooses to foreground is *memoria*, natural and artificial. To this end, he first contrasts the mnemonic prowess of Lucullus with that of Hortensius, an expedient comparison, since Hortensius was another principal interlocutor in the *Academici libri* and, in reality, he enjoyed a reputation for impressive *memoria*.[77] Cicero explains that both men, Hortensius and Lucullus, were extremely proficient practitioners of *memoria artificiosa* (the MOL), but while Hortensius possessed unrivalled *memoria verborum*, Lucullus excelled in *memoria rerum*. Cicero explains the importance of the distinction on the grounds that *res* are more important than *verba* 'for getting business done' (*in negotiis gerendis*).[78] Lucullus' *memoria* consequently helped him attain expertise in practical military matters.

We need not give any credence to Cicero's estimation of the two men's mnemonic abilities to see the significance of the underlying comparison. *Memoria rerum* is (as Cicero stressed at *De or.* 2.359) the special skill of the orator. Cicero's Lucullus relied solely on his superior *memoria rerum* to become a formidable *imperator*, skilled enough to tackle Mithridates and to rival men with years of front-line experience. The conceit thus begs the question: if Lucullus utilised this specialist oratorical technique to achieve his military greatness, what was to stop another specialist orator from doing the same? Cicero's focus on

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[75] Cappello (2019) 231.

[76] See Ch. I, p. 34-6.

[77] *Luc.* 2. For Hortensius' reputation, see Ch. III, p. 138-44.

[78] Cf. the Auctor *ad Herennium*, who emphasises that *memoria rerum* assists with *negotium*: *Rhet. Her.* 3.40. For the division of the MOL into *memoria rerum* and *memoria verborum*, see Ch. I, p. 22-4.

artificial memory allows him to subtly conflate the attributes of the *orator* and the *imperator*: if we push the Lucullan conceit to the extreme, Cicero is even suggesting that latent within the ideal *orator*, who possesses superhuman *memoria rerum*, there lies a mighty *imperator*, if only the *orator* should choose to apply himself to military affairs. I would not want to attach too much weight to this reading – I am not suggesting that Cicero seriously believed expertise in the MOL qualified an orator to command legions – but Cicero's desire to conflate the attributes of the ideal *orator* and *imperator*, at a point in Roman history when powerful military generals dominated the political stage, helps explain why he attributed strong *memoria* to exemplary individuals from both professions.

Themistocles, whom Cicero also invokes in the opening of the *Lucullus*, is another case in point. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, Themistocles is one of Cicero's favourite *exempla*, often cited for his *ingenium*, his *consilium*, and especially his *memoria*.[79] As in the case of Simonides, Cicero is the earliest (although surely not the original) source for many of our stories concerning Themistocles' incredible mnemonic ability. In *De senectute*, for instance, when addressing memory impairment in old age, Cicero introduces Themistocles as a counter-example, because, according to Cicero's reasoning, Themistocles had secured the names of all the Athenian citizens in his memory so well, he would not have started greeting them incorrectly as he aged.[80] Regardless of the probative strength of this anecdote within the context of *De senectute*, Themistocles' ostensibly superior memory for names is significant because it demonstrates he possessed a capacity that, as discussed above, Cicero deemed an important attribute of the ideal statesman. Like Cyrus, and like the expert craftsman who knows the names and details of all his tools, Themistocles had no need of external assistance to remember the names and details of the citizens he led.

Cicero does not invoke Themistocles' memory for names in the opening to the *Lucullus*. Rather, he revives an anecdote he first introduced in *De oratore*, which involves Themistocles, another 'certain learned man' (*quidam doctus homo*), and their differing attitudes towards the *ars memoriae*.[81] Cicero begins by reporting that, like Lucullus,

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[79] For Cicero's other uses of Themistocles as a (personal) *exemplum* (notably as another unjustly exiled statesman), see van der Blom (2010) 213-6.

[80] *Sen.* 21 (cf. Val. Max. 7.ext.15; Plut. *Them.* 5.4). Putting a figure on the number of names Themistocles supposedly memorised seems a pointless endeavour (*pace* Falconer (1923) 29, n. 2).

[81] *De or.* 2.299. It has been assumed that *quidam doctus homo* refers to Simonides, though the story is evidently distinct from the Simonidean origin myth. Cicero remains purposefully vague: see Leeman, Pinkster, and Wisse (1996) 7, *ad loc.*

Themistocles (whom Cicero calls the *princeps Graeciae*) also possessed remarkable *memoria rerum*, which makes him more useful for comparative purposes than Hortensius.[82] Lucullus and Themistocles were both great intellectuals, generals, and leaders. When a 'certain learned man' offered Themistocles the opportunity to learn the precepts of the *ars memoriae*, however, he turned it down, responding that he would rather learn how to forget – he would prefer, as it were, an *ars oblivionis*. In *De oratore*, Cicero's Antonius invokes this same anecdote to illustrate the sheer magnitude of Themistocles' natural talent. In the *Lucullus*, Cicero spins the story in another direction:

> tali ingenio praeditus Lucullus adiunxerat etiam illam quam Themistocles spreverat disciplinam; itaque ut litteris consignamus quae monimentis mandare volumus sic ille in animo res insculptas habebat.

Cic. *Luc.* 2.

> Though gifted with such great natural talent, Lucullus also added the discipline that Themistocles rejected and, consequently, just as we write out in letters that which we wish to commit to permanent record, so he would hold *res* imprinted in his mind.

According to Cicero, then, Lucullus one-upped the exemplary orator, statesman, and general Themistocles, the *princeps Graeciae*, by embracing contemporaneous mnemonic theory – and specifically (as the brief allusion to the wax tablet metaphor makes clear) by embracing the oratorical MOL. In the very next sentence, Cicero introduces Mithridates, the 'greatest king since Alexander' (*rex post Alexandrum maxumus*), citing his opinion that Lucullus was the most impressive *imperator* in history, in every type of warfare, both on land and at sea.[83] The implication is the same as in the comparison with Hortensius: mastery of *memoria rerum* led to Lucullus' military expertise. But by invoking Themistocles, Mithridates, and even Alexander – all exemplary leaders from the East – Cicero now goes one step further. In the pursuit of military excellence, Lucullus the model Roman *imperator* has assimilated a technique drawn originally from Greek rhetorical theory, the *ars memoriae*¸ into his own *ars militaris*, which he then uses to dominate Greece and Asia. In *De oratore*, Cicero's Antonius disregarded Themistocles' rejection of the *ars memoriae* on the grounds that mnemonic theory can be useful in the practical business of oratory. Cicero's Lucullus does likewise, embracing the mnemonic techniques that Themistocles spurned and utilising them in the

[82] *Luc.* 2.

[83] *Luc.* 3.

practical business of military campaigning. Cicero thus portrays an approach to the *ars memoriae* that sees exemplary Romans enhance their innate talents by means of Greek τέχνη put to practical use.

Cicero's attribution of superior *memoria* to both exemplary orators and military generals must be contextualised on two fronts. The first is the developmental history of *memoria artificiosa* as a subdiscipline of Greek rhetoric. Rome's military dominance of the Greek East was, in Cicero's era, well-established; its intellectual dominance was not.[84] For Cicero in particular, the allegedly inferior quality of Roman oratory in comparison to the oratory of a (somewhat nebulously-defined) Athenian golden age – which seems to span the era from Themistocles (or even several generations earlier) to Demosthenes – is a subject that arises repeatedly in *De oratore* and the *Brutus*, when Cicero searches to identify the traits of the ideal Roman orator who will rival and supersede the titans of the Greek past. In his view, it was only with the advent of Crassus and Antonius that Roman orators first equalled the renown of the Greeks in eloquence.[85] The pair belonged to the generation before Cicero and, at the very end of *De oratore*, which is set in 91 BCE, Cicero has his interlocutors posit that the new up-and-coming generation of orators might finally surpass the Greeks, singling out Hortensius for his ability to combine his many natural gifts with skilled application of theory.[86] Likewise, in the *Brutus*, Cicero portrays Hortensius as a fine oratorical innovator, comparing him with the greats, Crassus and Antonius – but here, Hortensius is carefully positioned so that he can be followed (and eventually surpassed) by Cicero himself.[87] As in the case of the exemplary Lucullus, who surpassed Themistocles, Alexander, and Mithridates in military skill thanks to his ability to combine natural talent with applied mnemonic theory, Cicero's exemplary orators eventually become superior to past generations of Greeks thanks to a combination of innate Roman *mores* and *ingenium*, enhanced by the application of Greek theory and training – and not just in the discipline of *memoria*, but across the rhetorical spectrum. This same approach to Greek learning will, Cicero seems to suggest, see future

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[84] For the increasing influence of Greek learning on Rome in this period, see Introduction, p. 13-6.

[85] *Brut.* 138.

[86] *De or.* 3.228-30.

[87] Hortensius is introduced at *Brut.* 301; he and Cicero meet at 319; Cicero 'surpasses' him at 323. For Cicero's teleological approach to oratory, see van den Berg, who makes an interesting argument that Cicero, while implicitly establishing an important place for himself at a high point in the oratorical teleology of the *Brutus*, nevertheless leaves the possibility of further stages of oratorical development open, in order to secure a legacy for his own speeches as works that should be praised and studied, even if aesthetic values in oratory change (as he believes they inevitably will): van den Berg (2019) 583-90, 598-601. Kaster raises some key questions regarding our interpretation of Cicero's oratorical 'history' in the *Brutus*: Kaster (2020) 14-7.

generations of Romans attain and maintain pre-eminence over the Greeks in the disciplines of peace, such as oratory, as well as in the disciplines of war.

The other necessary contextual front is Cicero's broader discourse on the roles of (and relationship between) the orator and the military general on the late-republican political stage. A trend emerges across his works, whereby Cicero to an extent conflates the activities of the *orator* and those of the *imperator*. This conflation is apparent in, for instance, the martial themes that run throughout *De oratore*. Time and again, oratorical arguments and techniques are referred to in terms of attack and defence: orators are trained to wage wars with words just as soldiers are taught to wield weapons; the forum itself becomes the front line; while the orator fights a battle, assaulting the opposition or providing protection for his *cliens*.[88] The role of *memoria* in the orator's arsenal is primarily defensive. Hence we see the standard rhetorical metaphors of *memoria* as *custos*, *praesidium*, or *thesaurus*.[89] As *custos*, *memoria* could secure lines of defence and attack in the orator's mind; as *praesidium* or *thesaurus*, it acted as an impenetrable store of resources, a stronghold or strongbox.

In *De oratore*, Cicero was drawing on a long Roman tradition of applying martial imagery to speech (words as weapons, and so forth).[90] The extent to which he developed the military theme is manifest in the *persona* of Antonius, who initially envisions speech itself as an *imperator bonus ac fortis*, a commander who can marshal troops to do his bidding and stop aggressors in their tracks.[91] Subsequently, Cicero has Antonius sum up his personal approach to *inventio* in a series of battle motifs. Antonius explains how he prepares to speak by first identifying whether the optimal strategy lies in using his oratorical weaponry against his opponent's case or in protecting his own arguments by fortifying his strongest lines of defence (*De or.* 2.292-3). If he is obliged to retreat from his opponent's attacks, Antonius makes it look like he has deliberately decided to relocate to a stronger defensive position and not like he has been forced to flee in panic with his shield abandoned or slung over his back (2.294-5). As mentioned in Chapter III, in the *Brutus*, Cicero continues to embellish the

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[88] For comparisons between oratorical and military training, see e.g. *De or.* 1.32, 1.157, 2.84, 3.55, 3.129, 3.206; and, for the defensive and offensive capacities of the orator, couched in military terminology, *De or.* 1.172, 1.184, 1.202.

[89] E.g. *Rhet. Her.* 3.28, 3.34. For analysis of *memoria* as *praesidium*, see Ch. I, p. 43; for *memoria* as *thesaurus*, Ch. II, p. 92. Instances of Cicero invoking *memoria* as *custos* include *De or.* 1.18, *custos inventis cogitatisque rebus et verbis*; *De or.* 1.127, *memoriā custodire*; *Part. or.* 3, *rerum omnium custos est memoria*; *Brut.* 219, [*memoria*] *custos est ceterarum ingeni partium*.

[90] For military imagery in republican Latin, see Fantham (1972) 26-33 and, for *De or.* specifically, 155-8.

[91] *De or.* 2.187.

portrait of Antonius the oratorical *imperator*, stating that he would arrange his arguments and talking points just as an *imperator* arranges his cavalry, infantry, and light-armoured troops, before immediately adding that 'his *memoria* was supreme'.[92] Here, Antonius' infallible memory allows him to grasp his subject matter and yet appear unprepared, thereby taking the *iudices* off-guard. Once more, Xenophon's Cyrus springs to mind (although I am certainly not suggesting an intentional parallel): just as Cyrus surprised everyone by retaining the units of his army in his memory and then arranging them in optimal formation, so Antonius took his audience unawares by memorising and arranging each unit of his speech.

Beyond the intellectual works, in speeches such as *Pro Murena* (which Cicero delivered as consul) we witness a sustained effort on Cicero's part to equate the prestige of the Roman *orator* with that of the *imperator*. Cicero chooses to defend Murena by magnifying the societal importance of military leaders at the expense of his opponent, Sulpicius, who was a legal expert (*iurisconsultus*) – a profession to which Cicero was himself closely allied.[93] Consequently, Cicero takes great care to distinguish the true *orator* from the *iurisconsultus*, whom he portrays as a mundane forensic consultant. Oratory is, he suggests, a perfectly valid alternative to the military route to the consulship, especially for *novi homines* (*Mur.* 24). By contrast, *iurisconsulti* are would-be orators who drop out when they realise they are not up to the *labor dicendi* (29). Cicero concludes that there are ultimately only two professions worthy of the highest level of praise, the military *imperator* and the good *orator* (30). In the context of the trial, Cicero's forceful reassertion of the 'equal' importance of the *orator* and the *imperator* does little to aid Murena, who was (according to Cicero) qualified for the consulship by virtue of the renown he had achieved in the military, not because of his oratory. Cicero's argument does, however, defend his own oratorical career, his role as consul-cum-advocate, and his self-portrayal in the *peroratio* as a *dux togatus*, ready to go to war with Catiline.[94] Cicero goes even further in the *Catilinarians* themselves, attempting to reshape his role as a preeminent *orator* into that of an *imperator togatus* – a hybrid, almost paradoxical, 'civilian *imperator*'.[95] To what extent Cicero succeeded in effecting this

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[92] *Brut.* 1.139: *ut ab imperatore equites pedites levis armatura, sic ab illo in maxime opportunis orationis partibus collocabantur. Erat memoria summa…* For continuation of this passage, see Ch. III, p. 134.

[93] *Mur.* 19-30. For historical context and analysis of this passage, see May (1988) 58-64 and Steel (2001) 170-3.

[94] *Mur.* 84-5.

[95] E.g. *Cat.* 2.28, 3.23-6, 4.20-4. Dyck notes the implicit contrast of *togatus* with the military *paludatus*, Dyck (2008) 163, *ad loc.* 2.28. For discussion see e.g. Nicolet (1960) 244-52, May (1988) 56-8, Steel (2001) 168-70.

transformation is debatable; he was certainly heavily invested in broadcasting a refashioned self-image to the public.[96]

The examples above illustrate Cicero's contention that, in his case at least, a great orator might also possess the leadership qualities of a great military leader. Even though the orator fights on the civilian battlefield of the forum, he should nevertheless be considered equally indispensable and equally worthy of recognition. Ultimately, however, Cicero's most honest assessment of the roles of *orator* and *imperator* is perhaps to be found at *Brut.* 256, where he admits that although the *magnus orator* is by far superior to the *minutus imperator*, nevertheless, the *imperator* is of more practical utility to the state. This admission reflects the late-republican reality. An orator, however perfect, could garner neither the power nor the glory of the strongest military generals. Towards the end of the *Brutus*, after reviewing all the greatest speakers in history, Cicero virtually recognised as much.

According to the Ciceronian paradigms of the ideal *orator* and *imperator*, then, while the two professions share certain character traits and attributes – certain virtues, certain capacities for leadership, a certain strategic grasp of attack and defence – they remain distinct. Likewise, according to the Ciceronian model, there is some overlap between the roles of *orator* and civilian *rector*, but expertise in one profession does not qualify an individual as an expert in the other.[97] To generalise, while the ideal statesman and the ideal speaker may share attributes and virtues, these are often coincidental – the attributes and virtues that define, as it were, the *vir bonus* in Cato's *vir bonus dicendi peritus*.[98] Based on the evidence discussed above, the question I pose here is whether Cicero was doing something genuinely distinctive by introducing *memoria* into the mix. On the one hand, Cicero's formulation of superior *memoria* as an exemplary attribute is far from universal across his works. Oratory, for instance, plays little part in Cicero's conceptualisation of the ideal *rector* in *De re publica* and, unsurprisingly, there is no role at all for superior

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[96] As Berry points out, as well as accusations *in Catilinam*, the *Catilinarians* contain many arguments *pro Cicerone*. Cicero needed to persuade the public that his actions as *imperator togatus* were those of a proper Roman leader, a *consul*, not a *rex*: Berry (2020) Ch. 5, esp. 190-2.

[97] At *De or.* 1.214-6, Cicero's Antonius implies that it is only an orator with truly limitless ability (such as Crassus) who extends the *facultas oratoris* to encompass governance of the state; he provides a list of *exempla* to illustrate the point, including Pericles, Scipio Africanus, and the elder Cato, who were leading statesmen and leading orators, but did not use the same methods in speaking as in governing.

[98] Cato's maxim is preserved in Sen. *Contr.* 1.pr.9; Gunderson argues that *auctoritas*, the power or authority that designates the right to influence and lead, is integral to the conceptualisation of the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*. See Gunderson (2000) 6-9, plus 231, nt. 10 for bibliography on the *vir bonus*.

memoria.[99] Further, we might point out that the vast majority of Cicero's 'memory men' are orators, while the military leaders to whom he attributes superior *memoria* remain, by comparison, relatively few.

In my view, however, Cicero's powerful men with powerful memories are not so few as to be inconsequential. As this section has explored, Cicero seems to have singled out superior *memoria* as a capacity that could benefit orators and leaders (military or civilian) alike, perhaps basing this view, which has scant surviving precedent, on his affinity for the exemplary attributes of Xenophon's Cyrus. Within oratory, superior mnemonic ability played an important defensive role in the speaker's arsenal. Beyond the forum, for statesmen and generals, a strong memory for details (of all kinds, personal, technical, geographical, and so on) might inspire great loyalty and trust in the competence of a leader, helping him to effect successful political or military outcomes. That, at least, was Cicero's vision of how memory contributed to leadership. He frequently invoked Themistocles as an exemplary proof, as a leader who utilised his vast *ingenium*, *consilium*, and *memoria* during both peace and war. Cicero went one step further, however, in his character sketch of Lucullus, effectively adding the *memoria artificiosa* of the orator Hortensius to the *memoria naturalis* of the leader Themistocles to create Lucullus' *divina memoria* – superhuman mnemonic ability that could facilitate mastery of any profession, including that of the *imperator*, without the need for prior experience. With this fusion, Cicero tested not only the bounds of plausibility but even the bounds of exemplary fiction and, if the idea of superior *memoria* as a leadership attribute was a distinctively Ciceronian innovation, then Cicero's Lucullus takes that innovation to the extreme. Collecting and reviewing Cicero's many and various memory men in a series of separate cases allows us to see that Cicero was exploiting a fundamental feature of exemplarity, namely the establishment of norms through the accumulation and reassertion of exemplary virtues, to bolster his own philosophy of the importance of superior *memoria* as a leadership trait.[100] As the subsequent section will suggest, it seems that Cicero's efforts to establish those norms were effective, inasmuch as superior *memoria* came to be recognised as a trait worthy of the most laudable Roman emperor.

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[99] Conversely, state governance does not feature in Cicero's formulation of the *summus orator* in the *Orator*. For the ideal *rector* of *De re publica* in relation to Cicero's *perfectus orator*, see Zarecki (2014) 62-8.

[100] For the establishment of norms via *exempla*, see Roller (2018) 13-7.

3. Superior *memoria* as a topos of imperial praise

While Cicero's exemplary ideal of the powerful leader with the equally powerful memory may not have reflected reality, the precedents he established retained lasting appeal. In this concluding section, I present a few examples that suggest superior mnemonic ability became an established hallmark of good leadership during the imperial period, quite possibly thanks to Cicero's overwhelming influence on the rhetorical tradition. Just as Cicero's version of the legend of Simonides and the MOL propagated rapidly and was adopted by later authors, so too were some of his references to powerful leaders with powerful memories noticed and reiterated. Sometimes, an imperial author simply repurposes one of Cicero's anecdotes: Valerius Maximus, for instance, reproduces Cicero's story about Themistocles' infallible memory for the names of Athenian citizens to illustrate Themistocles' diligence.[101] At other times, Cicero's memory men are invoked as part of a more sophisticated rhetorical conceit, as is the case in the passages discussed below.

The attribution of superior *memoria* to prominent and powerful men took on a new dimension during the imperial period with the instigation of autocratic rule at Rome and the consequent rise of encomiastic literature designed to praise the virtues of the emperor. We may even go so far as to argue that superior *memoria* became an established, if still relatively unusual, 'topos of imperial praise' – that is, an intellectual attribute for which the emperor, specifically, might be praised.[102] One relatively early example comes from Suetonius' life of Titus, where Titus' superior *memoria* is highlighted in a passage praising his overall intellectual acumen: Suetonius states that even in boyhood Titus had great gifts of mind and body, that 'his *memoria* was exceptional, and he had a readiness to be taught in almost all the *artes*, both of war and of peace'.[103] Suetonius includes Titus' superior *memoria* in a list alongside other intellectual virtues, drawing on a tradition that already had a long history in rhetoric, though adapting it to fit the personage of the emperor: Titus had all the intellectual skills that would equip him for leadership and imperial rule.[104] Cicero had been perhaps the first to praise a Caesar in this way, with his list of Julius Caesar's intellectual virtues in the

[101] Val. Max. 8.7.ext.16; cf. Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.50 and Plin. *HN* 7.88 (with comment in n. 52 above).

[102] For definition, development, and classification of 'topoi of praise', see Pernot (2015) 29-50.

[103] Suet. *Tit.* 3.1: *memoria singularis, docilitas ad omnis fere tum belli tum pacis artes*. Latin text: Kaster (2016).

[104] On intellectual virtues as a rhetorical commonplace, see above, p. 167.

second Philippic – although Cicero's praise there came with major caveats and qualifications.[105]

At some point in the final decades of the fourth century CE, the model of the powerful emperor with an equally powerful memory was reiterated and developed by the author of the life of Hadrian in the *SHA*.[106] The passage runs as follows:

> fuit memoriae ingentis, facultatis inmensae; nam ipse orationes et dictavit et ad omnia respondit. […] nomina plurimis sine nomenclatore reddidit, quae semel et congesta simul audiverat, ut nomenclatores saepius errantes emendarit. dixit et veteranorum nomina, quos aliquando dimiserat.
>
> SHA *Hadr.* 20.7-10.[107]

> He [Hadrian] was a man of vast *memoria* and immeasurable ability; for instance, he dictated his own speeches and personally responded to everything. […] He greeted many people by name – names that he had only heard once and all together at the same time – without a *nomenclator*, such that he would correct the *nomenclatores* when they all too often made mistakes. He also recounted the names of the veterans he had discharged at any point in the past.

The opening of the passage is reminiscent of Suetonius' Titus, and of the Ciceronian ideal of the great statesman whose superior mnemonic ability and natural talent assist him in both his oratory and his leadership of the state. The ensuing focus on Hadrian's memory for names develops this portrayal, invoking Cicero's philosophy that the good leader must always keep a record in his memory of his citizens' names to govern most effectively. In short, Hadrian has the memory for names and the leadership skills of Cicero's exemplary Themistocles. The mention of *nomina veteranorum* is moreover reminiscent of Xenophon's Cyrus, and should be read as a symbolic indicator of Hadrian's mastery of the army and his understanding of what it took to be the ideal *imperator* (we might also be reminded of Cicero's mnemonically-superior *imperator* Lucullus). Whereas the rest of the elite relies upon *nomenclatores* to keep track of names and details, Hadrian, by shunning the assistance of his underlings, asserts unfeigned social dominance.[108] He thus conforms to the paradigm of the powerful leader with

[105] Cic. *Phil*. 2.116.

[106] On the debated dating of the *SHA*, see Birley (2003) 132-46. The author of *Hadrian* purports to be one Aelius Spartianus, but see below, n. 113.

[107] Latin text: Hohl (1971).

[108] The reality of Hadrian's use of *nomenclatores* was no doubt quite different: the emperor's household was so large that *nomenclatores* were employed to keep track of other imperial slaves. See Vogt (1978) 366-75.

a powerful memory, which in turn contributes to his portrayal as the paragon of his generation.[109] He is the sole ruler in every sense – above the rest of the elite intellectually as well as hierarchically, and capable of governing without aid, almost omnipotent in the breadth and depth of his knowledge.

It is difficult (and perhaps ultimately unnecessary) to determine whether the portrayal of Hadrian's superior *memoria* in the *SHA* was drawing on Suetonius' portrayal of Titus' intellectual abilities, or the Ciceronian paradigm, or other stories repeated by other authors, lauding leaders for their ability to remember names *sine nomenclatore*.[110] The main model for the *SHA* was of course Suetonius, and Hadrian's general intellectual aptitude is certainly akin to Suetonius' portrayal of Titus.[111] On the other hand, Cicero is imitated frequently throughout the *SHA*: as well as the many explicit mentions of Cicero's name, Fündling identifies about forty slightly altered Ciceronian quotations.[112] Additionally, the modern hypothesis that the author of the *SHA* was some kind of *grammaticus* situates the lives firmly within the rhetorical tradition, even if they were not a direct product of the *ludus*.[113] Cicero's works were hugely influential upon this tradition and the exemplary characteristics that Cicero lauded when describing great men established precedents that were imitated by later generations who scrutinised his technique.[114] The author of the *SHA*'s *Hadrian* may well have been drawing on those precedents.

Another imperial attribution of superior *memoria* appears in the life of Severus Alexander, the second emperor in the *SHA* to be praised for mnemonic prowess. The author of this life lists *rerum memoria singularis* alongside the other qualities that marked Severus out from a young age as a future emperor (he in fact became emperor around the age of fourteen).[115] There is even an unverified claim that Severus used a mnemonic technique to aid his *memoria rerum*. In this portrayal we can again detect the model of Suetonius' Titus,

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[109] For discussion of Hadrian's overall portrayal in the *SHA*, see Meckler (1996) 366-75.

[110] E.g. Valerius Maximus and Pliny on Cyrus – see p. 159-60 above.

[111] For Suetonian influence, see Fündling (2006) 167-71.

[112] Fündling (2006) 161. See also Bergersdijk (2010) 38-40.

[113] The *SHA* is presented as the work of six authors. Syme, a proponent of Dessau's theory concerning unified authorship, famously dubbed the lone author a 'rogue *grammaticus*': see Dessau (1889) 337-92 and Syme (1968) 207. The *grammaticus* hypothesis was developed by Honoré (1987) 156-76. For an intriguing and more recent computer-aided study concerning the possibility of multiple authorship, see Stover and Kestemont (2016) 140-57.

[114] See MacCormack (2013) esp. 262-6.

[115] SHA *Alex. Sev.* 14.6. The author purports to be Aelius Lampridius.

whose superior *memoria* was one of the qualities that distinguished his suitability for imperial rule from boyhood. Cicero, however, also looms large in the life of Severus – he was apparently the emperor's favourite Latin writer.[116] The claims regarding Severus' *memoria rerum* are especially redolent of Cicero's Lucullus, who is the only precedent for the notion that an absolute novice might transform himself into a powerful leader by utilising mnemonic techniques. Cicero's Lucullus set out for the war in Asia *rei militaris rudis* and arrived a fully-fledged *imperator*. If the author of the life of Severus wanted us to believe that the future emperor would follow the Lucullan mould, then we must imagine that even though Severus acquired imperial power while still a teenager, thanks to his *rerum memoria singularis*, he would have been able to rapidly assimilate the skills necessary to assume supreme command of the Roman empire.

From the end of the Republic onwards, in the emerging genre of imperial epideictic encomium, certain attributes became to be considered particularly praiseworthy when attached to the emperor.[117] Even if Cicero's memory men did not influence the author(s) of the *SHA* directly, therefore, it is possible that superlative mnemonic skill was attributed to various emperors because *memoria* had itself become a commonplace topos of praise. If we accept a date of the late fourth century CE as plausible for the *SHA*, then it was written at a time when panegyric composed for the emperor was a well-established rhetorical genre, with distinct divisions and subdivisions of praiseworthy topoi. One of the subdivisions in imperial panegyric concerned praise of the emperor's 'personal attributes' (Latin, *personis attributae res*).[118] Menander Rhetor, who wrote a rhetorical treatise on encomium in Greek, provides us with lists of possible topoi that might be deployed in an imperial panegyric (βασιλικὸς λόγος).[119] Specifically, under the rubric of 'intelligence' (φρόνησις), he lists intellectual virtues such as mental agility and foresight, while advising that the emperor should be lauded for excelling everyone else on earth in intellectual skills, without which his many achievements as a ruler would not have been possible.[120] It is conceivable that superior mnemonic ability might have been included by other rhetoricians or orators under the rubric

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[116] SHA *Alex Sev.* 30.2, also 8.5, 31.4, 57.4.

[117] For the emergence of these praiseworthy attributes, see Morton Braund (1998) esp. 55-8.

[118] See Pernot (2015) 40-2.

[119] This is the second of two Menandrean treatises: see Russell (1998) 28-33.

[120] Men. Rhet. 2.1.33-4.

of intelligence as a praiseworthy personal attribute, to be deployed in encomium when suitable.

My final example in this section illustrates this possibility put into practice. It is drawn directly from the genre described above, namely the imperial panegyrics of the late fourth century CE, in an oration apparently delivered before the senate in Rome, composed by Pacatus Drepanius in praise of Theodosius I.[121] In the relevant passage, Pacatus celebrates how much trust everyone has in Theodosius, how he always remembers the men to whom he has pledged benefactions, and how he never forgets to deliver on his promises.[122] It is Theodosius' superlative mnemonic capacity that inspires this trust – so once again, we encounter the idea that superior *memoria* contributes to a leader's ability to inspire faith and loyalty in those he leads. Pacatus then marvels at the power of Theodosius' *memoria*, before asking, in an elaborate rhetorical question, whether Hortensius, or Lucullus, or Caesar ever possessed powers of recollection strong enough to rival the emperor's ability to retrieve everything he has committed to memory, wherever and whenever he wants.[123] The correct answer is, evidently, "No".

Here, we have direct evidence of Pacatus invoking several of Cicero's powerful men with powerful memories. Lucullus' supposed superior mnemonic ability is an entirely Ciceronian conceit and can have only come from the opening of the *Lucullus*. From the additional reference to Hortensius, it seems probable that Pacatus was thinking of the passage at *Luc.* 2, since Cicero there praises them both in the same breath. The choice of Caesar is perhaps more surprising, given that both surviving instances where Cicero attributes superior *memoria* to him are overtly rhetorical (*Deiot.* 42, *Phil.* 2.116). But take *Pro rege Deiotaro*, a speech that has been called 'proto-panegyric'.[124] If Pacatus had read the speech looking for examples of how to flatter a Caesar, he might well have noted Cicero's praise of superior *memoria* and have chosen to follow the precedent. It also seems a prudent move on Pacatus' part, to compare his own emperor to a Caesar as well as to the less famous Hortensius and

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[121] For historical context and text, see Nixon and Rodgers (1994) 437-47, 647-74. The oration is the second of the *Panegyrici Latini XII*.

[122] Pacatus *Panegyricus Pacati Theodosio Augusto* 18.

[123] Pacatus, 18.3: *At ego miror etiam memoriam; nam cui Hortensio Lucullove vel Caesari tam parata umquam adfuit recordatio quam tibi sacra mens tua loco momentoque quo iusseris reddit omne depositum?* Text: Mynors (1964).

[124] Morton Braund (1998) 55, in reference to the three Caesarian speeches; also p. 68-71 for Ciceronian influence on imperial panegyric.

Lucullus, whether that Caesar was renowned for *memoria* or not. Hortensius was merely an *orator*, however impressive; Lucullus had a reputation as a powerful *imperator*, certainly, but also as the *imperator* who failed to beat Mithridates and was replaced by Pompey. In Julius Caesar, however, Pacatus found a leader worthy of being outshone by Theodosius in any field, no matter whether either man had a reputation for superior mnemonic skill.

The above survey of emperors who were attributed superior mnemonic prowess is but a brief study of a relatively rare topos over the *longue durée*. Nevertheless, it is indicative of how legends about powerful men with powerful memories possessed an enduring appeal for multiple generations. The stories demonstrate that significance was attached to superior *memoria* outside of pedagogic rhetoric and oratory, and even outside of 'intellectual' professions such as that of the poet or the legal expert. Superior *memoria naturalis* (and even occasionally superior *memoria rerum*) was viewed, alongside other natural gifts of intelligence, as a praiseworthy attribute for a Roman leader from at least the Ciceronian era onwards, indicative of his capacity to learn, retain, and take care of the interests, skills, and needs of those he governed. Cicero's portraits of individuals with superlative mnemonic skills persisted in the rhetorical tradition and superior *memoria* was invoked variously as a topos of praise by authors and orators seeking ever more inventive reasons to laud the leadership of the most powerful men in the Empire.

Concluding remarks

At the start of this thesis, I suggested that for rhetoricians of the first century BCE, the answer to the question of how much artifice there can be in memory was, *prima facie*, "As much as you like". The subsequent analysis has, I hope, demonstrated not only the rather more nuanced role that *memoria* played in rhetorical theory, but also how discipline-specific the utilisation of artificial mnemonic techniques was. Even in educational settings, where personal mnemonic capacity was valued and cultivated, younger students relied on *memoria naturalis* when learning by heart; *memoria artificiosa* remained the province of more advanced rhetorical pedagogy. As for the practical business of oratory, the MOL was an important part of the skillset of some but by no means all professional orators. When Cicero attributed superior *memoria* to an exemplary individual, more often than not he was referring to *memoria naturalis*.

Arguing for the limited reach of a major theme of one's work (in my case, the MOL) may seem an odd thing for any researcher to do. I do not want to downplay the remarkable fact of the MOL's existence: Roman rhetoricians and orators recognised and lauded the specific importance of memory to their disciplines in a way that modern professions do not. In short, there was a place for the MOL in the Roman world but, as scholars, we must keep the MOL in its place. Doing so frees us to focus on other mnemonic practices that did not involve the *ars memoriae*, such as the socialising function of pedagogic memorisation exercises, or the importance of a strong memory for names in Roman politics. Accordingly, my Concluding Remarks address three fronts: the relationship between the MOL and oratorical expertise; the wider (mis)application of the MOL in Classics; and some exciting possibilities for future research into Roman mnemonic practices.

1. On the MOL and oratorical expertise

What does it mean to speak about the trained memory of the Roman orator? I have talked a great deal about Cicero's 'ideal' orator in this thesis, but I have gradually come to the conclusion that, if we are interested in the typical Roman professional, it might be more productive to talk about the 'expert' orator instead. To this end, I observe that memory plays a crucial role in the acquisition of expertise in any discipline and, consequently, it may be useful to consider modern research into the relationship between mnemonic skill and

expertise. Ericsson and Chase have proposed a theory of 'skilled memory' to describe and explain the apparently superior mnemonic ability of a wide range of experts, from musicians to translators: in Ericsson's words, 'In most types of expertise, the expert does not practice to improve their memory directly, but rather the superior working memory is a unintentional consequence of efforts to improve the selection and execution of superior actions'.[1] It is important to note that Ericsson here refers to superior *working* memory, a term that encompasses the processing and manipulation of information as well as its retention and recall. We might take the example of the expert doctor, who has many long years of practical experience, and who is apparently able to digest information concerning a given medical case, isolate the relevant details, order them, retain them, and act on them, all with little effort, while the junior doctor struggles to do the same.[2] In such cases, the expert's apparently superior memory for key pieces of information related to the field is extremely discipline-specific, since their working memory has adapted over many years of practical experience to meet the specialised demands of the profession.

The modern concept of skilled memory is, of course, simply a theoretical framework – there was no notion of 'working memory' in the ancient world and we cannot conduct studies on expert Roman orators. Yet I see no reason why their mnemonic capabilities should not have followed what are apparently universal paradigms of expertise. Consider a story told by Quintilian about Scaevola, an experienced player of *duodecim scripta*, a game based partly on luck but also on strategy and correct decision-making.[3] Scaevola was, says Quintilian, able to recall every move he had made while playing to pinpoint exactly where he had gone wrong.[4] Much like an expert chess player, it seems Scaevola was adept at retaining information pertinent to the game.[5] Quintilian then draws an analogy between *duodecim scripta* and oratory, arguing that it is even more important for the orator to arrange the topics of his speech in the correct order than it is for the player to execute his moves strategically.

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[1] Quote from p. 700 of the comprehensive research review provided by Ericsson (2018) 696-713. See also Chase and Ericsson (1981) 141-189.

[2] The extent to which experienced doctors' memories adapt to isolate and encode information selectively has been illustrated in studies showing that even when advanced medical students retain more information about a given medical case, their diagnoses are inferior to those of experienced doctors who retain fewer (but more pertinent) details: see Wimmers et al. (2005) 949-57 and Ericsson, Patel, and Kintsch (2000) esp. 586-8.

[3] *Duodecim scripta* is generally compared to backgammon – more chance-based than chess, but still reliant on the player's skill. See Austin (1934) 30-4 and Toner (1995) 91, 95-6.

[4] Quint. *Inst.* 11.2.38.

[5] For modern chess experts, see Ericsson (2018) 701-3.

Quintilian's vision of the expert orator is that he should be able, like the expert player of *duodecim scripta*, to perceive the pieces and the patterns on the forensic playing board and to execute the most appropriate moves – but to do this instinctively presumably required many years of practical experience. If the development of the notional Roman orator's expertise conformed to the paradigm of skilled memory theory, then we would expect that during those years of practical experience, the orator's working memory gradually adapted to meet the specific demands of his discipline.

The 'specific demands of his discipline', namely forensic speechmaking, included the isolation, ordering, retention, and retrieval of the facts (*res*) most relevant to a given case. The remarkable thing about the existence of the ancient MOL is that whereas in modern professions (such as medicine), superior discipline-specific mnemonic performance is generally taken for granted as a by-product of many years on the job, professional rhetoricians and orators recognised and lauded the importance of memory to their specific domain of expertise, to the point that *memoria* became a distinct subdiscipline of the field. The *ars memoriae* was designed to isolate, order, retain, and retrieve the facts (*res*) of a given case – that is to say, it was designed to simulate the mental processes that expert orators with many years' experience undertook to meet the demands of their profession. This observation highlights both the discipline-specific qualities of the MOL and the complexity of the enmeshed relationship between artifice and the natural development of oratorical expertise: *memoria artificiosa* was designed to imitate the processes of an expert orator's *memoria naturalis*, processes that had, in turn, adapted to meet the (artificially imposed) constraints of ancient oratory. The goal of *memoria artificiosa* was thus to train the working memory of the Roman orator to execute the mental processes that needed to become second nature if he were to achieve expertise. The MOL provided a codified set of instructions to guide the orator through those mental processes; practised enough and internalised, the MOL allowed the orator to prepare and perform speeches and refutations in the forum *sine scripto*, with apparent ease.

2. On the application of the MOL in Classics

I have reasoned throughout this thesis that the ancient MOL was relatively limited in scope and seldom applied in contexts outside of oratory. My findings have relatively clear, cautionary implications for scholarship that relies on the application of rhetorical mnemonic

theory to draw conclusions, notably in the field of Memory Studies.[6] Artificial mnemonics and cultural memory do not tend to mix, yet mixed they have been.

The problems that arise from the conflation of different concepts of *memoria* are encapsulated in general terms by what Beiner has appropriately called 'the first sin of Memory Studies': laxity.[7] Although Beiner is actually discussing Memory Studies as applied to the Troubles in Northern Ireland, his observation that 'the pedantry required to pin down such a slippery subject [as memory] poses a formidable challenge' applies equally to *memoria* in the Roman world. As the theory of modern Memory Studies is applied to ever more diverse realms of ancient life, there is a real risk that the application becomes forced, resulting in statements that originate less in the realms of hard evidence and more in those of some progressively fantastic *Glasperlenspiel*.[8] While undertaking this research, I have noticed that the conceptualisation of *memoria* as *memoria artificiosa* seems particularly prone to misuse, with scholars embarking upon journeys that connect apparently unrelated topics to the MOL via increasingly ingenious routes. Below, without wanting to criticise to no good purpose, I provide examples that illustrate how, when it comes to *memoria*, laxity can lead us down an increasingly slippery slope.

A relatively innocuous instance of potential conceptual laxity features in Bergmann's influential essay on 'The Roman House as Memory Theater', which examines the pictorial ensembles in the House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii to argue that memory played a crucial role in their creation and reception. [9] Bergmann begins by outlining the rules of the MOL, before arguing that ancient mnemonic systems incorporated spatial and material elements because, 'for a largely illiterate society, the visual process played a powerful role in receiving and retaining information' (p. 225). This assertion is untenable on two counts: first, the MOL was designed and used, probably exclusively, by highly literate rhetoricians and orators; second, even in today's comprehensively literate society, mnemonics incorporating space, objects, and architecture are used by expert mnemonists for no other reason than *they work*.[10] There was nothing special about Roman society that made it particularly suited to the

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[6] Modern approaches to communicative and cultural memory are outlined succinctly by Assmann (2008) 109-18.

[7] Beiner (2017).

[8] An analogy inspired by Hölkeskamp (2014) 65; *pace* Hesse.

[9] Bergmann (1994) 225-56.

[10] As neuroscientist Becchetti concludes: '[the MOL] must be deeply rooted in neurology because it seems to be applied unawares even by mnemonists who have never heard of its existence', Becchetti (2010) E104.

adoption of a mnemonic system with spatial or material elements such as the MOL. Having established the special status of the *ars memoriae* in Roman society, Bergmann then treats the process of mentally reviewing *imagines* in the MOL as analogous to the physical viewing of various scenes depicted throughout a Roman *domus*, stated thus: 'Elevated to metaphor and internalized as private memory *loci*, the Roman house offers insight into a formative mental model' (p. 226). There is nothing fundamentally wrong, I suppose, with reading pictorial ensembles in the *domus* as a set of *imagines* placed in mnemonic *loci*, although I do not think there is much enlightenment to be gained, since we must remain always aware that such a reading is a metaphorical framework of our own making – there is little evidence that any Roman would have viewed a house metaphorically as if it were the physical manifestation of an individual's MOL. Even the (low) percentage of the population who received training in *memoria artificiosa* were taught to apply the analogy the other way around, likening mnemonic *loci* to architectural spaces at one moment and to wax tablets the next. Certainly, the *imagines* contained within mnemonic *loci* were designed to trigger associative recall in the same way that paintings might conjure memories, but we hardly need to invoke the MOL to tell us that images, like words, can trigger recollections. What the MOL does tell us is that the same image will trigger different memories in different individuals, depending on disposition and experience.[11] The inclusion of *memoria artificiosa* in the rhetorical curriculum cannot therefore support Bergmann's contention (whether valid or not) that educated Romans were taught to 'read' images in a standardised fashion.[12]

Moving on, the risks of conflating ancient mnemonic *loci* with the modern concept of *lieux de mémoire* are demonstrated in Jaeger's monograph *Livy's Written Rome* (an example I have selected not because it is particularly heinous, but because it is typical).[13] Jaeger combines the conceptualisation of *memoria* as *monumentum* with the *ars memoriae*, likening Livy's schematised topography of Rome to mnemonic *loci* and the monuments highlighted therein to mnemonic *imagines* to argue that 'several features of the *ars memoriae* suggest it as a likely model for Livy's conception of Rome's past' (p. 20). Jaeger's link between the 'remembered landscape' and the 'trained memory' (p. 21-4) imprecisely confuses practices of memorialisation in wider Roman society with the memorisation techniques used by some individuals. There are certainly superficial parallels between Livy's authorial technique and

[11] The Auctor takes pains to point this out at *Rhet. Her.* 3.38 and elsewhere: see Ch. I, p. 44.

[12] Bergmann (1994) 226.

[13] Jaeger (1997) 19-24.

the rules of the MOL – but the fact that both utilise vivid depiction, to name one similarity, might be explained quite straightforwardly by the observation that vivid depiction is inherently memorable, rather than by the hypothesis that Livy was using the MOL as a model. The same reasoning can be applied to other similarities. In short, correlation does not necessarily equal causation.

Bergmann's and Jaeger's invocations of the MOL are at least grounded on genuine features of the technique; others are entirely hypothetical. Take Favro's link between the moderate spacing of mnemonic *loci* and Roman modes of walking and dancing, which appears in her study of triumphal processions.[14] As in the case of Jaeger's study of Livy, there is conceptual conflation, this time between collective acts of remembrance via ritual performance and the *ars memoriae*. After stating that the MOL is known as 'the Memory Walk System' (by whom?), Favro explains that Roman rhetoricians 'recommended *loci* be placed at regular intervals, a modulation that echoed the slow walking associated with upper-class ambulation and the measured rhythms of ritual dancers' (p. 86). This abstract (and at best circumstantial) connection adds little, seems forced, and detracts from the merits of the study, which contains some otherwise strong points concerning the desires of triumphal 'curators' to create memorable kinetic spectacles.

At the bottom of the aforementioned slippery slope lie wildly speculative links between the MOL and settings divorced from the Greco-Roman rhetorical scene in both space and time. I call to witness Kelly's belief that Stonehenge was arranged in accordance with the principles of the MOL, which is used to underpin an argument regarding prehistoric henges as follows: 'All the factors advised for optimising a set of sequenced *loci* are met. It is therefore logical to argue that stone circles were a mnemonic technology'.[15] To ground a thesis concerning the function of a third-millennium-BCE monument directly on a Greco-Roman rhetorical technique constitutes a monolithic miscalculation.

In sum, just because the MOL may have been treated as a party trick in past scholarship does not mean that we should now aim to redress the balance by seeing it everywhere, from art history to stone circles: in so doing, we turn it into a trite cliché all over

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[14] Favro (2014) 85-102.

[15] Kelly (2015) 223-4; see also p. 69-71, where Kelly argues (with little analysis of relevant evidence) that the MOL was used in non-literate cultures, and by 'pre-literate Greek orators'.

again. Likewise, to generalise this principle, we should take a similarly rigorous approach to the application of findings from modern cognitive science to the study of Classics at large.[16]

3. On future research into Roman mnemonic practices

I shall now highlight several areas, both inside and outside of the forum, where further sustained focus on mnemonic practices (as opposed to theories) may prove productive. The first remains within the realm of oratory and concerns the transformation of oratorical performance into text – a natural extension of my discussion in Chapter III, from the 'preparation' and 'trial' phases of the forensic process to the 'publication' phase. As noted, a large amount of work has already been conducted in this area, especially regarding the nature of surviving Ciceronian orations and whether they are fair representations of what was said at trial.[17] Focussing on the orator's utilisation of his memory presents an alternative perspective on these debates. As I have discussed, although some orators in the late Republic utilised the MOL to assist in the delivery of their orations, they did not use it to retain entire speeches word-for-word. In the absence of verbatim transcripts, therefore, it seems likely that orators would have relied on external mnemonic aids such as *commentarii* to reproduce the structure and arguments of a delivered speech – especially if some time had elapsed between delivery and composition.[18] The orator's memory, by which I mean his personal episodic recollections of the trial, would have also exerted considerable influence on the text.

The Ciceronian corpus provides direct evidence for the influence of memory on the composition process. It seems that Cicero was selective in his recreation of a delivered speech, both on a micro scale (altering phrasing or introducing additional material) and occasionally on a macro scale (leaving parts of a speech unelaborated as *tituli* or *capita*).[19] Occasionally, he succumbed to the *periculum memoriae*, the fallibility of memory, by

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[16] A methodological point highlighted in the Introduction: see p. 12.

[17] See p. 118.

[18] For a summary of the issues surrounding differences between delivered and 'published' orations, see Alexander (2002) 15-26, esp. 17-8 for the absence of verbatim transcripts (although the relevant case of *Pro Milone* is not discussed – for which, see Marshall (1987) 730-6). The date of the invention of shorthand, required for verbatim transcripts, is debated. On balance, the evidence suggests that forensic speeches in the late Republic were not typically documented by any means that could produce verbatim (or near-verbatim) records.

[19] See Ch. III, n. 30.

misrepresenting trial proceedings unintentionally.[20] The questions prompted by these instances of 'selective' and 'fallible' memory reach beyond the issue of whether Cicero's texts matched his original words. We might, for instance, ask whether disparity between an audience member's memory of a delivered speech and the circulated text of that speech was routinely noticed or even considered problematic. Further, bearing Cicero's various motives for composition in mind, we might move away from the trial itself to consider different readerships, viewing oratorical composition as an act of communicative memory with pedagogic memorisation exercises as one of the mechanisms of transmission.

On this topic, Cicero poses a particularly interesting case study because of his evident awareness that his orations were, in some instances, going to be used for pedagogic purposes, to be studied in detail and perhaps memorised by future cohorts of aspiring Roman orators, eager to imitate and emulate his achievements.[21] This opens the possibility for further examination of the pedagogic practices of memorisation that became so widespread in Roman *ludi* from the late Republic onwards. Along with the growing popularity of the declamatory scene, we see a culture of quotation emerge – works such as the elder Seneca's declamatory bricolage of *Controversiae* and *Suasoriae* bearing testimony to a competitive striving for essential verbal elegance, for novelty, and for memorability. It is thus possible that pedagogic practices of memorising snippets, *sententiae* rather than full *orationes*, had a direct effect upon modes of literary composition.

My final suggestion for future study leaves behind the worlds of rhetoric and oratory to focus on a Roman mnemonic practice that often slips beneath our radar, if only because its practitioners were enslaved. I refer to the *nomenclatores*, whose job it was to retain names and details on behalf of their masters. As discussed briefly in Chapter IV, the importance in Roman electioneering of *nomenclatio* (the practice of greeting potential voters by name) led in the later Republic to a scenario in which candidates were obliged to utilise *nomenclatores* while canvassing; it also helps explain why Cineas' fantastic feat of name-memorisation held such exemplary appeal; and it may even be the reason why Cicero repeated stories about men such as Themistocles, who reportedly possessed a superior memory for names.[22] For any Roman with a public presence and a degree of power, remembering and being remembered

[20] E.g. Cic. *Att.* 1.13.4 and 13.44.3.

[21] See Cicero's claims at e.g. *QFr.* 3.1.11, *Att.* 2.1.3 and 4.2.2.

[22] See p. 164-6.

by other influential men helped to maintain that presence and power. Consequently, we see *nomenclatores* retained permanently as part of a household and utilised outside of electoral contexts – a convention that seems to have only increased in popularity during the imperial period. The practice of *nomenclatio* and the utilisation of enslaved *nomenclatores* should therefore be set alongside other social practices that were integral to the institutionally hierarchical nature of Roman society, such as the *salutatio*. The subject is itself a book-length study and there remains a great deal of analysis to be done – we currently only have Kolendo's slim monograph, half of which is a collection of epigraphic evidence dated largely to the imperial period.[23] For now, I observe only the unique 'Romanness' of these mnemonic practices. It is, for instance, revealing that Greek equivalents of the term *nomenclator* did not exist and had to be invented, appearing in texts only in the first century CE.[24] A full study of *nomenclatio* and the use of *nomenclatores* would therefore provide a beneficial antidote to the perception that might otherwise be drawn from this thesis, whereby the majority of mnemonic practices originate in the Greek rhetorical, pedagogic, and philosophical traditions, before being 'translated' into the Roman world.

This thesis has focussed on the function of individual mnemonic skill in Roman rhetoric and oratory, in the *ludus* and in the forum; it has reappraised the technical evolution of the MOL; and it has explored how our perceptions of *memoria* may have been influenced by Cicero. I conclude by returning to the 'big' questions that motivated my initial engagement with ancient conceptualisations of memory.[25] First, there is the advent of writing and the issue of its potential effect on individuals' experiences of memory and remembering – an intrinsically inscrutable question. As numerous comparative anthropological studies have shown, the concept of strict verbatim memorisation becomes almost meaningless in societies where no full written records exist.[26] The contention that the *ars memoriae* was created in response to the advent and spread of written texts is, however, misleading: as this study has demonstrated, the MOL was not developed to aid verbatim memorisation. Rather, the codification of the MOL was driven by the demands of professional oratory, which required

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[23] Kolendo (1989).

[24] E.g. Plutarch's ὀνοματολόγοι, *Cat. Min.* 8.2, which Geiger suggests represents an *ad hoc* Plutarchian translation of *nomenclatores*: Geiger (1971) 165-6.

[25] See Introduction, p. 9-10.

[26] For an introduction to such studies, see Ong (1982) 56-66.

speakers to rapidly memorise the outline of what remained largely improvised speeches. Oratory was a highly literate profession, dominated by oral performance. As a performative technique, the MOL helped orators to emulate the structure and precision of a written composition while retaining the fluency of speech. In this discipline-specific sense, then, my findings offer a new perspective on the changing relationship between memory and writing in Greek and Roman societies.

Second, I raised the question of whether esoteric ancient theories of memory bore any relation to quotidian practice. The answer is a succinct "yes and no": yes, students of rhetoric and some orators utilised the MOL as part of their everyday practice; and no, the MOL was rarely employed outside of the *ludus* or the forum, while debates over the nature of memory seem to have been confined to philosophy, at least in the first century BCE.

Third and finally, I asked whether we, today, engage with the act of remembering in a fundamentally different way to the mnemonically-trained Roman orator. For the large part, I suspect not. Mnemonic training contributed to and reinforced oratorical expertise but was highly specialised – so the mnemonic ability of the expert Roman orator would be superior to anyone, modern or ancient, who had not experienced the same training and long years of practice, but only in the realm of speechmaking. There are isolated examples of Greek and Roman mnemonists, such as Metrodorus and Hortensius, who adapted their mnemonic skills to other fields, just as expert mnemonists adapt their skills today. I am sure, however, that even the most expert of these legendary 'memory men' would sometimes misremember a quote or forget a name, and, like the rest of us, fall foul of the *periculum memoriae*.

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