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The Horrors of the Unseen: Depictions of Violence in the *Iliad* and Greek Tragedy

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Classics

by

Aleah Hernandez Hernandez

Dissertation Committee:  
Professor James Porter, Co-Chair  
Associate Professor Zina Giannopoulou, Co-Chair  
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2017



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## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

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Greek tragedy; mythology; narratology; classical reception in literature, film and media

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Horrors of the Unseen: Depictions of Violence in the *Iliad* and Greek Tragedy

By

Aleah Hernandez Hernandez

Doctor of Philosophy in Classics

University of California, Irvine, 2017

Professor James Porter, Co-Chair

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In the *Poetics*, Aristotle states that “*pathos* is a destructive or painful deed, such as deaths on stage, excessive suffering, wounding and things of this sort” (1452b). Yet despite the philosopher’s assertion about the possibility of death and wounding on stage, the extant corpus of Greek tragedy presents onstage violence and death as rare occurrences, and scholars, in turn, have taken the infrequency of these phenomena as a sign of theatrical convention. This dissertation seeks to complicate the idea of this convention and to make a case for narrated tragic violence as the conscious preservation and refinement of narrated Homeric violence.

I contend that visualization, narration and space are the basic characteristics of a narrated scene of violence in epic and in tragedy. The convergence of these characteristics creates a *locus violentus*—a visualized, narrative space which heightens the effects of violence by bringing listeners into close, imaginative proximity with the details of violent acts. I maintain that the *locus violentus* forms a sort of “poetics of violence”: it offers a paradigmatic structure of narrated violence whose origins can be found in scenes of violence in the *Iliad* and whose influence continues to be seen in scenes of violence in tragedy. To support these claims, I begin with an



analysis of Iliadic battle scenes, which illustrates the form and function of the *locus*. Next, I take the foundational form of the epic *locus* and use it as the blueprint for the tragic *locus*. Through an examination of the characteristics of tragedy, I find that the tragic *locus* consists of five essential characteristics—violence, narration, visualization, space and suspense—and three supplementary characteristics—similes, metaphors and the presentation of the victim. The essential and the supplementary characteristics yield the theoretical apparatus and affective scope for the tragic *locus*. Finally, I advance two case studies of, respectively, the minimal and the maximal tragic *locus*. These case studies show that narrated violence is not simply a convention but a potent means of enhancing the audience’s cognitive engagement with the scene in which violence is enacted.

## Introduction

μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος  
οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρὶ Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκε,  
πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν  
ἡρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν  
οἴωνοῖσί τε πᾶσι....

Wrath—sing, goddess, of the accursed wrath  
of Achilles, son of Peleus, which brought  
countless sufferings to the Achaeans and sent  
many brave souls of heroes to Hades, and  
made them prey for dogs and all the birds....

*Iliad*, 1.1-5<sup>1</sup>

Μῆνιν—as the first word of the Greek canon, μῆνις, or wrath, provokes a visceral reaction in a listener. From its very first utterance in the epic, wrath is a term loaded with meaning not only because of what the Homeric narrator says will result from it—countless sufferings (μυρὶ'...ἄλγε', 2) and the deaths of many men (πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι, 3)—but also because of what a listener knows of wrath. Wrath is an emotion associated with vengeance, and as it pertains to the epic, vengeance is the impetus for violence. Thus, the proem also speaks to violence as a larger theme in the *Iliad*. It points to the ways in which violence becomes the driving force of the epic, and by extension, it highlights why this theme survives in the work of the tragedians of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Violence in epic and tragedy is largely the means by which they affect their audiences; it is the crux and climax of their stories. Warriors kill one another on the battlefield, wives kill husbands, parents kill their children and the chain of violent acts seems never-ending. Throughout all these acts, one thing appears to remain constant: scenes of violence are narrated rather than acted out in front of an audience. What begins

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<sup>1</sup> The text from the *Iliad* comes from the 1920 Oxford version edited by David B. Munro and Thomas W. Allen. The translation is my own.

naturally in Homeric epics as a convention of oral composition continues on in the work of tragedians as a concomitant of performance.

Yet, the correlation between the epic and the tragic depiction of violence has not received much attention in recent scholarship. James Barrett's seminal work investigating the role of the tragic messenger in relation to the Homeric narrator has come closest to providing a link between the genres' narratological presentation of themes and concepts. However, the basis of his work centers more on the rhetorical and epistemological aspects of the messenger than on the issue of violence.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, scholars whose work *does* delve into the characteristics of violence tend to eschew the narratological components of the concept in order to treat it as part of a much greater socio-cultural context. Rene Girard and Walter Burkert, for example, approach violence in terms of its role in sacrifice and religion, and they use it to address larger concerns about the development of Greek society and culture.<sup>3</sup> Working with Iliadic violence, Simone Weil examines the theme of force and its potential to dehumanize through acts of war.<sup>4</sup> And in less ethnographic terms, scholars have used violence as a means to discuss other topics, such as the expression of pain and suffering,<sup>5</sup> the realism and artistry of Iliadic wounding scenes,<sup>6</sup> and the particulars of Homeric battle formations.<sup>7</sup>

In the realm of tragedy, violence has also been used to emphasize the origins of the genre or the conventions of the theater. Terry Eagleton, for instance, studies violence with a view to making greater claims about the role of tragedy, as form and concept, in the development of Western literature,<sup>8</sup> whereas Alan Sommerstein provides various accounts of the reasons for

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<sup>2</sup> Barrett (2002), xviii.

<sup>3</sup> Girard (2007); Burkert (2001).

<sup>4</sup> Weil (2007).

<sup>5</sup> Holmes (2007).

<sup>6</sup> Friedrich (2003).

<sup>7</sup> Albracht (2005).

<sup>8</sup> Eagleton (2003).

which violence cannot be performed on stage.<sup>9</sup> While studies such as those of Eagleton and Sommerstein speak to the significance and cultural relevance of violence, they leave out of consideration the possibility of narrated violence as a deliberate, aesthetic choice. Very few scholars have considered the idea that tragedians purposefully chose to forego onstage violence because of the advantages it afforded their plots and the effects it would have on their audiences.<sup>10</sup> The increased level of suspense which an unseen act of violence produces, or the ways in which narrated violence grants audiences deeper engagement with the perpetrators and the victims of violent acts, for example, are left out of the discussion about tragic violence. Moreover, because most scholars overlook the possibility of narrated violence as a choice, they fail to form a connection between the narratological presentation of violence in epic and tragedy. It is precisely this omission which provides the impetus for my investigation.

### Objective

This dissertation endeavors to establish a sort of “poetics of violence.” More specifically, I aim to show that narration, visualization and space form the conceptual basis for epic depictions of violence. They create what I call the *locus violentus*—a visualized, narrative space which enhances the effects of violence by bringing listeners into close, imaginative contact with the details of violent deeds. I also contend that narration, visualization and space are taken up from epic and expanded upon in tragedy to create the tragic version of the *locus*. In accordance with this bifurcation of the *locus*, I have organized the dissertation into 3 chapters. Chapter 1 locates the *locus violentus* in epic and explains its purpose; Chapter 2 then establishes the

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<sup>9</sup> Sommerstein (2010), 30-46.

<sup>10</sup> Pathmanathan (1965), to my knowledge, is the rare scholar who discusses the lack of violence on stage as a decision consciously made by the tragedians. He, however, attributes this decision to plot structure (the act of violence occurs too far away, there are too many people involved in the act) or the logistics of “miraculous” acts, and not to a Homeric precedent of narrated violence.

theoretical framework and affective scope of the *locus violentus* in tragedy; and Chapter 3 presents two case studies which apply and use the framework from Chapter 2 to illustrate the minimal and maximal cases of the tragic *locus*.

### **Delimitations**

First, a clarification of the type of violence pertinent to this study is in order. Considering the sorts of scenes found in Homeric epic and in 5<sup>th</sup> century tragedy, acts of physical violence are the most fruitful for my study because they are the easiest to identify in a narrative. Physical violence is an action whose characteristics can be objectively described in a scene, whereas the beginnings and endings of, say, psychological violence are debatable. Furthermore, throughout both genres, there is no shortage of cases in which one person inflicts bodily injury upon another, and in instances where a character decides to commit violence against himself or herself (as in cases of suicide), physical wounding is also often the intent. Moreover, the effects of physical violence—namely, physical injuries and corpses—are easier to represent imaginatively or to depict outright. As such, my investigation focuses on scenes in which characters use violence for the purposes of causing physical harm or death.

Next, it is important to determine which of the two Homeric epics offers the paradigmatic structure of the *locus violentus*. Although violence is prevalent in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, only the *Iliad* contains an extensive number of violent scenes and displays a somewhat consistent “form” of violence. As Albracht notes, Iliadic battles progress in sections with each commander leading his contingency onto the battlefield in a relatively uniform manner.<sup>11</sup> Battle scenes and

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<sup>11</sup> Albracht, 49-51. Here, Albracht discusses the use of battle lines as overlying idea behind the skirmishes between the Achaean and Trojan armies, but he also acknowledges that the smaller groupings of warriors need not enter all together. They may go into the conflict in different “phases,” but their entry is similar, hence my comment about them being “relatively uniform.”

duels, in particular, appear to follow a general pattern which delineates the “typical” beginning, middle and end of an Iliadic act of violence—a confrontation leading to a battle and ending in a death seems to be the most prevalent form of violence in the epic. Kirk, moreover, notes that battles rarely go beyond the first assault<sup>12</sup> but that if warriors *do* exchange attacks, one of six possible outcomes is possible. The six outcomes are as follows: (1) Hero A misses hero B, B kills A; (2) A misses B, B hits but fails to penetrate, A kills B; (3) A hits B but fails to penetrate, retreats, and is then killed or wounded by hero C; (4) A misses B, B misses A, A kills B with second shot; (5) A misses B, kills C; (6) A hits B with spear or stone, then kills B with sword or C with spear.<sup>13</sup> There are “standard elements” and a seemingly limited range of outcomes during the depiction of a battle scene. Variations do not affect the presence of these elements, only the arrangement of their respective enhancements (taunts, assistance from a god and the like).<sup>14</sup> Thus, when an audience encounters one of the myriad battle scenes in the *Iliad*, there is the assumption that it can effectively foresee the general progression of this scene regardless of whether the specific details relating to the methods of death and destruction vary from conflict to conflict.

Scenes of violence in the *Odyssey*, on the other hand, are few and far between. The battle against Polyphemus in Book 9 and the fight against the suitors in Book 22 make up the bulk of the epic’s violence, and even though both episodes involve death and mutilation, they represent the evolution of the foundational Iliadic paradigm as they take violence outside of the regimented context of war. Upon first glance, this advancement would seem to be beneficial to my study

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<sup>12</sup> Kirk (1990), 22.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 24-26. See the note above for an example of some of the limitations which could be imposed on a battle scene. As Kirk also states, “An opponent can try to retreat, or he stands firm; but he could also throw while the other is challenging or boasting, or resort to subterfuge, for example by trying to distract the attacker’s attention—but these things never happen...[the material] had to be kept to manageable proportions, as well as being made to serve his underlying literary ends.”

since tragedy, too, portrays acts of violence outside of wartime. However, if one takes into account the plots of many extant tragedies and the characters present in those tragedies, it is evident that there is a distinct group of “Iliadic” tragedies but no group of “Odyssean” tragedies. To be sure, Odysseus *is* present in several tragedies (*Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, for instance), but he typically appears as part of an Iliadic cast of characters. More importantly, however, the storylines of Iliadic tragedies often expand the characterizations of these epic figures and treat more thoroughly events which are chronologically proximal to the events of the Trojan War. Accordingly, the continuity in epic and tragic plotlines allows me to consider how tragedy can play upon expectations by making changes to the established Iliadic material. As a result, it is preferable to base my examination of violence on the events of the *Iliad* because it not only possesses a plethora of scenes to choose from but also offers a more concrete link between epic and tragedy suitable to my study.

### Definition of Terms

With the *Iliad* as the epic component of the study, let us take a look at the *locus violentus* as a “visualized, narrative space.” In Homeric epic, visualization is the Homeric rhapsode’s ability to construct mental imagery through the details of narration; in tragedy, visualization is a character’s capacity to convey mental imagery through narration *and* through the manipulation of other theatrical features. Visualization is vividness, or *ἐνάργεια*.<sup>15</sup> More to the point,

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<sup>15</sup> For an recent treatment describing the importance of *ἐνάργεια* in ancient literature, see Plett (2012), 7-21. For specific discussions of *ἐνάργεια*, see Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* (ed. Ross), 3.11.1-2: ὅτι μὲν οὖν τὰ ἀστεῖα ἐκ μεταφορᾶς τε τῆς ἀνάλογον λέγεται καὶ τῶ πρὸ ὀμμάτων ποιεῖν, εἴρεται· λεκτέον δὲ τί λέγομεν πρὸ ὀμμάτων, καὶ τί ποιούσι γίνεται τοῦτο. λέγω δὴ πρὸ ὀμμάτων ταῦτα ποιεῖν ὅσα ἐνεργούντα σημαίνει (the quality of Homeric vividness is specifically referenced in 3.11.3-4: καὶ ὡς κέχρηται πολλαχοῦ Ὅμηρος, τὸ τὰ ἄψυχα ἔμψυχα ποιεῖν διὰ τῆς μεταφορᾶς. ἐν πᾶσι δὲ τῶ ἐνέργειαν ποιεῖν εὐδοκιμεῖ); Demetrius’ *On Style* (ed. Roberts), 209-220: Πρῶτον δὲ περὶ ἐναργείας· γίνεται δ’ ἡ ἐναργεία πρῶτα μὲν ἐξ ἀκριβολογίας καὶ τοῦ παραλείπειν μηδὲν μηδ’ ἐκτέμνειν... (several references to Homeric epic are made throughout these sections). Also Longinus’ *On the Sublime* (ed. Russell), 15.1: οὕτω γοῦν [ἡμεῖς] εἰδωλοποιῖας [δ’] αὐτὰς ἔνιοι λέγουσι· καλεῖται μὲν γὰρ κοινῶς φαντασία πᾶν τὸ

visualization is the *enhancement* of narrative which leads an audience to actively use its imagination to enliven the scenes being depicted.<sup>16</sup> When listeners visualize a scene, they are attentive to *both* the entirety of the scene *and* to its constituent parts. It is not enough to say, for instance, “Polyxena was sacrificed.” Along with that overarching statement, listeners need to know about the setting of the sacrifice, the actions and thoughts of those involved, and the responses to her death to gain a more vivid image of the sacrifice.

The listeners’ investment in these visualized details, moreover, makes them susceptible to the emotive effects of the images they have created because the narrator explicitly gives them emotional and visual cues in his account and/or highlights the affective implications of the scene. Returning to the sacrifice of Polyxena, a narrator may tell the audience that the scene is pitiful and provide visual details which support this feeling (people crying, for example), but the narrator could also potentially leave these out and emphasize the fact that the audience is envisioning Polyxena, and not an animal, being sacrificed thereby implying the inappropriate nature of her death and eliciting an emotional response. Visualization, then, is not merely the transmission of information for the sake of creating a picture of violence but rather the means by which epic or tragedy activates the imaginations of their listeners so that they may envision the act of violence and register, epistemologically and emotionally, its impact. This conception of visualization—the calculated use of narration for the purpose of creating dynamic, mental imagery—informs the *locus* in both epic and tragedy.

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ὀπωσοῦν ἐννόημα γεννητικὸν λόγου παριστάμενον· ἤδη δ’ τούτων κεκράτηκε τοῦνομα ὅταν ἂ λέγεις ὑπ’ ἐνθουσιασμοῦ καὶ πάθους βλέπειν δοκῆς καὶ ὑπ’ ὄψιν τιθῆς τοῖς ἀκούουσιν.

<sup>16</sup> The idea of “enlivening”, or more precisely, enacting mental imagery is a concept I have adopted from the 2001 work of Alva Noë who (working with J. Kevin O’Regan) developed the “enactive” theory of mental imagery. I detail the features of this theory later while delineating the theoretical framework of the dissertation. For now, I can say that I use this theory as part of the basis for my analysis of epic and tragic scenes of violence. Other scholars working with cognitive theory also factor into my work, of course, and their influence is noted in the outline of the dissertation.



Additionally, visualization in tragedy must account for the physical perception of the theater and actors. As features of the tragic performance, the *skene* and the actors' masks are *both* directly observable *and* imaginatively malleable. An audience can perceive the *skene* and tragic masks exactly as they are (scene painting and masks), but it can also view them for their symbolic value. If the setting needs to change, as in *Ajax* or as in *Eumenides*, the audience is able to imaginatively shift the location to advance the tragedy's plot. Likewise, the emotions "expressed" through the tragic mask are the mental projections of viewers who combine the actor's gestures, head movements and body position in order to infer the feelings being presented.<sup>17</sup> In this way, visualization in tragedy is the product of the audience's direct, visual interaction with these theatrical features *and* of its mental reconstruction of the scene depicted through a *locus*.

Narration in the epic version of the *locus* consists of the words conveying the appearance, motivations, actions, etc. of characters involved in a battle scene. Narration of the epic *locus* begins when the Homeric narrator explicitly names at least one hero as he moves to confront another and progresses until violence is inflicted and/or the scene moves to a different group of warriors or to a different location altogether. Moreover, as mentioned above, the narration of the *locus* must provide listeners with details which will help them actively engage with the scene they are imaginatively rendering. An epic *locus* cannot be a brief statement of killing like "Achilles killed warrior A, then warrior B, and finally warrior C." It must be an extended scene which gives the audience time to develop a mental image.

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<sup>17</sup> This point is most convincingly argued by Meineck (2011). On page 124 of his article, Meineck says, "Speech, song, gesture, and dance support [drawing the spectator's eye to the actor], in that they are all subservient to the mask," and while discussing the plasticity of the tragic mask, he states, "Although the features were not exaggerated, forehead, eye sockets, eyebrows, cheeks, and lips were pronounced, and...it appears that these were intended to assist the mask in seeming to change emotions." Cf. 134: "Thus, expressive ambiguity in faces leads to increased spectator engagement, as our visual processing systems work to complete the picture and make emotional and situational judgments. The schematic painted surface of the Greek tragic mask provided such an ambiguous façade."

In tragedy, the *locus*' narration also describes the development of an act of violence. This description, however, largely comes from a character in the tragedy who is proximal to the violence taking place. This means a character can be near enough to hear the act happening and describe the violence he imagines occurring. Additionally, this character can be present for or participate in the violent deed and give a firsthand account of it. Other than this, narration can come from those who have knowledge of an "established" act of violence—a character may describe a violent scene which is known to have occurred in the past regardless of whether or not the character was present at the scene. Therefore, narration of the tragic *locus* begins when a character on stage makes a statement about violence that he or she has seen or knows about and ends when this character leaves the stage, and/or makes an overarching comment about what he or she has depicted, and/or moves to another topic of discussion.<sup>18</sup>

Lastly, space in the epic *locus* comprises the beginning and the end of a battle scene. It is the narratively constructed space which enables listeners to visualize warriors doing battle. Yet, the space of the *locus* is not envisioned as the battlefield at large but rather as a separate location imagined to be *within* the battlefield. It is a narrowed, imaginative space the Homeric narrator creates so that he can hone in on a confrontation between two warriors and describe their actions at length. The narrator begins the construction of this envisioned space by presenting the audience an overview of the Achaean and Trojan armies and then naming the specific heroes who will battle against each other. Identifying these warriors by name immediately prompts listeners to focus on the area taken up by these characters—instead of keeping listeners at an imaginative distance, the narrator urges listeners to "enter" the battlefield and visualize themselves moving near the designated heroes.

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<sup>18</sup> In the specific instance of the suicide scene in Sophocles' *Ajax*, narration ends when the hero commits suicide.

With the two warriors forming the boundaries of the imagined battle space, the narrator bolsters the warriors' relative proximity to one another by either explicitly stating that they approach each other and narrowing the *locus*' space further, or by providing details which emphasize their focus on each other. For instance, the narrator may tell the audience how a warrior observes his opponent, the words he speaks to him, or even how his weapon enters the other warrior's body. These sorts of details allow listeners to imagine themselves so close to the battle that they can imaginatively look into a warrior's body to see which of his organs is pierced. An example of a delimited narrative space can be seen in Book 5 during the battle between Sarpedon and Tlepolemus (628-667). Although both the Achaeans and the Trojans are fighting *en masse*, the Homeric narrator turns away from the larger skirmish and focuses on these two heroes. He describes their taunts, their movements toward each other and finally their attacks. While Sarpedon and Tlepolemus fight one another, there is no mention of the larger armies' tactics (though it can be assumed that the Achaeans and Trojans are still fighting).<sup>19</sup> The two warriors are narratologically isolated until their battle is over.

Conversely, space in the tragic rendition of the *locus* is *both* physical *and* narratively constructed. Because tragedy is performed within the confines of the theater, there are physical spaces in which violence can take place. The stage and the area behind the stage as defined by the presence of the *skene* are two such spaces. Furthermore, the *skene* also marks the separation between the theatrical setting and the physical landscape which exists beyond the theater. From a narrative standpoint, tragic space emphasizes the imagined aspects of the stage, backstage area and the greater landscape. The *skene* characterizes what the audience should envision for the space on stage (palace courtyard, encampment, etc.) and, by extension, what the space behind the

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<sup>19</sup> Kirk, 22.

*skene* should represent (palace interior, tent interior, etc.), and it denotes what landscape the audience should visualize in the surrounding area (countryside, battlefield, etc.).

More specifically, however, tragic space as it pertains to the *locus* is the precise, imaginative location in which violence occurs. It is the space *within* the unseen area behind the *skene* or in the area beyond the boundaries of the theater<sup>20</sup> which emerges through the details offered in narration. These details—about distinct rooms, landmarks, or objects—mobilize the audience’s imagination so that only a small area needs to be envisioned; they give context to the *locus* and potentially add significance to the scene. A narrator stating that the scene of violence occurs in a grove, for instance, enables listeners to bypass the larger landscape from their imaginative focus, and a narrator highlighting the presence of a bed in a *locus* brings associations (intimacy, marriage, etc.) which can amplify the effects of violence. Additionally, the mention of specific objects allows listeners to create a focal point around which they can visualize characters moving or actions occurring. In Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, for example, the *skene* shows the audience that the area backstage represents the interior of Agamemnon’s palace, but when Cassandra and Clytemnestra describe the details of Agamemnon’s murder, they narrow the space of the scene to his bath. The space of the *locus*, then, is only the area immediately around the bath and not some larger room in the palace.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Throughout, I have emphasized the role of narration in the development of the *locus*, but at the same time, I have made references to visualization as a mental act whereby listeners can “see” characters performing actions within a delimited space. As such, this study is not purely a

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<sup>20</sup> The stage is excluded here because the space of a *locus* formed on stage does not need to be visualized in the sense that no additional, imagined space needs to be envisioned. The stage itself would be the space of the *locus* and would be immediately observable.

narratological one. Alongside the narratological aspects of the *locus*, there is also a consideration of mental imagery as represented in contemporary classical scholarship and in the field of cognitive science. Earlier, I briefly cited Noë's enactive theory of mental imagery as one of the methodologies for the study of my passages.<sup>21</sup> Noë argues that people are able to perceive mental imagery because they are effectively "seeing" the imagery as they would in the physical world.<sup>22</sup> When one physically observes a person, object, etc., he or she mentally explores and asks questions about what he or she sees. This exploration and inquiry are largely subconscious activities, but nevertheless, the experience of observing things in the physical world creates a corresponding memory in the observer's mind.<sup>23</sup> The observer can then use this memory to construct a mental image which he or she may manipulate so that other features of the image, or actions performed by the image, or actions performed on the image can be visualized.<sup>24</sup>

Take, for instance, a person sitting at a desk in an office. When one sees such an image in the physical world, the seated person's legs are typically occluded. Yet, one does not immediately assume the seated person has no legs because memory dictates that, barring unforeseen circumstances, a person sitting at a desk has legs and that once he or she stands up, his or her legs will come into view. Similarly, enactive theory postulates that when an observer wants to visualize a person sitting at a desk, the observer constructs the image based off of the memory of seeing a person sitting at a desk, with all its constituent parts (sitter, desk, chair) and setting (office). The observer may then choose to change the perspective and observe the sitter and the desk from above, behind, etc. Furthermore, the observer is able to manipulate the image in this way because he or she has previously viewed people, desks, chairs and offices from

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. note 16.

<sup>22</sup> O'Regan and Noë (2001), 970-971.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 950.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 948.

different angles. In addition, the observer may also decide to give the sitter a gender with specific traits (short hair, glasses, fancy clothes, etc.), move the sitter to a new location, make the sitter get up and run away, or even remove the sitter's legs.

In contrast to the enactive theory, the quasi-pictorial theory of Kosslyn and the propositional theory of Pylyshyn offer other concepts of mental imagery. The quasi-pictorial theory of mental imagery states that mental images are surface representations akin to pictures, which are stored in an observer's memory and recalled in a "visual buffer."<sup>25</sup> A visual buffer is a brain-state which holds the image in the mind of the observer—if mental imagery is like a picture, then the visual buffer is the canvas on which the picture is painted.<sup>26</sup> Like a painting, the buffer exhibits the spatial properties inherent to the picture being imagined; objects are envisioned in relation to other objects in order to create the overall spatial layout of the picture.<sup>27</sup>

Applying this theory to the person sitting at a desk in an office, an observer creating a mental image of this will first recall the image and then place it in the visual buffer. With the visual buffer, the observer lays out the spatial relationships between the sitter, desk, chair and office (the desk is in front of the sitter, who is in front of the chair, which is in front of the office wall). To change any of these details, the observer constructs a new mental image. So, for example, if the observer wants to view the sitter from behind, the observer merely replaces the original, anterior image with a new, posterior image. Intermediate images leading to the new perspective are not necessary: to be sure, the observer *could* include these images to visualize the movement needed to acquire the new view and, in so doing, create a sort of mental film strip, but these intermediate images are not required if the observer only wishes to switch perspectives. Likewise, adding traits, changing locations, putting the sitter to flight or removing the sitter's

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<sup>25</sup> Troscianko (2013), 182.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 183.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas, "Mental Imagery, The Analog-Propositional Debate."

legs is a matter of the observer constructing new mental images—replacing the original image altogether, not seeing the image differently as enactive theory would have it.

Alternatively, the propositional theory contends that mental images emerge as “linguistic descriptions” first and as images afterwards.<sup>28</sup> Just as a sentence is composed of words whose order and meaning are determined by the rules of English (Spanish, Italian, German, etc.) grammar, a mental picture is composed of verbal symbols which the brain organizes and interprets according to the rules of a “hypothetical internal brain language” or “mentalese.”<sup>29</sup> Plainly stated, an observer needs words to activate his or her imagination. In terms of the person sitting at a desk in an office, no image of this can exist until the observer reads the words on the page or hears the words uttered. An observer cannot form any mental image unless he or she has the verbal description of that image in mind.

In terms of the *locus*, propositional theory falls short because it would imply that violence can *only* be conveyed through verbal means. The non-verbal elements of a performance, such as music, gestures, or audible cues (screams, exclamations of sorrow, etc.), would not factor into visualization, and what is more, memory would have no bearing on a narrative’s impact. That is to say, the listeners of epic or tragedy would not use memory to enhance their understanding of violence, just the words of the epic narrator or tragic character. Thus, propositional theory is too limiting to be applied to the *locus*. Quasi-pictorial theory and enactive theory work better with the concept of the *locus*, but of the two, enactive theory is most fitting. Both theories permit visualization by verbal and non-verbal means, but enactive theory alone makes visualization a matter of dynamic, cognitive interaction. The images evoked through enactive theory are envisioned as pictures with dimension; they are not flat or static, as quasi-pictorial theory

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas, “Mental Imagery, The Analog-Propositional Debate.”

<sup>29</sup> Thomas (2008), 452.

contends. Furthermore, the spatial component of enactive theory places listeners inside a scene, not at a distance from it; it enables them to actively and cognitively *engage* with the scene rather than merely observe it imaginatively. For these reasons, enactive theory is the framework I use to analyze scenes of violence.

Additionally, I consult scholars who work in or adopt concepts from the fields of cognitive narratology, cognitive psychology and cognitive neuroscience. Paivio's neuroscientific Dual Coding Theory,<sup>30</sup> for instance, is referenced, and Tsagalis' work combining classical studies with cognitive narratology contributes to my discussion of Homeric similes.<sup>31</sup> Paivio's theory argues that when people want to recall a concept, they can choose to think of the word for the concept, an image of the concept, or both. This idea, then, is applied to the role of memory in the performance of Homeric epic. Tsagalis uses concepts of space from cognitive narratology to illustrate how Homeric similes offer their own form of space. These spaces are aligned with the greater Homeric narrative and provide layered visual units which enhance the comprehension of Homeric scenes—a concept which is analogous to my view of similes as supplementary *loci*. Others' contributions are noted below and in the following chapters. On the whole, however, I contend that the pairing of contemporary classical scholarship with studies and theories of mental perception from cognitive science offers a more thorough view of the steps listeners take as they endeavor to engage with a *locus*.

### **Outline of Dissertation**

Chapter 1 begins with a discussion of audience engagement in Homeric epic. Specifically, I address Homeric epic's ability to make listeners imaginative viewers and examine

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<sup>30</sup> Paivio (2013).

<sup>31</sup> Tsagalis (2008) and (2012).



how the convergence of narrative, visualization and space comes to form the structure of the *locus violentus*. During the treatment of these characteristics, I look at the work of several contemporary scholars. For the study of Homeric narrative, I consult the work of de Jong, in particular her comments on the pictorial characteristics of Homeric narrative.<sup>32</sup> At various points, I also cite Bakker's work on Homeric composition and performance to bolster my points on narrative engagement.<sup>33</sup> In terms of space, I look to the work of Purves who discusses the visualization of epic space and movement<sup>34</sup> and to Ryan's studies in cognitive narratology which treat the imaginative construction of space.<sup>35</sup>

With these attributes laid out, I go on to explain the methodology for the selection of passages and give an overview of other epic characteristics which pertain to the *locus*. Among these discussions, special consideration is given to the work of Moulton,<sup>36</sup> Minchin<sup>37</sup> and Bezdek.<sup>38</sup> Moulton provides the basis for my analysis of similes; Minchin's work combining cognitive theory and Homeric poetics, specifically as it refers to the role of memory, is invaluable for the examination of similes as well; and Bezdek's study on the cognitive processes involved in the feeling of suspense contributes to the ideas of suspense and spatial focalization within the *locus*. Finally, to argue for the validity of the *locus*, I engage with Auerbach who argues that the use of conjunctions, adverbs and "other syntactical tools" in Homeric epic naturally delimit "persons, things, and portions of incidents in respect to one another"<sup>39</sup> and with Bakker's<sup>40</sup> comments about the use of "speech units" in the framing of Homeric episodes.

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<sup>32</sup> de Jong (1997), (1999) and (2004).

<sup>33</sup> Bakker (1993), (1997) and (2005).

<sup>34</sup> Purves (2010).

<sup>35</sup> Ryan (2003).

<sup>36</sup> Moulton (1974).

<sup>37</sup> Minchin (2001).

<sup>38</sup> Bezdek et al. (2015).

<sup>39</sup> Auerbach (2013), 6.

<sup>40</sup> In particular, his work from 1997 and 2005.

After defining the characteristics of the epic *locus*, I move to close readings of battle scenes in the *Iliad*. To establish a sort of “control case” for the *locus* I examine the formal duel between Paris and Menelaus in Book 3. Since a duel explicitly creates a scenario which emphasizes combat between two characters in a designated area, I use the scene as an example of the base form of the *locus* and as a counterpoint for the other *loci* I analyze in the chapter. Following this scene, I examine part of Agamemnon’s *aristeia* in Book 11 and the famed battle between Hector and Achilles in Book 22 to highlight all of the *locus*’ characteristics at work. Lastly, I analyze the role of internal spectators—characters within the epic who observe acts of violence—as a way of extruding the potential effects of violence upon the audience and as a segue to the discussion of tragedy. I link the internal viewer of violence to the tragic messenger using the work of Barrett as my template, and through this association, I make the first connection between the presentation of violence in epic and that in tragedy.

Chapter 2 sets up the theoretical apparatus I use to describe the particular features of the tragic *locus violentus*. I open the examination of the *locus* by briefly outlining the concept’s essential and supplementary characteristics. I argue that the essential characteristics—violence, narration, visualization, space and suspense—are the traits needed to construct a tragic *locus*, while the supplementary characteristics—similes, metaphors and the presentation of the victim—bolster and add greater complexity to the *locus*. Next, I explain my methods for discussing each of these characteristics and note the importance of establishing a distinct set of “Iliadic” tragedies. Iliadic tragedies, I contend, maintain continuity between epic and tragedy and grant me the opportunity to examine how shifts or modifications of epic attributes enhance the depiction of violence within the tragic *locus*.

Although I single out the significance of the Iliadic plays, I commence the extended discussion of the tragic *locus*' essential and supplementary characteristics with selections from across the tragic corpus so that, as in the previous chapter, I can discuss these features in terms of genre. I begin with an examination of tragic violence and use Aristotle's comments about violence and conflict in the *Poetics* (via Halliwell)<sup>41</sup> to support my emphasis on physical violence. For the analysis of space, I adopt Rehm's categories of space in the tragic theater, specifically his ideas about scenic, extrascenic and distanced space.<sup>42</sup> During my discussion of narration, I return to the work of Barrett so that I can explain why characters other than the tragic messenger are possible narrators for the tragic *locus* and then focus on the narratological work of Markantonatos<sup>43</sup> and Goward<sup>44</sup> to highlight the narrative techniques which may be useful during the presentation of a *locus*. After this section, I turn to visualization. There, I highlight the work of Meineck<sup>45</sup> who employs a cognitive slant to discuss issues of visibility during a tragic performance. And rounding out the study of the tragic *locus*' essential characteristics, I discuss suspense and use the work of Goward, Hall<sup>46</sup> and others to show how this characteristic develops before and during the depiction of the *locus*. Thereafter, I describe how similes and metaphors have changed in the transition between epic and tragedy and demonstrate how these two characteristics and the presentation of the victim can boost the effects of the *locus*.

Finally, Chapter 2 turns back to the group of Iliadic tragedies in order to provide the affective range of the tragic *locus* and to determine which tragedies represent the minimal and maximal cases of the *locus*. I define minimality and maximality in a *locus* by the number of ways

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<sup>41</sup> Halliwell (1998).

<sup>42</sup> Rehm (1992) and (2002).

<sup>43</sup> Markantonatos (2002).

<sup>44</sup> Goward (2004).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. note 17.

<sup>46</sup> Hall (2007).

in which a *locus* uses its essential characteristics to establish complexity and the level of engagement necessary for an audience to grasp the details of a violent act. The presence of supplementary characteristics may add to the intricacies of a violent scene, but they do not factor in the overall determination of minimality or maximality. With this in mind, I first examine which of the Iliadic tragedies have *loci*, and then I organize the remaining selection of plays in order of increasing cognitive engagement. The suicide scene in Sophocles' *Ajax* and the mutilation scene in Euripides' *Hecuba*, I ultimately argue, respectively represent the minimal and maximal cases of the tragic *locus violentus*.

With the theory of the tragic *locus* in place, Chapter 3 goes on to illustrate why *Ajax* and *Hecuba* offer the least and most cognitively engaging instances of the *locus*. The discussion of *Ajax* starts with a brief synopsis describing the circumstances of Ajax's madness and a quick overview of Ajax's narrative capabilities. From here, I do an in-depth analysis of the *locus* of Ajax's suicide. I delineate the structure of the *locus* by highlighting the use of essential characteristics, but the main emphasis of my examination soon becomes Ajax's use of visualization. Ajax intends to commit suicide on stage, so in essence, there is nothing to recreate mentally. Nevertheless, Ajax frequently asks his viewers to look at him not as he is, but as he was (a warrior on the battlefield) or soon will be (a corpse). Thus, I contend that Ajax is still prompting his listeners to interact with the *locus* cognitively. Auditors may be able to physically see Ajax preparing for his death, but the mental reimagining of Ajax is what is truly significant. Tecmessa's narration after Ajax's suicide further supports this idea. Tecmessa repeatedly urges the audience to view her as an emblem of Ajax's death. She uses visualization to put forth the notion of her symbolic death. Taken altogether, then, the two narrative depictions of the *locus* offer an impactful but ultimately less cognitively complex scene of violence.

My analysis of *Hecuba* similarly begins with a rundown of the death of Polydorus and the sacrifice of Polyxena. These two events are crucial not only for the development of suspense in the play but also for the development of Hecuba as a narrator. As such, I follow the discussion of these events with a quick analysis of Hecuba's dialogue with Agamemnon and with Polymestor to show how the subtleties in her speech complicate the narration of the *locus*. Before discussing narration, however, I describe how Hecuba and Polymestor's departure from the stage transforms the area behind the *skene* into the extrascenic space of the *locus*. Then, I organize my analysis according to the different narrative renditions of the scene. I start with the chorus' synchronous portrayal of the *locus* and point out the assumptions this narration brings forth. Next, I focus on Hecuba's synchronous and proleptic narration of the scene. During this discussion, I note how Hecuba's version of the *locus* modifies the depiction of violence and frustrates the chorus and audience's understanding of the scene. Lastly, I examine the presentation of Polymestor as the victim of the *locus* and analyze his analeptic narration of the *locus*. While highlighting the extensive details of his account, I also comment on Polymestor's use of similes and note how the inclusion of this supplementary characteristic adds complexity to the *locus*. Finally, I describe how each stage of narration causes the audience to be exceedingly attentive to the shifts in the *locus*' depiction and how the proximity of the *locus* enhances the audience's understanding of violence. With these ideas in mind, I argue that this *locus* represents the most cognitively sophisticated depiction of violence.

To conclude, I summarize the findings of each chapter and discuss the contributions of the *locus violentus*. As fodder for a future investigation of the *locus violentus*, I consider how other forms of violence may affect the concept of the *locus* and examine other fields of study in which I believe the *locus* can be applied.

## **The Space in Between: The Formation of the *Locus Violentus* in the *Iliad***

In this chapter, I examine the characteristics of epic and discuss how these traits lend themselves to the formation of what I call the *locus violentus*—a visualized, narrative space which emphasizes the qualities of scale, suspense and, to a lesser degree, similes and anecdotes in order to create a cognitively engaging scene of physical violence. With the characteristics of the *locus* defined, I go on to illustrate the concept by analyzing specific battle scenes. I begin with the formal duel between Menelaus and Paris in Book 3, and using this scene as a point of comparison, I move to an examination of a battle scene from Agamemnon’s *aristeia* in Book 11 and the battle between Achilles and Hector in Book 22. Through these scenes, I endeavor to elucidate the importance of the *locus* to the epic and to enhanced audience engagement. Additionally, the chapter also examines the significance of internal viewers—in particular, the Trojan royal family (Priam, Hecuba and Andromache) in the aftermath of the battle from Book 22 and Athena and Ares during Diomedes’ *aristeia* in Book 5—relative to the tragic messenger. This figure is central in subsequent chapters not only because he maintains the connection between narrative and violence but also because it is through this character that the tragic *locus violentus* finds its outlet.

### **Narrative Engagement**

As with most scenes in the *Iliad*, there is more to violence than the facts of its execution. If one examines the composition of a violent scene more closely, it becomes apparent that the Homeric narrator<sup>1</sup> is also concerned with displaying events which elicit a visceral reaction.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the chapter, the terms “Homeric narrator,” “rhapsode,” “singer” and the like are used to describe the performer of the *Iliad*.

Granted, the narrator *does* highlight the most minute details in scenes involving violence—the sounds of war as Achilles drives the Trojan forces into the Scamander (21.9-11), Patroclus’ rout of the Trojans across the battlefield (16.399-418). At every opportunity, the epic narrator undoubtedly activates the senses, but he does so not only to enhance the vividness of the epic but also to draw the audience into the space of the narrative itself. Initially, this occurs when the audience is able to orient itself to the narrator’s perspective.<sup>2</sup> It envisions figures, locations and situations with the broadest of strokes,<sup>3</sup> and then as the Homeric rhapsode continues to narrate the epic, the space becomes more defined as people’s imaginations accommodate new information. So, for instance, the audience hears about Odysseus and Ajax departing for Achilles’ tent on a path generally described as being “by the shore of the loud-roaring sea” (παρὰ θῆνα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης, 9.182), and then at the heroes’ arrival, it is given a view of Achilles’ tent, the Myrmidons’ ships and Patroclus playing a song on a lyre (9.185-187). In all, general features are progressively refined into precise details which listeners can more easily envision. Thus invested in this “perceptual experience,”<sup>4</sup> the Homeric narratees are gradually enveloped by details to the point that they seem to be participants rather than merely passive listeners.<sup>5</sup> As Stambovsky notes (albeit in an author-reader context):

By his complementary participation in the literary enterprise, the reader celebrates artistic vision in the only way that the communicative endeavor of the artist is ever actively celebrated. The degree to which a literary metaphor’s thematic meaning takes place prereflectively, depictively...determines the extent to which its transformational power is realized...there are [no bounds] to limit metaphor’s power to transform us by being our means of assimilating novel and ever more richly discriminated

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<sup>2</sup> Clay (2007), 241.

<sup>3</sup> Hofmeister (1995), 293. While describing the effectiveness of images he states that “the advantage of imagery...resides in its power to make an impact upon the consciousness of a reader, or listener, on an immediate, pre-critical level.”

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, citing the term from Phillip Stambovsky’s *The Depictive Image*.

<sup>5</sup> Bakker (1993), 2-3.

data of awareness.<sup>6</sup>

Likewise, in the context of oral poetry, an audience's ability to consistently assimilate new information, combined with the epic rhapsode's ability to provide further detail, accordingly creates a scenario in which listeners are greatly encouraged to engage with the *material* of the narrative. While listeners inhabit the space laid out for them by the words of the rhapsode, the figures and objects encountered take on a physical presence even if they are not actually present because they are *imaginatively* proximal. What begins with the epic narrator recreating the images bestowed upon him by the Muses and continues as an audience is tasked with reenacting the same imagery produces a chain of perception intimating the notion of witnessing the events of the epic first-hand.<sup>7</sup> In this way, both the narrator and narratees are metaphorically and immediately present; they are consciously tied to the narrative and subject to its emotive effects.

Furthermore, the Homeric narrator assists the reconstruction of details in a narrative space by including imagery which comes from a familiar "stock class of subject matter."<sup>8</sup> These "stock" images act as cognitive anchors which members of an audience can latch onto regardless of their level of experience with war or violence. They are visual touchstones that provide momentary respites within the narrator's depictions of mutilation and slaughter. And because the epic narrator is more likely to delve deeper and repeatedly ask the audience to imagine acts of brutal violence than to relent, the presence of recognizable markers becomes highly significant because the points of contrast they offer solidify the impact of the violence being inflicted. The audience may take solace in certain aspects of a scene, and epic narrator may lead listeners "by

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<sup>6</sup> Hofmeister, 294. Cf. Prier (1989), 167-168. On these pages, Prier makes several remarks concerning the empirical qualities of the *Iliad*. To offer an example, on page 168 he states, "What is important is not the 'subject' but the *experience*...an extended experience of sight and light that as ecphrasis creates picture-visions in the intermediary realm."

<sup>7</sup> Bakker (1993), 15.

<sup>8</sup> Coffey (1957), 116. Coffey reserves the "stock class of subject material" designation for similes, but other non-war scenes, such as those which refer to distant family members, can also depict conventional or typical subject matter.



the hand and...[conduct them] safely through the fiery heart of battle,”<sup>9</sup> but soon after the narrator will refocus their gaze directly on the killing blow in order to jolt them back to the reality of the narrative and to punctuate the effect of the violent act as it comes to fruition.<sup>10</sup>

Throughout the process of enhancing the audience’s participation in the epic, it is important to note that Homeric narrator gives priority to sight, and in particular imaginative sight, above all the other senses. Every step, from the adoption of the narrator’s point of view to the reconstruction of “typical” stock imagery, arises from the ability to “see” with the mind’s eye, and this ability to visualize is directly linked to the possibility of having a visceral response. Or more plainly stated, a visceral reaction is inherently related to an enhanced sense of visual engagement—to feel, the audience must be willing to commit its sight to the narrative. Although it can be argued that the aural components of the narrative are most significant to the understanding of oral poetry,<sup>11</sup> the act of listening, in and of itself, does not bring about comprehension.<sup>12</sup> The acoustic attributes of the epic are intermediary; they are the means through which imaginative vision, and so visceral understanding, takes hold.

This point becomes even more apparent if one observes the epic from a temporal standpoint. The timeframe of the *Iliad* has a natural tendency to pull away from the audience’s

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<sup>9</sup> Clay, 237-238.

<sup>10</sup> de Jong (1999), 374. According to her analysis, there are specific passages in Homer which either use the vocabulary of perception or highlight the understanding of certain figures in the epic. These “perception-passages” are the “hinges of the story.” They fulfill three functions, one of which is signifying “the emotional effect on events on characters.” In terms of violence, it appears that the perspective of characters is meant to be mimicked by the audience as it listens. The audience’s emotions align with the narration Homer provides, and as a result it is more affected by the violence taking place.

<sup>11</sup> Kitts (2005), 12. Instead of sight, Kitts argues that a “listener will notice that death tends to be focalized with an ear for the victim’s last breath.” The interplay between sight and hearing is, of course, crucial since the visualization of a scene is largely dependent upon the sophistication of the listener. Moreover, I *do* agree that a listener is attuned to the moment of death, but I argue that the visualized image takes precedence over the aural comprehension of death because the imagined visual is more effective.

<sup>12</sup> Richardson (1990), 178-182. The Muses are the “repositories of story knowledge.” They alone have direct access to the information the epic narrator requires to tell the story. They see all, they know all, and in granting the narrator the ability to see, they give him the ability to let the audience see as well. As Richardson notes, “he can see so that we can hear” and “[we] see only through hearing.”

attempts at visual involvement.<sup>13</sup> Even as the rhapsode uses images to grant listeners access to the narrative, those images are the products of “epic distance”<sup>14</sup>, or the idea that what Homeric rhapsode is memorializing belongs to a long bygone era.<sup>15</sup> The characters in the epic, for example, are not the rhapsode’s or our or even the ancient audience’s contemporaries. They are akin to gods in their almost superhuman attributes, and their exaggerated abilities help emphasize the fact that “the heroic world” is “clearly separated from the poet’s present.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, an audience needs to visualize in order to ground the more remarkable features of the epic.

One area where this is possible is in the culture of the narrative itself. The world of Iliadic heroes can be made familiar because it follows a relatable, inherent logic.<sup>17</sup> The rules by which the heroic society operates are not so different that they can be considered unrealistic. They exist in conditions which “permit the reconstruction of an historical society which we can fit into the social development of ancient Greece.”<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the society which the Homeric rhapsode represents in the *Iliad* is a construct with elements that are familiar enough to envision but

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<sup>13</sup> Bakker’s 1997 and 2005 works counter this statement. In his estimation, the performance of the epics drives the past into the present so that the mere utterances of the words create a new form of present. While previous scholars have made the mistake of viewing epic language according to the standards of written language, Bakker argues that the epic contains certain markers which show that the audience’s experience of the performance is based on an ever present “mindset” rather than the familiar cues of “more contemporary” language within the poem. I stated something similar when I mentioned that visualization makes things “*imaginatively proximal*,” but I also contend that epic possesses certain characteristics that prevent the experience from being wholly present. I discuss what these characteristics are above and in greater detail later when I examine the essential characteristics of epic.

<sup>14</sup> Raaflaub (2008), 472.

<sup>15</sup> de Jong (2004), 13. de Jong highlights the small clues Homer gives in the proem of the *Iliad* which indicate the difference between the figures in the poem and Homer’s narratees. Her analysis of these lines is largely based on the temporal language of the proem, whereas Raaflaub’s discussion relies on the exaggeration of specific details.

<sup>16</sup> Raaflaub, 472-473. Some of the qualities Raaflaub deems extraordinarily exaggerated or fantastic are: the size of Ajax’s shield, the weight of Achilles’ ashen spear, the warriors’ amount of wealth, the number of men fighting, the number of slave and herds, and the time span in which Homer’s epics occur (i.e. ten years each). Cf. Richardson, 66-67 and 177-178, for another reason for the differentiation between the contemporary performance and the heroic narrative.

<sup>17</sup> Raaflaub, 473. Here, Raaflaub cites Donlan who states, “The society depicted in Homer may be, as some maintain, a fictional construct: if so, it is an internally logical one, whose complexities, throughout 28,000 lines of epic verse, form an intelligible and coherent pattern. To that extent Homeric society is ‘real’; and it is more likely that such a social structure existed in space and time than that it was made up.”

<sup>18</sup> Raaflaub. Cf. Hainsworth (1993), 223: “It is characteristic of oral poetry that it tends to substitute the familiar (i.e. what is contemporary with the poet or within the memory of his audience) for the archaic.”

detached enough that what is envisioned can be extraordinary and monumental. And taken altogether, it is possible to see how visualization is a matter of constant negotiation, an essential management of the inherent push and pull of the epic's extensive span of time and the preternatural attributes of its characters.

### **The *Locus Violentus* and its Significance as a Narrative Form**

Having detailed the importance of visualization, I can now explain how it relates to my previous discussion of space and imagery. On the whole, it would be a monumental undertaking to attempt to envision the scale of the *Iliad*—the sheer number of men and ships is enough to overwhelm anyone who would venture to imagine them in the mind's eye.<sup>19</sup> The enumeration of the Catalogue of Ships in Book 2 (484-759), for example, is something akin to a superhuman act requiring “a hypothetical part-mechanical, part-mathematical version of [the Homeric narrator].”<sup>20</sup> It is something requiring an augmented sense of mental vision. The narrator's appeal to the Muses at the beginning of the Catalogue (484), then, is a plea to be imbued with their divine sense of sight and also a plea to make the list of ships a manageable task. In addition, it can be argued that the Catalogue is actually based on a mental map. From this standpoint, the epic narrator emphasizes the geographic origins of the Achaeans rather than their specific numbers, which again makes the Catalogue easier to handle.<sup>21</sup> The development of compartmentalized, cognitive regions is not exclusive to extensive lists within the epic however.

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<sup>19</sup> Purves (2010), 3-9. This point is debatable, as Purves notes. There are those who agree with Aristotle that the *Iliad* is eusynoptic (εὐσύνοπτος, “easily seen at one glance”), while others such as Nietzsche believe the idea of visual unity is only a “myth.” In my estimation, the epic has too many details to absorb in a single glance which is actually beneficial to the narrative because it forces listeners to approach scenes as focalized units.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 7 and 9-10.

<sup>21</sup> Minchin (2001), 84-87 (also noted by Purves, 37). Both Minchin and Purves, moreover, draw much of their discussion from Rubin (1988), which discusses the spatial characteristics of oral performance. While Rubin's work is valuable, I consider the more recent work of Marie-Laure Ryan (2003) who also acknowledges the role of space, and specifically maps, in memory. For more on the role of the Muses, see Minchin, 64 and the pages mentioned in note 12.

The narrator also frames battle scenes in such a way that the audience only has to visualize a specific area in the field.

Often, clashes between the Achaean and Trojan forces are limited to a select group of men, and among these men are the most notable warriors from both sides of the conflict. Their presence, in particular, determines the boundaries of the battle space. To wit: even if the audience is to understand that the larger Trojan army is fighting, the epic may direct listeners to primarily focus on, for instance, Hector and the group of men he is leading. Consider Book 15 of the epic. There, the epic narrator describes the Trojans' assault on the Achaean ships (328-654) and the weariness the Achaeans feel as they encounter after wave after wave of the Trojans' forces (655-658). Although the battle narrative momentarily stops to focus on the Achaeans' recovery (659-670), Hector quickly becomes a focal point in the scene since it is he whom the narrator singles out at the front of the Trojan army (Ἔκτορα δὲ φράσσαντο βοὴν ἀγαθόν, 671). Furthermore, he is the figure through which the audience can produce half of the impending skirmish's frame. The same is also true for whomever Hector is fighting. In the case of this scene, Ajax is the central figure from the Achaean side (οὐδ' ἄρ' ἔτ' Αἴαντι μεγαλήτορι ἦνδανε θυμῷ ἐστάμεν, 647-675), so he and the forces accompanying him produce the other side of the scene's frame. Consequently, the precise area to be envisioned is not the battlefield as a whole but the area taken up by Hector, Ajax and their respective armies. It is a space which is purposefully limited. Hence, the scene unfolds in the following manner:

ὥς Αἴας ἐπὶ πολλὰ θοάων ἴκρια νηῶν (685)  
φοῖτα μακρὰ βιβάζ, φωνὴ δὲ οἱ αἰθέρ' ἴκανεν,  
αἰεὶ δὲ σμερδνὸν βοόων Δαναοῖσι κέλευε  
νηυσί τε καὶ κλισίησιν ἀμυνέμεν. οὐδὲ μὲν Ἔκτωρ  
μίμνεν ἐνὶ Τρώων ὀμάδῳ πύκα θωρηκτάων·  
ἀλλ' ὥς τ' ὀρνίθων πετεηνῶν αἰετὸς αἴθων (690)  
ἔθνος ἐφορμᾶται ποταμὸν πέρα βοσκομενάων  
χηνῶν ἢ γεράνων ἢ κύκνων δουλιχοδείρων,

ὥς Ἴκτωρ ἴθυσσε νεὸς κυανοπρώροιο  
ἀντίος αἴξας· τὸν δὲ Ζεὺς ὄσεν ὀπισθε  
χειρὶ μάλα μεγάλῃ, ὄτρυνε δὲ λαὸν ἅμ' αὐτῷ. (695)

Thus, as Ajax was striding long to and fro across the many decks of the swift ships, his voice went up to heaven, and shouting terribly as always, he ordered the Danaans to defend the ships and the camp. Nor did Hector stay among the throng of stoutly-armed Trojans; but just as a tawny eagle rushes upon a flock of winged birds while they feed near a river, wild geese, or cranes, or swans, so did Hector dash straight at the dark-prowed ship, darting against [it]; and from behind, Zeus pushed him with his exceedingly great hand, and at the same time, he roused the army with him. (15.685-695)<sup>22</sup>

By placing direct emphasis on the movements of Hector and Ajax, the Homeric narrator makes the Trojans' rout cognitively manageable for the audience. Rather than attempt to delineate all aspects of the attack, it is able to focus its attention on the most important warriors in the field and extrapolate the intensity of the overall battle through their actions.<sup>23</sup>

Narratively speaking, this means that the audience's visual frame of reference during a battle scene is gradually being narrowed. The space of violence is constantly moving inward; it is shifting away from an assembled mass of warriors to a distinctly condensed confrontation between a hero and his opponent(s). Duels between warriors are the focus regardless of whether the larger army does or does not act in concert with these particular heroes. As such, the violence inflicted by prominent warriors during a duel remains front and center. It is largely as Auerbach states, namely that Homeric narrator "knows no background." Everything described in Homeric

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<sup>22</sup> All passages from the *Iliad* are from the 1920 Oxford version of the text edited by David B. Munro and Thomas W. Allen. All translations are my own.

<sup>23</sup> Although the book ends with the two armies clashing, it is important to note that as the heroes within this delimited space move, they are also defining another enclosed area, namely the space in which they specifically do battle.

epic is “only present, and fills both the stage and the reader’s mind completely.”<sup>24</sup> And this is especially the case when the narrowed space of a duel places the audience within close imaginative propinquity with the violence inflicted by a hero. For this reason, I argue that violence is most effective when it takes place in an exclusive, focalized space—a narrative zone which is markedly separate from the larger field of battle and an area which calls for an amplified sense of participation through detailed visualization—the space of a duel, a *locus* of violence, or what I designate hereafter as the *locus violentus*.

At this point it would be natural to ask why the *locus violentus* is most significant representation of violence. Simply stated, the *locus* imparts the strongest cognitive connection between a narrative and its audience. Violence is a ubiquitous aspect of Greek literature, but violence within the confines of a specific *locus* brings it finer focus, a level of grotesque intimacy, which is the defining characteristic of epic duels and, later, the climactic force of tragedy. Thus, the *locus* is essential because it is a narrative feature which places a narratee at the crux of a story. Without the *locus*, the *Iliad* would be left with battle scenes too large in scale to visualize, and its hallmark vividness would be diminished because warriors’ actions on the battlefield would be impressionistic at best. As such, I argue that violence thrives when its effects are seen as one opposing figure comes to confront another in an enclosed setting, not when these figures are enveloped within a myriad of other warriors on the battlefield.

Along with the question of the *locus*’ significance, it is also fitting to question its validity. Is it possible to distinguish the *locus* as a form specific to violence especially when scholars such as Bakker note that the epic naturally tends to isolate certain imagery as it moves from one

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<sup>24</sup> Auerbach (2013), 4. While it *does* seem that violence is, indeed, in the foreground of a listener’s mind, it also appears that there are instances in which the rhapsode layers the imagery in a scene (similes are the most explicit example), and in these moments there is effectively a “foreground” and a “background” scene to take into account. How these concurrent scenes are created and how they work together is something discussed later in the chapter.

scene/unit to another?<sup>25</sup> In order to answer this crucial question and overcome any other challenges the *locus* may possess, it is very important to look closely at the characteristics of epic and to choose passages that demonstrate how the formation of this separate space of violence sets it apart from other passages. Moreover, since I am equally concerned with the effects of the *locus*, I must look at the techniques the Homeric narrator uses to compel an audience to participate in scenes of violence.

### Selection of Passages

Earlier, I argued that scenes of significant violence<sup>26</sup> are not likely to be found in broad, imagined spaces. Instead, significant acts of violence are likely to appear in scenes which are focused and have a high level of detail. As such, I turn to longer passages because passages of greater length are more likely to afford a greater number of details. I omit what Kitts calls “short, formulaic dying scenes”<sup>27</sup>—scenes in which Warrior A cuts down Warrior B and rapidly moves on to kill Warriors C and D. These scenes, though valuable as quantifiable expressions of a warrior’s bloodlust, do not possess the multilayered details necessary for a listener’s heightened sense of involvement. Appropriately, then, the first set of passages consists of extended scenes that highlight the characteristics of the *locus violentus*, which I more thoroughly define as: a visualized, narrative space consisting of duel between at least two warriors which remains safe

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<sup>25</sup> Bakker (2005), 67-68, and (1997), 80, 86-87. I discuss these pages in greater depth when I describe how the *locus violentus* distinguishes itself from other scenes. In the meantime, Auerbach also seems to imply there is a progression of scenes which is inherently related to his idea of a “perpetual foreground.” On page 6 he states, “The separate elements of a phenomenon are most clearly placed in relation to one another; a large number of conjunctions, adverbs, particles, and other syntactical tools, all clearly circumscribed and delicately differentiated in meaning, delimit persons, things, and portions of incidents in respect to one another, and at the same bring them together in a continuous and ever flexible connection... a continuous rhythmic procession of phenomena passes by, and never is there a form left fragmentary or half-illuminated, never a lacuna, never a gap, never a glimpse of unplumbed depths.” This idea, along with those presented by Bakker, I contend with later during the discussion of epic’s notable characteristics.

<sup>26</sup> Read scenes involving prominent Achaean and/or Trojan heroes.

<sup>27</sup> Kitts, 12.

from encroachment until some form of violence is inflicted or there is a call to end the duel by external or often divine intervention.<sup>28</sup> Qualitatively, the *locus* shows elements of scale, suspense and aggression directed against the audience, either by content or by feature of imagery (as in divine or cosmic light), and optionally, it includes similes and anecdotes which serve to supplement the *locus*' space or amplify the effect of scenes. In order to elucidate the importance of these features, I examine one of the formal duels in the *Iliad* along with other significant battles. With both, I highlight the form and function of the *locus*, the audience's cognitive engagement, and the manner in which the intensity of the violence influences the intensity of the imagery in the scene.

Following this section, the next selection of passages examines the role of the internal audience. Given that the *locus violentus* produces an area of narrowed focus, it is possible for those who are excluded from this area to become spectators in their own right. In spite of their relative distance from the violence taking place within the *locus*, these viewers are similarly important because their reactions denote the sort of responses the epic rhapsode is seeking from his listeners. This is especially true when internal viewers possess intimate bonds with those they are observing. Figures, such as Priam, Hecuba and Andromache, are notable even though they do not participate in battle because their engagement is fueled by their familial connection to Hector and others. These connections are valuable because they are representative of associations which are more likely to pertain to the members of the audience. There is a greater likelihood of a listener understanding the role of a parent or a spouse than perhaps the role of a warrior. Ergo, these "noncombatant" characters figure into a larger emotive framework which prompt the audience to have a response to the violence taking place.

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<sup>28</sup> I deem the *locus* most successful when violence explicitly results in some form of bodily harm because it produces a sustained visceral effect upon a listener. Otherwise, the emotional effect is stilted and the duel is a *locus* only in form, which while important may not be as effective.



Finally, it is important to consider another form of internal audience, namely that composed by the Olympian gods. Their role in the narrative is unique in that they are equal parts invested and detached from the action of the epic. For them, the act of observation is all-encompassing. They are ideal witnesses to violence and other events, and they are unencumbered by mortal sentimentality. Their function in the epic presents a counterbalance to the more emotional function of characters like Priam, Hecuba and Andromache. As a result, examining both types of internal spectators enables one to see their roles in the epic as prototypical, as something which tragedy takes note of to create one of its most characteristic figures. Therefore, the final passage analyzing the role of the gods provides a fitting segue between this chapter and those to follow.

### **Characteristics of Epic Pertaining to the *Locus Violentus***

#### **Scale**

As it stands, I have given form and definition to the *locus violentus*, but I have not thoroughly explained why certain epic traits call for the creation of this specific narrative area. To remedy this, I begin with one of the most defining features of epic—its scale. Epic has few limits when it comes to the locative or temporal components of its narrative. Unlike tragedy which almost always requires everything to take place in a single location within the span of a day, epic can travel between various locations and time periods at will. For example, an audience can follow a god from Olympus to the battlefield at the speed of thought,<sup>29</sup> and the narrative can

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<sup>29</sup> One of many examples of this sort appears in Book 5, lines 866-867 in which Ares flies away to Olympus after he is wounded by Diomedes: τοῖος Τυδεΐδῃ Διομήδεϊ χάλκεος Ἄρης φαίνεται ὁμοῦ νεφέεσσιν ἰὼν εἰς οὐρανὸν εὐρύν.

transport listeners to the time of a hero's birth<sup>30</sup> or even glance forward to view a hero's legacy.<sup>31</sup> In these and many other instances, epic shows how its scale increases the scope and versatility of its narrative. Nevertheless, the same cannot be said about the vastness of its imagery, especially when it involves violence. When there is a mass of men on the battlefield or there are innumerable deaths to render, scale becomes a hindrance because epic is forced to employ outlines or, as Richardson calls them, "action summaries" to illustrate the actions taking place.<sup>32</sup> Under these circumstances, there is no detail to keep an audience visually or emotionally invested. Both the narrative and its narratees lose focus, and so another of epic's distinctive traits—the extended simile—must come into play.<sup>33</sup>

### Similes

Similes in the *Iliad* provide some of the most engrossing imagery in the epic because they provide an alternative to war. They are gateways to the familiar,<sup>34</sup> and often the dynamics of their imagery offer unique counterpoints which cannot necessarily be replicated within the boundaries of battle. That is, their presence is one of the very things which proffers epic its aforementioned narrative flexibility—the space of similes is the area in which epic scale becomes apparent because similes have the potential to form imagery which can extend beyond

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<sup>30</sup> As in 4.474-477 which describes the birth of the Trojan warrior, Simoeisios, after he is struck down by Ajax.

<sup>31</sup> Take, for instance, the Homeric narrator's comment about Phainops in Book 5. As the epic rhapsode states, Phainops was worn down by old age and begat no other children (ὁ δὲ τείρετο γῆραϊ λυγρῶ, υἷὸν δ' οὐ τέκετ' ἄλλον ἐπὶ κτεάτεσσι λιπέσθαι, 153-154) after his sons, Xanthus and Thoon, were killed in battle by Diomedes.

<sup>32</sup> Richardson, 14-17. Richardson deals with "action summaries" as a means to examine narrative progression. His concern is not the precision of narrative details *per se*, and yet he astutely remarks upon the "visual impression" left by summaries, which seems to speak to the loss of visual acuity an audience encounters when confronted with a scene presented on a large scale.

<sup>33</sup> What I designate as an "extended simile" is similar to what Moulton (1974), 383, n. 10, describes as "full similes" (a term derived from the work of D.J.N. Lee). According to him, full similes are those which "[extend] over several verses, as opposed to short comparisons" which are brief and fully expressed in roughly a single line, as in φλογὶ εἵκελος Ἥφαιστοιο ἀσβέστω (17.88-89) to describe Hector's cry during battle.

<sup>34</sup> A more thorough examination of this quality is discussed in subsequent pages detailing the significance of memory to the epic.

the land of Troy or even the timeframe of the main narrative. And yet, in relation to the quantitative aspects of the epic they may serve an opposite purpose. They may reconfigure the enormity of a scene with images which confine the range of the audience's imagination; they can narrow the scope of visualization so that, as Coffey states, "the whole picture of the simile explains the whole picture of the event."<sup>35</sup> Thus, even if the *Iliad* itself is not eusynoptic,<sup>36</sup> similes can give the epic eusynoptic qualities. They enable the audience to see an overwhelmingly expansive scene through a frame of reference that *can* be understood and imagined in more tenable terms. It is hardly a coincidence that the majority of extended similes appear during battle.<sup>37</sup> To describe the motions and acts of heroes on a large scale, the Homeric narrator draws imagery from other, more self-contained settings, such as specific scenes from nature or from domestic life. Consequently, the audience sees the throng of Achaeans preparing for battle in Book 2 appear as flock of wild geese or cranes (459-463) or a swarm of flies on a farmstead (469-471);<sup>38</sup> the Myrmidons rallying to re-enter the battle in Book 16 become a pack of ravenous wolves (156-163) and are later seen fighting like wasps (259-265); and the epic narrator compares the multitude of Trojans being slaughtered by Achilles in Book 21 to an onrush of locusts (12-14) and a school of fish (22-24).<sup>39</sup>

Conversely, if the audience is already within the confines of a defined space, as it would be within the *locus*, similes can expand the visual scope of a precise feature as well. For

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<sup>35</sup> Coffey, 117.

<sup>36</sup> For the discussion regarding the eusynoptic properties of the *Iliad*, see note 19.

<sup>37</sup> Moulton, 382-383. While discussing the variety of imagery in similes, Moulton notes that "over three-fourths of the full similes of the *Iliad* occur in battle scenes." The full similes in these scenes do not automatically indicate an issue of scale since they also encompass similes referring to single combatants, so I soon highlight those scenes in which scale is the quality re-presented by the simile. Cf. Tsagalis (2012), 277, which states, "the spatial component of [similes] is stronger than the spatial indicators of [battle narrative]."

<sup>38</sup> Despite the relatively few lines taken up by these two examples, they can still be considered extended similes because their subject matter seems to deal exclusively with the numbers of men entering the fray. Coffey, 125, in particular, notes the numerical aspects of these lines.

<sup>39</sup> For an extensive analysis of beast similes, see Clarke (1995). Other notable examples which present domestic scenes can be found at the beginning of Agamemnon's *aristeia* in Book 11. Due to the importance of other details in those scenes, the *aristeia* is discussed in later pages.

example, the Homeric rhapsode can describe a warrior or his arms with the utmost detail, as he does in Book 18 when he describes the arms of Achilles, but in order to fully highlight the warrior's ferocity or the arms' significance, he may use a simile as a means of enhancement. In such scenes, the subject matter of the similes can be as mundane as those formerly mentioned or as far-reaching as those offered by comparisons to cosmic forces (stars and supernatural sources of light).<sup>40</sup> As a result, in their capacity to encapsulate or expand certain scenes, they are both the symptom and the solution for epic scale.

Furthermore, relative to the notion of space, similes presage and gradually supplement the *locus* by designating another area of narrowed focus.<sup>41</sup> When juxtaposed with the *locus*, similes make it possible to layer imagery so that an audience can treat contrasts as similarities, as divergent images which can be made terrifyingly analogous to each other.<sup>42</sup> Or, they can cause the narrator's listeners to treat differences as *amplifiers* of contrast which can elicit a greater degree of *pathos*, especially when the epic sets scenes of peace against the backdrop of battle imagery.<sup>43</sup> Whatever the case may be, the comparisons in similes are predicated on the idea that an audience possesses some form of experience which can be set against the events within the narrative, which draws my attention to another important feature of epic and its similes—the use of memory.

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<sup>40</sup> Of all the heroes in the *Iliad*, Achilles is the best example of this type of comparison, and as such, much of the discussion surrounding the “cosmic” category of simile is reserved for later pages. In those pages, Prier's work is paramount.

<sup>41</sup> Minchin, 25. The spatial or visual components of imagery are some of the “most powerful mnemonic aids,” and since similes and the *locus* both operate with these same premises, they form an especially powerful scene when they are brought together. Cf. Tsagalis (2012), 274-275. On these pages, Tsagalis examines the comparative techniques the Homeric narrator uses to describe the suffering of Ares (5.858-867) and notes that “when the narrative space changes, then the simile space changes too. In other words, each narrative space corresponds to a single simile space.” With similes, there is the possibility for a series of smaller “visual frames” within a larger “visual unit.”

<sup>42</sup> Tsagalis (2008), 284. Here, he states, “By keying the audience on a narrative register distinct from the external narrative, the similes allow the audience to participate in a dynamic interplay with their own experiential universe, which consists of multiple image-mappings, both converging on and diverging from the visualizations suggested by any given simile.”

<sup>43</sup> For a useful analysis of Homeric similes' comparative range, see Ready (2011), 14-26.

## Memory and Anecdotes

Although the purpose and validity of Homeric similes have been much debated,<sup>44</sup> the fundamental link between memory and similes is undisputable. Compositionally, similes are innately versatile. They are “omnitemporal,” occurring at indistinguishable times, and as such they are able to “link the heroes of the past, the narrator and his narratees, and us, the later readers.”<sup>45</sup> Moreover, Homeric similes also take place in indefinite settings. If one looks back to the battle scene from Book 15, it is possible to see that the simile comparing Hector to a tawny eagle attacking a flock of birds (ὄρνιθων πετεηνῶν αἰετὸς αἴθων ἔθνος ἐφορμᾶται ποταμὸν πάρα βοσκομενάων, 690-691) gives no indication of when this attack is happening or where the river the birds are feeding at is. This lack of definition, both in time and space, means there is yet another reason why the narrative possesses great flexibility, namely because the visualized space of the simile is not exclusively tailored for any singular experience. The simile is “universal” through its ability to be conceived and perceived by every listener and ironically “personal” for the very same reasons.

An audience, whether ancient or modern, has the capability to imagine, and what it envisions and visualizes through the imagination becomes personal because the images evoked

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<sup>44</sup> Moulton, 384-386. His seminal work on the *Iliad*'s similes discusses the various “problems” some scholars find in the similes' composition, and Bakker (2005), 114-135, also addresses these problems and drives the discussion forward with some points of his own.

<sup>45</sup> de Jong (2004), 14. Bakker (2005), 131-133, offers a contrasting view of the “timelessness” of similes. He contends that this idea, as well as the belief in the “gnomic” nature of similes, shows scholar's inherent bias toward the “literate conception of language” because it turns similes into proverbs which, in turn, makes the content of similes into “generic types.” Rather than use similes in this manner, Bakker argues that the utterance of similes makes them “highly specific” to the present circumstances of the epic performance. It seems, however, that the fact that the scenery of similes draws from images which have cultural capital, or are “stock” images, means that they are images which have existed, do exist and will exist within and without the performance of the epic. Therefore, their presence is a marker of a *continuum* of experience. Similes are simultaneously pertinent to the individual and the collective.

emerge from memory.<sup>46</sup> I already noted the Homeric use of “stock” imagery, but now I can definitively state that the reason such imagery is commonplace is because of memory. Memory is what allows an audience member to draw a line between the common and the uncommon aspects of a narrative, but most importantly, memory is an inherent part of epic performance. For, as Bakker asserts, without memory, “the past does not even exist in oral societies, and without the ‘mind act’ of remembering the speech act of poetry would be impossible.”<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the act of performing the *Iliad* is not a matter of oral reproduction but an acknowledgement of mnemonic tradition.<sup>48</sup> And if the entirety of the epic is an act of remembrance on the part of the rhapsode, then similes represent a microcosmic view of that act on the part of the audience; *id est*, while the Homeric narrator activates memory over the course of the entire narrative for himself and for his auditors, similes are especially delineated for listeners because they appeal directly to their experience.

Other than similes, the epic narrator can also utilize anecdotes to appeal to narratees’ memory. Stories such as these typically refer to a moment in a warrior’s history or to a warrior’s temporally or physically distant family member,<sup>49</sup> and while prominent warriors *are* mentioned in their roles as husbands and sons, anecdotes are most often used in relation to warriors who are not well-known.<sup>50</sup> Regardless of renown, these stories are significant because, like similes, they

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<sup>46</sup> Rose (1966), 348. Cf. Vernant (1991), 68, which notes how memory is intrinsic to the singing of epic, “The hero is committed to memory, memorized, in the field of epic song which, to celebrate his immortal glory, is placed under the sign of Memory, making itself memory by making him memorable.”

<sup>47</sup> Bakker (2005), 95.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 167. While discussing the optical traits of history and epic, Bakker states, “The epic poet, too, has access to knowledge, which involves a kind of memory very different from the personal memory of the messenger: the knowledge deriving from the epic tradition.” Then, on pages 174 and 175 he makes his point explicit: “the singer [of epic] draws on previous and previously accumulated knowledge—the tradition of which he is part”; “Homeric poetry is not a report on a memory; it *is* memory. Its focus is not the event remembered but the act of remembering itself.”

<sup>49</sup> As in the description of the family line of the warriors, Crethon and Orsilochus in 5.541-560. After Aeneas strikes them down, the epic rhapsode details their father’s lineage and how the two warriors came to be involved in the fight in Troy.

<sup>50</sup> Richardson, 44-45.

represent circumstances which are focused away from war. They reframe the warrior in terms which are inherently relatable and memorable because his role in the anecdote is that of a person within a larger community. He ceases to be defined by his ability, or inability, to kill and is represented as a person whose loss will be felt as a matter of extreme consequence to those in his sphere.<sup>51</sup> As mentioned earlier, whether or not an audience member knows the perils of war, he is likely to understand his or her role within a family or within a community. So an anecdote is, at once, a powerful tool which can appeal to a listener's memory of the interpersonal relationships he or she has had or still has after the performance of the epic is over. Additionally, the self-contained quality of an anecdote is also comparable to that of the *locus* which, just as a simile, fittingly allows it to be juxtaposed and used as an amplifier of contrast for the sake of *pathos*.

On the whole, then, memory dictates experience. Memory creates what Minchin calls, "structures of expectation."<sup>52</sup> If one encounters something analogous to a previous experience or image, he or she approaches the new experience or image with a predetermined set of reactions.<sup>53</sup> In the same way, anecdotes and similes put memories to use and offer listeners the opportunity to visualize things which align more closely to their experiences.<sup>54</sup> Hence, memory influences how deeply an image or a story will affect a listener or the audience as a whole. The degree to which a commonplace detail will have an effect on a person or a group is relative, but

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<sup>51</sup> Richardson, 46.

<sup>52</sup> Minchin, 13.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 37. Minchin describes "scripted knowledge" as the sort of knowledge which people acquire through daily routines throughout their lives. These "scripts" are commonly shared among people so that they can begin to predict the outcome of certain experiences, whether they exist in the real world or are fabricated in a fictional narrative.

<sup>54</sup> Bassett (1921), 137. As Bassett states, "in the similes the materials are all taken from the listener's own experience, and the appeal is to the associative, rather than the creative, imagination, which is more easily stimulated, and requires less mental effort." Cf. pp.45, "[The poet] takes the simple and familiar elements of nature and human life, things to which his listeners have become so habituated that their sensuous reaction to them has become dulled, and selects and combines these into a picture that seems completely new. This stimulates the calloused sensibilities and sets imagination in motion." Even though his comments are only explicitly about similes, they can also be applied to familial anecdotes.

when this detail is unexpectedly combined with the violence, the contrast is universally unsettling and wholly effective.<sup>55</sup> In the end, the overall image composed in the mind's eye is multilayered—it is an amalgamation of the information the epic narrator provides and the details the audience extrudes from juxtapositions. In battle scenes, similes, and anecdotes, listeners are tasked with drawing the information which is most significant to their experiences. It is as Rose states: “the imagination accepts subject and object together, mind and nature, the self and the world, as constitutive elements in experience, and accepts them in their full existential complexity and richness.”<sup>56</sup> Similes and anecdotes give narratees the opportunity to tether themselves to the narrative, and when members of the audience encounter scenes of violence, similes and anecdotes are the means by which each person can attain a greater understanding of the narrative because the most horrific or extraordinary aspects of violence are now aligned with other, more familiar aspects of the scene.

### Suspense

In conjunction with the concept of memory and the epic narrator's ability to depict the unexpected, one finds the concept of suspense as well. According to Auerbach, suspense “is very slight in the Homeric poems.”<sup>57</sup> Because he believes the Homeric narrator consistently presents the audience with “foreground” instead of various layers of imagery, there is no way for suspense to be a distinct trait of epic. “Digressions,” such as the washing of Odysseus' feet

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<sup>55</sup> Minchin, 134. Minchin makes this point specifically about similes. She notes that differences between the imagery of a simile and that of its target scene take greater time to process cognitively and, as such, will produce a focused effect due to the novelty of the comparison. The notion of the unexpected is also at work with this juxtaposition. See pages 18-20 for Minchin's take and cf. Herman (2003), 3, who also notes that in order to be considered a narrative “an event-sequence must involve some kind of noteworthy (hence ‘tellable’) disruption of an initial state of equilibrium by an unanticipated and often untoward event or chain of events.” As the *Iliad* itself represents a unique presentation of the concept of the Trojan War, similes offer similar opportunities for innovation.

<sup>56</sup> Rose, 352.

<sup>57</sup> Auerbach, 4.



by Euryclea which he cites, are not present to delay the narrative and to create tension but to do the exact opposite—to inculcate its imagery in the minds of listeners and relieve any possible strain, to “win the reader over wholly to itself as long as he is hearing it, to make him forget what had just taken place during the foot-washing.”<sup>58</sup> Narrative detours, among which similes and anecdotes have been previously considered, do not stall progression towards the work’s *dénouement* because the goal of the epic is ever-present; to Auerbach, a “digression” is yet another foreground.<sup>59</sup> This argument, noteworthy as it is, nevertheless flies in the face of narratological studies which show that narrative plots form out of causal relationships. They center around the notion of action and reaction—cause and effect—and a general thread which the audience can logically follow.<sup>60</sup> Though, as stated earlier, the narrative cannot only be composed of this thread; there need to be elements of the unforeseen to make the “script” of the plot worthy of telling, and out of these unpredictable components conflict—and so, suspense—materializes.

Suspense, for that reason, is an inherent feature of the Iliadic narrative because its plot is fraught with conflict. From the initial confrontation between Agamemnon and Achilles in Book 1 to the eventual duel between Achilles and Hector in Book 22, the *Iliad* is teeming with the prospect of suspense. It is full of instances in which the audience experiences the moment of collision between hope and fear.<sup>61</sup> That is to say, the audience may hope that it knows what will happen next, but soon after, it must acknowledge the frightening possibility that it actually does not. As Minchin notes—suspense is not “the anxiety of the ignorant but the dread of the

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<sup>58</sup> Auerbach. *Contra* Auerbach, Minchin, 103.

<sup>59</sup> Auerbach, 5-8.

<sup>60</sup> Minchin, 104. Cf. Herman, 10.

<sup>61</sup> Bezdek et al. (2015), 338.

informed.”<sup>62</sup> And looking back to the discussion of similes, one can see how suspense relates to similes because both concepts thrive off of the interplay between memory-based expectations and the potentially unanticipated reality of the narrative. More importantly, however, it is possible to see why suspense is also intricately linked to scenes of death and violence. In duels, the audience may have foreknowledge about who is going to die, but the particular manner in which this happens is essentially unpredictable. Scenes of violence and similes, then, are appropriate areas for the examination of suspense.

In addition, it is also important to be attentive to the fact that suspense lends itself to an imaginatively narrowed focus. Whereas the general course of the epic and scenes without narrative tension supply an expanded view, scenes with suspenseful elements place themselves centrally in the imagination of the audience. The periphery disappears, and immersion in the narrative increases.<sup>63</sup> Likewise, if the audience feels greater participation in the action of the epic, the force of the visceral response is also enhanced. Thus, the effect of suspense appears to arise most potently out of a defined, narrative space. And together with a simile or a duel, suspense seems to fit well with the tenets set out for the *locus*. But this being said, I must consider the work of Bakker and others<sup>64</sup> who have argued that other scenes in the epic also take place within specific narrative “frames” before I can make a claim about the *locus*’ validity.

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<sup>62</sup> Minchin, 129, n. 56.

<sup>63</sup> Bezdek et al., 342. M.A. Bezdek and his colleagues conducted a study which theorized that a person’s attention is narrowly focused when he sees something suspenseful. In order to test their hypothesis, they placed each subject in an MRI machine to test the which visual regions of the brain were at work when viewing scenes with varying levels of suspense. During scenes with little suspense, the subjects still employed the parts of their brain which were aware of external (read peripheral) stimuli (in this case, flashing checkerboards present on the borders of the viewing area). Conversely, during moments of elevated suspense, these same subjects showed an explicit reduction in activity in those regions. Because of these results, they concluded that suspense significantly narrows visual scope and, as such, creates an increased sense of participation in the viewer. Even though this study deals exclusively with the responses to visual narratives, the results are still applicable because cognitive studies have shown that imagination employs the same areas of the brain which are responsible for visual understanding. Cf. Paivio (2013), 7-9, for his discussion of imagination as it relates to imagery (and language).

<sup>64</sup> Auerbach can be considered among the “others,” but his work was already discussed earlier (note 25) so I refrain from restating his position.

Upon examining some of Bakker’s work on Homeric poetics, it becomes apparent that the fragmentation of scenes or “speech units” is embedded in the language of the *Iliad* itself. Particles, such as μέν and δέ, are markers of progression from one oral “stepping-stone” to another.<sup>65</sup> As such, a moment like the conversation between Athena (in disguise as Phoenix) and Menelaus in Book 17 employs these particles to distinguish the difference between one figure’s speech and that of another:

σοὶ μὲν δὴ Μενέλαε κατηφείη καὶ ὄνειδος  
 ἔσσεται εἴ κ’ Ἀχιλῆος ἀγαθοῦ πιστὸν ἑταῖρον  
 τείχει ὑπο Τρώων ταχέες κύνες ἑλκήσουσιν.  
 ἀλλ’ ἔχεο κρατερῶς, ὄτρυνε δὲ λαὸν ἅπαντα.

τὴν δ’ αὖτε προσέειπε βοῆν ἀγαθὸς Μενέλαος· (560)  
 Φοῖνιξ ἄττα γεραιὲ παλαιγενές, εἰ γὰρ Ἀθήνη  
 δοίη κάρτος ἐμοί, βελέων δ’ ἀπερύκοι ἐρώην

“For you, Menelaus, there will be dejection and rebuke, if swift dogs tear the trusted comrade of noble Achilles asunder beneath the wall of the Trojans. But hold fast bravely, and rouse the entire army.”

Then Menelaus, good at the war cry, answered her:  
 “Phoenix, aged father born years ago, would that  
 Athena give me strength and ward off the force of  
 arrows....” (17.556-562)

Furthermore, the general spatial considerations a listener must make in order to be involved in the narrative require an “orienting unit” to provide the direction and context of a scene.<sup>66</sup> This results in the epic forming various “frames” which give auditors a general view of a scene’s settings and also offer them a “close-up” view of certain details.<sup>67</sup> During her abovementioned

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<sup>65</sup> Bakker (1997), 80-81. Much of Bakker’s view of these markers is influenced by the work of the linguist Wallace Chafe. For Bakker’s detailed discussion of Chafe’s work, see pages 44-53. These ideas are also present in Bakker (2005), 48, but their purpose in that work is to argue against the tendency to view Homeric epic in terms of literary, or written, ideas.

<sup>66</sup> Bakker (1997), 87.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 100-106. Other than μέν and δέ, Bakker sees a hero’s name as another orienting marker which sets the sequence of specific frames.

discussion of “structures of expectation,” Minchin also describes how general knowledge consists of episodes which the rhapsode draws from later while performing the narrative. Rather than describe every detail to the fullest, the narrator triggers the audience’s memory of the episode and gives only the most necessary details in order to keep listeners engaged.<sup>68</sup> These select narratives are highly significant because they align with the concept of natural cognitive limits, or the idea that human consciousness can only retain so much information/detail.<sup>69</sup> Ryan describes the process at length, stating:

Reading also involves two levels of memory: Whereas the global representation is stored in long-term memory, smaller textual units affect primarily what has been called the sketch-pad of short-term, or episodic, memory. It is on this sketch-pad that readers form their most detailed visualizations.<sup>70</sup>

Additionally, the visualizations created within the short-term memory are constantly replaced as more information reaches the audience. In her estimation, this creates a cognitive map which orients each detail spatially and allows members of the audience to move from one “site” to another without necessarily having to envision the entire path between sites.<sup>71</sup> Yet, this is not to say that the spaces created by specific details are meaningless because they are impermanent but rather to say that the spaces are noteworthy in the moment of their creation because of the detail they offer. And it is also not to say that listeners cannot layer similes with their referent scenes because they are frequently replacing one another but to say that similes pose a different scenario because they juxtapose their long-term imagery with the short-term visuals of the scenes to

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<sup>68</sup> Minchin, 13 and 114-116. Cf. Bakker (2005), 68, “little blocks of experience or parcels of experience.”

<sup>69</sup> Bakker (2005), 67-68, also mentions the limited capabilities of the human mind, but Ryan’s account is more thorough, so her work takes precedence.

<sup>70</sup> Ryan, 234. While Ryan is working with readers rather than listeners, her thoughts on visualization are equally relevant to the present discussion.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 235. Although Ryan specifically cites Kosslyn to explain the idea of moving from one image to another, I believe the same point could be made using enactive theory. Enactive theory does not assert that mental imagery cannot suddenly switch and be “replaced,” only that an observer continually interacts with an image for as long as the image is envisioned.

which they allude. As such, the overall idea of a “sketch-pad of short-term memory” is still pertinent to the discussion of selective narrative spaces.

So far, each author’s work appears to show that the *locus violentus* is merely one of many types of *loci* which can be found in the *Iliad*. And in truth, they are not mistaken. The *locus* is an innate product of epic and cognitive processes. That fact notwithstanding, if it is an example of a quintessential epic trait, then it is the instance in which that trait is turned on its head. It is a feature whose main emphasis is not only the construction of images but also the subsequent destruction of these images. The *locus* presents a moment of chaos—bodies are pierced, destroyed and mutilated from Book 4 onward, parents watch their sons perish in front of them in Book 22—it highlights the circumstances in which order is eliminated so that violence can come to the fore. What is more, the *locus violentus* is not easy. It is a challenge for and a constant and unrelenting attack upon narratees’ imaginative sight. Alongside other tests within the narrative (for example, epic distance), the hostile nature of violence itself poses a distinct cognitive hurdle. In all, the *locus violentus* differentiates itself to the point that it needs to be treated as its own entity. It engages elements of scale, memory and suspense and, more often than not, similes. Therefore, it offers an audience a unique fusion of epic traits which, in turn, provide insight into the most salient aspect of epic—violence.

### **Formal Duels**

To examine the structural characteristics of the *locus*, let us first look at the characteristics of a formal duel. Formal duels, in and of themselves, are scenes with a recognizable form—they are highly organized, ceremonial and marked as separate, inviolate spaces. They are pertinent representations of the *locus*’ construction, but interestingly enough,

the two formal duels in the epic are otherwise lacking in terms of a successful execution of violence. For this reason, an assessment of this type of scene will also illustrate how the form and function of the *locus* is affected by the execution of violence. With that point in mind, I analyze the duel between Paris and Menelaus in Book 3 and see how the various traits of the *locus* come into play:<sup>72</sup>

Ἕκτωρ δὲ Πριάμοιο πάϊς καὶ δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς  
χῶρον μὲν πρῶτον διεμέτρεον, αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα (315)  
κλήρους ἐν κυνέῃ χαλκῆρεϊ πάλλον ἐλόντες,  
ὀπότερος δὴ πρόσθεν ἀφείη χάλκεον ἔγχος.

And Hector, son of Priam, and noble Odysseus were  
first marking the space, and then taking the lots in a  
bronze helmet they shook [them to determine] which  
of the two would let fly his bronze spear first.

(3.314-317)

While the formalities of the duel are being set by Hector and Odysseus, the Homeric rhapsode immediately establishes a narrow area of focus for the audience to envision. The space is clearly demarcated and, as one would expect, undoubtedly reserved only for Paris and Menelaus (χῶρον μὲν πρῶτον διεμέτρεον, 315). Furthermore, the Homeric narrator introduces an element of anticipation in the scene by emphasizing the drawing of lots (κλήρους ἐν κυνέῃ χαλκῆρεϊ πάλλον ἐλόντες, 316) and the warriors' prayers for a resolution to the overarching conflict of the war (320-323). Within both of these details, there is the implicit look forward to the result of violence—the former detail opens the possibility for a successive chain of violence until the latter foresees the loser of the duel descending into Hades. This prospect elucidates the quality of suspense in the scene, and adding to this tension is the subsequent arming of Paris:

αὐτὰρ ὁ γ' ἀμφ' ὅμοισιν ἐδύσετο τεύχεα καλὰ  
δῖος Ἀλέξανδρος Ἑλένης πόσις ἠϋκόμοιο.  
κνημῖδας μὲν πρῶτα περὶ κνήμησιν ἔθηκε (330)

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<sup>72</sup> Because much of the language of this duel is replicated in the duel between Hector and Ajax, it is sufficient to thoroughly examine these lines in order to describe the characteristics of the formal duel.

καλάς, ἀργυρέοισιν ἐπισφυρίοις ἀραρυίας·  
δεύτερον αὖ θώρηκα περὶ στήθεσσι ἐδυνεν  
οἷο κασιγνήτιο Λυκάονος· ἤρμοσε δ' αὐτῷ.  
ἀμφὶ δ' ἄρ' ὤμοισιν βάλετο ξίφος ἀργυρόηλον  
χάλκεον, αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα σάκος μέγα τε στιβαρόν τε· (335)  
κρατὶ δ' ἐπ' ἰφθίμῳ κυνέην εὐτυκτον ἔθηκεν  
ἵππουριν· δεινὸν δὲ λόφος καθύπερθεν ἔνευεν·  
εἴλετο δ' ἄλκιμον ἔγχος, ὃ οἱ παλάμηφιν ἀρήρει.  
ὥς δ' αὐτως Μενέλαος ἀρήϊος ἔντε' ἔδυνεν.

Then noble Alexander, husband of lovely-haired  
Helen, placed his beautiful arms around his  
shoulders. First he set the beautiful greaves, fitted  
with silver ankle pieces, around his shins; next he  
placed the corselet of his brother Lycaon around his  
torso and fitted [it] on himself. Then around his  
shoulders he cast his silver-studded bronze sword,  
then his great and sturdy shield; and upon his strong  
head he placed his well-made, horse-haired helmet;  
the terrible crest nodded from above; and he seized  
his brave spear which fit the palm of his hand. And  
likewise did warlike Menelaus place his armor.

(3.328-339)

When the narratees switch their view to Paris, there is a description of each piece of armor as he is placing it on his body. The audience looks at the armor—the materials from which it is made, the way it gleams and how it fits—and through careful word order the Homeric narrator brings auditors further into the scene. The narrator begins with the piece of armor (κνημῖδας, θώρηκα, 330 and 332 respectively). Afterward he follows with the word for the proper part of the body (κνήμησιν, στήθεσσι). Finally the verb setting the armor in place encloses the word associated with the body part so as to make a sort of linguistic shell (ἔθηκε, ἔδυνεν). While the audience is listening to the narrator recite these lines, it follows Paris' movements, and overall, the narrative gives every listener the opportunity to visualize each step in the process of arming. Because listeners imagine each piece so closely during this process, the Homeric narrator makes it seem as if they are looking at things through Paris' eyes. They mimic

his perspective, and though Paris is the one who is “physically” arming himself, the progression of the scene seems to prepare the listeners for battle as well. So as a consequence of the suspense brought about by the scene and the intense visualization of his armor, the epic narrator enhances narratees’ engagement and sets them firmly within the confines of seemingly well-constructed *locus*. This fact changes, however, once the fighting begins.

After Paris’ opening volley, the violence which seemed to be so imminent suddenly becomes stifled:

πρόσθε δ’ Ἀλέξανδρος προΐει δολιχόσκιον ἔγχος, (346)  
καὶ βάλεν Ἀτρεΐδαο κατ’ ἀσπίδα πάντοσε ἴσην,  
οὐδ’ ἔρρηξεν χαλκός, ἀνεγνάμφθη δέ οἱ αἰχμῆ  
ἀσπίδ’ ἐνὶ κρατερῇ...

διὰ μὲν ἀσπίδος ἦλθε φαεινῆς ὄβριμον ἔγχος,  
καὶ διὰ θώρηκος πολυδαιδάλου ἠρήρειστο·  
ἀντικρὺ δὲ παραὶ λαπάρην διάμησε χιτῶνα  
ἔγχος· ὃ δ’ ἐκλίνθη καὶ ἀλεύατο κῆρα μέλαιναν. (360)  
Ἀτρεΐδης δὲ ἐρυσσάμενος ξίφος ἀργυρόηλον  
πλῆξεν ἀνασχόμενος κόρυθος φάλον· ἀμφὶ δ’ ἄρ’ αὐτῷ  
τριχθὰ τε καὶ τετραχθὰ διατρυφὲν ἔκπεσε χειρός.

First, Alexander let loose his long-shadowed spear,  
and he struck against the son of Atreus’ shield, equal  
on all sides, [but] the bronze did not break through,  
and its point bent back on the sturdy shield...

And through the shining shield went the sturdy  
spear and through the richly-wrought corselet had it  
pressed; right beside his flank did the spear cut  
through his tunic, but he bent aside and avoided  
dark death. And drawing his silver-studded sword  
and rising up, the son of Atreus smote the peak of  
his helmet; but around it, [the sword] broke into  
three and four pieces and fell from his hand.

(3.346-349, 3.357-363)

Even though Paris’ throw strikes his target, the audience is able to see that he ultimately fails to cause any damage. The point of his spear bends, but it does so not because of the force of Paris’



throw but rather because Menelaus' shield is exceedingly durable (οὐδ' ἔρρηξεν χαλκός, ἀνεγνάμφθη δέ οἱ αἰχμὴ ἀσπίδ' ἐνὶ κρατερῇ, 348-349). This contrast between an object that yields and one that does not is metaphorically representative of the warriors in the duel. While Paris is typically known to be "light armed"<sup>73</sup> and a coward because he prefers to use a bow, Menelaus is doubly superior because he is one of the primary leaders of the Achaean forces and as such, a fighter in the vanguard. Therefore, the violence Paris attempts to inflict is lacking any sort of physical or narrative strength because he himself is lacking. This fact, as of yet, has no bearing on the effectiveness of the *locus* since one warrior in a duel is, or will be found to be, invariably weaker than the other, but as soon as the listeners turn to Menelaus' actions, it becomes clear that there is more to the suppression of violence than Paris' physical deficiencies.

When Menelaus begins his counterattack, he seems close to ending the duel. His spear breaks through both Paris' shield and corselet (διὰ μὲν ἀσπίδος ἤλθε φαεινῆς ὄβριμον ἔγχος, καὶ διὰ θώρηκος πολυδαίδαλου ἠρήρειστο, 357-358), and the audience even visualizes the spear coming very close to piercing Paris' skin (ἀντικρὺ δὲ παρὰ λαπάρην διάμησε χιτῶνα ἔγχος· ὁ δ' ἐκλίνθη καὶ ἀλεύατο κῆρα μέλαιναν, 359-360). Violence at the hands of Menelaus appears to bring the possibility of relief for the tension and suspense found earlier in the scene, but Paris' narrow escape prolongs these feelings a moment longer. Then as Menelaus raises his sword to deal an assuredly mortal blow there is another potential realization of violent intent, but this too is denied by the solid craftsmanship of Paris' helmet. The sword shatters, and with that, all implements of death are unusable or out of reach (ἀμφὶ δ' ἄρ' αὐτῷ τριχθὰ τε καὶ τετραχθὰ διατρυφὲν ἔκπεσε χειρός, 362-363). The only weapon at hand is Paris' sword, but he is so stunned by the events of the duel that he has no opportunity to draw it against Menelaus before

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<sup>73</sup> Kirk (1985), 315-316. Kirk's commentary on the arming notes Paris' martial deficiencies. As an archer, he owns no corselet and needs to borrow one from his brother in order to duel. This fact stands in stark contrast to Menelaus who arms himself without any dramatic flair because he is primed for battle at all times.

he is seized.<sup>74</sup> Under these circumstances, the battle has no rhythm; outside of the first exchange, there is no back-and-forth between Paris and Menelaus. Indeed, this is partly because Menelaus quickly proves he is a better fighter, but even so, that quality cannot explain the stilted nature of his offensive. Each attempt to inflict a fatal blow has been thwarted by Paris' good fortune, and unfortunately for Menelaus, this trend is exacerbated by the presence of Aphrodite.

Since the rhapsode renders Menelaus frustratingly<sup>75</sup> weaponless, the Achaean has no choice but to try to end the duel by literally taking hold of Paris' helmet:

...κόρυθος λάβεν ἵπποδασείης,  
ἔλκε δ' ἐπιστρέψας μετ' εὐκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοῦς· (370)  
ἄγχε δέ μιν πολύκεστος ἰμάς ἀπαλήν ὑπὸ δειρήν,  
ὅς οἱ ὑπ' ἀνθερεῶνος ὀχεὺς τέτατο τρυφαλείης,  
καί νύ κεν εἴρυσσέν τε καὶ ἄσπετον ἦρατο κῦδος,  
εἰ μὴ ἄρ' ὄξυ νόησε Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἀφροδίτη,  
ἣ οἱ ῥῆξεν ἰμάντα βοὸς ἴφι κταμένοιο· (375)  
κεινὴ δὲ τρυφάλεια ἅμ' ἔσπετο χειρὶ παχείῃ.

...and having rushed forth, [Agamemnon] seized his helmet, bushy with horse hair, and turning him around, he dragged him toward the well-greaved Achaeans; the well-stitched leather strap, the strap of his helmet which had been stretched under his chin, was choking him under his soft neck. And now would [Agamemnon] have dragged [him] and won unspeakable glory, if Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, had not quickly perceived and snapped by force the strap [made from] a slaughtered ox; and the empty helmet followed his stout hand.

(3.369-376)

Whatever formalities existed at the outset of the duel are no longer at work because, at this point, the Homeric narrator has denied both Menelaus and the narratees the fulfillment of their expectations. Now the aim is violence by any means, and because of this, Menelaus

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<sup>74</sup> Kirk, 316.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 319. The commentary on Menelaus' call to Zeus clearly emphasizes the fact that he has been annoyed to the point at which he would dare to swear at Zeus. Usually, Kirk states, this would result in some sign of anger from Zeus, but in this instance, Menelaus' complaints are understandable.

unceremoniously strangles Paris as he walks towards his fellow warriors (κόρυθος λάβεν ἵπποδασείης, ἔλκε δ' ἐπιστρέψας μετ' ἐϋκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοῦς, 369-370). Ironically, it is possible to view Paris' throttling as a reflection of the suppression of the *locus*' function since the narrator has deprived the scene, and the audience, a concluding act. And yet, in the same act the epic narrator offers listeners one last chance for relief—a chance to finally envision the duel's climactic force and to end the *locus*—until Aphrodite's influence changes the tenor of the scene.

The introduction of the conditional clause (373-376) instantaneously and abruptly ends the duel. There is no further possibility for violence, and the tension which pervaded the scene turns to anger<sup>76</sup> as no one achieves *catharsis*. The duel becomes a spectacle, an affront to the heroic sensibilities of those still on the battlefield, and for the epic's listeners, a less effective *locus* because the sudden conclusion makes their investment in the duel futile. Even though the form of this *locus* successfully produces suspense, the “reward” for that engagement is frustration, and the audience's experience of the *locus* is superficial since Aphrodite makes the events of the duel insignificant. Just as the Achaeans and Trojans bristle at the sight of the duel, the audience is unable to see the very thing it wanted to see—violence—but this is not an attack on its imaginative sight so much as it is a denial of sight altogether. Thus, the absence of violence in this scene deals a serious cognitive blow to the *locus*.

### ***Locus Violentus in Form and Function***

In contrast to the events of Book 3, I can turn to the book which I initially left out of my discussion about similes: Book 11. At its outset, Agamemnon is rallying his companions and preparing them for battle, but rather than drive him and the other men immediately into battle,

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<sup>76</sup> Book 3, lines 453-454: οὐ μὲν γὰρ φιλότιτί γ' ἐκεύθανον εἴ τις ἴδιοτο· ἴσον γὰρ σφιν πᾶσιν ἀπήχθετο κηρὶ μελαίνῃ.

the epic narrator focuses exclusively on Agamemnon and presents an extended arming scene. It is a surprising turn considering that the advent of violence is so near, but its presence imposes an effective level of tension for the scene:

Ἄτρεΐδης δ' ἐβόησεν ἰδὲ ζώννυσθαι ἄνωγεν (15)  
Ἄργείους· ἐν δ' αὐτὸς ἐδύσετο νόροπα χαλκόν.  
κνημῖδας μὲν πρῶτα περὶ κνήμησιν ἔθηκε  
καλὰς ἀργυρέοισιν ἐπισφυρίοις ἀραρυίας·  
δεύτερον αὖ θώρηκα περὶ στήθεσσιν ἔδυνε,  
τόν ποτέ οἱ Κινύρης δῶκε ξεινήϊον εἶναι. (20)

And the son of Atreus shouted and commanded the Argives to gird themselves; and among them, he himself put on his flashing bronze. First he placed the greaves around his legs, beautiful and fitted with silver ankle pieces; he then put around his torso the corselet which Cinyras once gave him to be a guest-gift. (11.15-20)

Straightaway, it becomes apparent that the lines of Agamemnon's arming scene are almost identical to those seen earlier with Paris,<sup>77</sup> and unsurprisingly, their effect is essentially the same. As before, details in the scene pull narratees in by allowing them to mimic Agamemnon's actions. The hearers "arm" themselves, but in spite of this imaginative action, the rhapsode wards off the prospect of entering the field of battle by introducing another item which emphasizes the challenge of imagining violent imagery.

After delving into the aspects of the corselet, the epic narrator directs his hearers toward Agamemnon's terrifying shield:

τῇ δ' ἐπὶ μὲν Γοργῶ βλοσυρῶπις ἐστεφάνωτο  
δεινὸν δερκομένη, περὶ δὲ Δεῖμός τε Φόβος τε.  
τῆς δ' ἐξ ἀργύρεος τελαμῶν ἦν· αὐτὰρ ἐπ' αὐτοῦ  
κυάνεος ἐλέλικτο δράκων, κεφαλαὶ δὲ οἱ ἦσαν  
τρεῖς ἀμφιστρεφῆες ἐνὸς ἀυχένος ἐκπεφυῖαι. (40)  
κρατὶ δ' ἐπ' ἀμφίφαλον κυνέην θέτο τετραφάληρον  
ἵππουριν· δεινὸν δὲ λόφος καθύπερθεν ἔνευεν.

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<sup>77</sup> Kirk, 314. Kirk supplies a chart with the breakdown of the similarities found in the two arming scenes I have discussed as well as those in Books 16 and 19.

εἶλετο δ' ἄλκιμα δοῦρε δύω κεκορυθμένα χαλκῷ  
ὄξεα· τῆλε δὲ χαλκὸς ἀπ' αὐτόφιν οὐρανὸν εἴσω  
λάμπ'· ἐπὶ δ' ἐγδούπησαν Ἀθηναίη τε καὶ Ἥρη (45)  
τιμῶσαι βασιλῆα πολυχρῦσοιο Μυκῆνης.

And upon it, a grim-looking Gorgon was crowning  
it, glaring terribly, and around it [was] both Terror  
and Fear. Out from it there was a silver strap; on it  
had whirled around a cyanus serpent, and it had  
three heads turned all around, having grown from a  
single neck. And upon his head he placed his two-  
horned, four-knobbed horse-tailed helmet; and the  
terrible crest nodded from above. And he seized  
two stout spears, sharp and headed with bronze; far  
off, the bronze shone from that very spot [up] to  
heaven; at this, both Athena and Hera clamored,  
honoring the king of gold-rich Mycenae. (11.36-46)

Unlike the simple description of Paris' shield, the depiction of Agamemnon's shield is much more detailed and much more than ephrastic because it possesses its own aggressive gaze (τῆ δ' ἐπὶ μὲν Γοργῶ βλοσυρῶπις ἐστεφάνωτο δεινὸν δερκομένη, 36-37). The Gorgon's head cannot be acted upon; it counteracts passivity and challenges listeners' sense of sight as it dares them to visualize its horrific visage. Moreover, the Gorgon offers the audience a preliminary test—if it can meet the terror which the Gorgon embodies, then surely it can imagine the terrors of war when Agamemnon returns to the field and the *locus* begins its work.

Following this detail, the epic narrator complicates the process of visualization again by including Terror and Fear on the face of the shield (περὶ δὲ Δεῖμός τε Φόβος τε, 37). Terror and Fear are the emotions that the Gorgon should produce, and they are the feelings the audience can expect when the narrative finally reaches the battle. They, along with the Gorgon, are cues not only for Agamemnon's opponents but for the audience as well, and altogether, they present a sort of archetypal response to a violent scene—what begins with an attempt to visualize something horrific ends with something felt on an emotive plane once visualization has been achieved. In

other words, while these characters offer moments of adversity, they also provide the framework for how to overcome the scene's emotive tribulations. The Gorgon deters hearers from envisioning it, as do Terror and Fear, but Terror and Fear also lead hearers to the emotions which come about when they successfully visualize the image. They indirectly allow each audience member to bypass the point at which he would freeze in terror at the sight of figures on Agamemnon's shield.

Because Terror and Fear grant listeners access to visualization, the narrative continues to the details of Agamemnon's helmet. Just as Paris' helmet before it, Agamemnon's helmet is brilliant and shows a high level of craftsmanship (κυνέην θέτο τετραφάληρον ἵππουριν, 41-42), and as it moves, it becomes a terrible sight to behold.<sup>78</sup> Nonetheless, this emotion can no longer deter the audience from maintaining its gaze because Terror and Fear have mitigated any potential panic the armor may cause. Now what the rhapsode presents to the audience is a full view of Agamemnon as an emblem of fear and simultaneous splendor. Throughout this scene, the epic rhapsode has made them pause and absorb both the beauty of the armor and, conversely, each piece's connection to violence or the emotions violence evokes. By constantly drawing out this connection, the rhapsode has also preemptively established a feeling of suspense. While the production of this sentiment is no different than what occurred before Paris and Menelaus' duel, the suspense in this scene is heightened by the explicit references to the horrific figures present on Agamemnon's shield. They are figures which create the expectation of not only violence but *horrific* violence. So with this in mind, listeners are undoubtedly ready to face scenes of violence to come. They clamor for battle, just as Athena and Hera do while they await Agamemnon's

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<sup>78</sup> Hainsworth, 222. "The nodding plume... was a characteristic enhancement of the warrior's fearsome appearance from the earliest representations to the close of the Geometric period."

presence in battle (ἐπὶ δ' ἐγδούπησαν Ἀθηναίη τε καὶ Ἥρη τιμᾶσαι βασιλῆα πολυχρῦσοιο Μυκίηνης, 45-46).

Though the previous imagery's aim is to repel and assault listeners' imaginations, the epic's auditors, nevertheless, move forward because they seek to envision violence and its resolution. As with the formal duel, ending the battle's narration before the appearance of violence would remove the crux of scene and, more importantly, the *locus*. Therefore, even if the epic narrator shocks or disgusts members of the audience with early imagery, they continue to accept more abhorrent visuals because they are invested in the fulfillment of violence. They have come to know its emotive characteristics so intimately that all there is left is to see the violence taking place. Consequently, the Homeric narrator directs his audience to the assembly of warriors on the battlefield, and along with that view, he brings in the first of a series of similes:

Οἱ δ', ὥς τ' ἀμητῆρες ἐναντίοι ἀλλήλοισιν  
ὄγμον ἐλαύνωσιν ἀνδρὸς μάκαρος κατ' ἄρουραν  
πυρῶν ἢ κριθῶν· τὰ δὲ δράγματα ταρφέα πίπτει·  
ὥς Τρῶες καὶ Ἀχαιοὶ ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισι θορόντες (70)  
δήουν, οὐδ' ἕτεροι μνώοντ' ὀλοοῖτο φόβοιο.  
ἴσας δ' ὑσμίνη κεφαλὰς ἔχεν, οἱ δὲ λύκοι ὦς  
θῦνον· Ἔρις δ' ἄρ' ἔχαιρε πολύστονος εἰσορόωσα·  
οἷη γάρ ῥα θεῶν παρετύγγανε μαρναμένοισιν,

And just as reapers against each other drive the  
swathe of a fortunate man through the field of wheat  
or barley, the thick handfuls fall; thus did the  
Trojans and the Achaeans cut each other down as  
they leapt, neither of the two was thinking of deadly  
flight. And the battle was keeping equal heads, just  
as wolves, they were rushing; steadily gazing,  
mournful Eris was rejoicing; for of the gods, she  
alone was among those doing battle.... (11.67-74)

As noted in the discussion of epic scale, similes are able to narrow the focus of a scene in order to make it easier for a listener to visualize. Furthermore, an extended simile taps into narratees' collective memory and, in so doing, forms the transition point between a large scale battle and a

*locus*. Here, the simile accomplishes those very things: in place of a description of Agamemnon or the other warriors, the rhapsode offers hearers the self-contained image of a field and turns their focus toward the reapers working within it. There is no sign of war or any indication of a specific time or place. What are most certain in this simile are the actions taking place—the men reap and gradually approach each other, and as they do, the narrator depicts their reaping as a constructive deed through which a fortunate man (ἄνδρὸς μάκαρος, 68) prospers. On the surface, this image seems simple and easy to understand, but upon closer inspection, a much more complex picture is taking shape.

Within the perspective of war, the space of the simile is overlaid onto the field of battle, and through this layering, the rhapsode creates something more gruesome and chaotic because the workers who, at one time, reaped the field together transform into the Achaeans and the Trojans who stand in the place of not only the reapers but the grains they reap as well.<sup>79</sup> While the men approach each other from opposite sides, the narrator places his listeners at the center of the men’s confrontation where the battle is thickest. There, the warriors’ “reaping” has no part in a continuous cycle of growth.<sup>80</sup> Instead, their actions are almost wholly destructive, and suddenly, the audience sees the notion of persistent growth, which is conveyed in the simile, superimposed on the repeated advances of the Achaeans and the Trojans. The “bounty” of the prosperous man’s field is effectively neutralized by that of the battlefield.

In the course of this comparison, the Homeric narrator has also formed a point of transition between the implicit violence of reaping and the explicit and unremitting assault of the

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<sup>79</sup> Hainsworth, 228. The shift from the reapers to the soldiers as reaper and crop, he states, sets the tone of the subsequent battle. Whereas Book 10 offered “fame and profit and little risk,” in Book 11 “[all] that now disappears.” The ensuing battle will abandon decorum for a “horrendous” and “brutal” account of war.

<sup>80</sup> Garcia (2013), 22-23. On these pages, Garcia emphasizes the idea of a cycle of “need and fulfillment” as a marker of life. Those who lie outside of this cycle are typically gods who require no bodily nourishment. Mortals, too, can temporarily be spared the “biological economy of human life” if they have access to ambrosia or nectar. In terms of the passage above, however, the men’s exclusion from this cycle comes about because the cycle itself has been extinguished.



warriors on the battlefield. They relentlessly propel themselves forward, and the force of their offensive culminates in total dismemberment. The rhapsode reduces them to “equal heads” (ἴσας δ...κεφαλὰς, 72), and through this reduction, the audience acquires a precise view of all out violence.<sup>81</sup> There are no more hints or general descriptions of battle. Now the epic unleashes a moment of completely unrestrained terror by highlighting the *outcome* of battle, namely the decapitated heads of fallen warriors. What began with the simple—albeit horrific—comparison between the work of the reapers and the deeds of the men advancing against one another, ends with the specific juxtaposition of the “products” of each group’s tasks. In this case, the epic narrator brings out the blatant hideousness of the dismembered heads by equating them with the bundles of grains falling wantonly on the ground (τὰ δὲ δράγματα ταρφέα πίπτει, 69). The simile’s imagery bleeds into the details of the battle, and the rhapsode compels listeners to view the scene through a dual lens, from a viewpoint consisting of two seemingly disparate but harshly comparable scenes.<sup>82</sup>

Accordingly, the actions within both the simile and the scene of battle are to be taken simultaneously.<sup>83</sup> The reaper’s work does not stop as soon as the rhapsode asks the audience to

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<sup>81</sup> Hainsworth, 228. On these lines: “Neither army will give ground... ‘held their heads on a line’ (trans. Lattimore), ‘locked them head to head’ (trans. Fagles), is one of those expressions whose force is evident but which defy rational analysis.” A rational analysis seems to exist if I take the phrase ἴσας κεφαλὰς ἔχεν as an indication of decapitation and an extension of the image of harvested grains. By doing so, the rhapsode’s narration stays consistent and portrays both the force of the men’s assault and the continuation of the horrific nature of this particular battle.

<sup>82</sup> Karanika (2014), 215-216. On these pages, Karanika notes the frequent metaphorical interplay between death and harvesting, and in particular, she cites the work of Mike Turner which discussed the concepts behind the figure of the Grim Reaper.

<sup>83</sup> Zielinski (1899-1901), 320. Zielinski discusses what he calls the “*law of psychological incompatibility*,” the eye’s incapability of processing and perceiving multiple things occurring at the same time. In his estimation, temporal simultaneity is an illusion. One is only aware of something else occurring at the same time through markers given by the Homeric narrator which would logically indicate simultaneity. In other words, the rhapsode cannot present or narrate events occurring simultaneously, so instead he presents them in sequence and uses details to show that one event has to take place alongside another. By this logic, the argument above would appear to be incorrect, but Zielinski seems to err in two ways: first, he appears to underestimate the sophistication of the ancient listener. The ancient audience was highly attuned to subtle shifts of tone, theme, etc. and would not have as much trouble “seeing” a variety of objects working all at once. Secondly, Zielinski’s case studies do not account for the temporality, or lack thereof, of similes. Similes seem to be used very deliberately by the Homeric narrator as means

focus on what is taking place on the battlefield.<sup>84</sup> Even though Homeric narrator’s overall narrative centers around battle and the actions of the warriors contained therein, the presence of similes alongside such deeds also calls for an equal level of attention because similes offer listeners a way to reframe and organize the chaos of violence. In this way, the reaping of Book 11 imposes a semblance of order upon the image of countless men killing and being killed. And yet, this implied order still produces shock—shock that the violent can so simply be cast in the light of the familiar and be considered mundane or typical, and shock that materializes when the audience realizes that it, too, can play the role of Eris and rejoice as it imagines or “watches” horrible acts of violence (Ἔρις δ’ ἄρ’ ἔχαιρε πολύστονος εισορόωσα, 73).

As the audience continues with the narrative, the narrator finally narrows the scope of the narrative to the space of the duel. In this space, Agamemnon takes center stage, and his rampage forms the basis of a definite *locus violentus*. If one examines Agamemnon’s battle against Iphidamas and Coön, it is possible to see how the level of visual intensity increases when the audience’s scope of visualization is explicitly framed.

οἱ δ’ ὅτε δὴ σχεδὸν ἦσαν ἐπ’ ἀλλήλοισιν ἰόντες,  
 Ἀτρεΐδης μὲν ἄμαρτε, παραὶ δέ οἱ ἐτράπετ’ ἔγχος,  
 Ἴφιδάμας δὲ κατὰ ζώνην θώρηκος ἔνερθε  
 νύξ’, ἐπὶ δ’ αὐτὸς ἔρεισε βαρεῖη χειρὶ πιθήσας· (235)  
 οὐδ’ ἔτορε ζωστήρα παναίολον, ἀλλὰ πολὺ πρὶν  
 ἀργύρω ἀντομένη μόλιβος ὡς ἐτράπετ’ αἰχμῆ.  
 καὶ τό γε χειρὶ λαβὼν εὐρὺν κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων  
 ἔλκ’ ἐπὶ οἱ μεμαῶς ὣς τε λῖς, ἐκ δ’ ἄρα χειρὸς  
 σπάσσατο· τὸν δ’ ἄορι πληξ’ ἀνχένα, λῦσε δὲ γυῖα. (240)

And when they drew near as they rushed against

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to convey movement, appearance, etc. which one should directly align with other things occurring in the epic. The rhapsode’s frequent use of the word ὥς and the like bolsters this notion. Moreover, despite the fact that a simile and its accompanying scene are also presented in sequence, their order does not preclude a listener from responding to one simultaneously with the other. Cf. Whitman and Scodel (1981), who use Zielinski’s notions of “apparent time” and “real time,” and offer another method to affirm narrative simultaneity.

<sup>84</sup> Tsagalis (2012), 348-349. Tsagalis argues that Homeric similes have inherent “visual motion,” meaning that the Homeric narrator is constantly “following a path with his mind’s eye” as he aligns the simile with the larger narrative.

each other, Agamemnon missed and his spear was turned aside; but Iphidamas struck [him] from below, underneath the belt of his corselet, and trusting in the weight of his hand, he himself pressed down upon [Agamemnon]; he did not pierce the glancing belt, but being met much before the silver, the point of the spear was turned just as lead. And having taken the broad spear in his hand, Lord Agamemnon was eagerly drawing [it] toward himself like a lion, and he tore [it] from [Iphidamas'] hand; [Agamemnon] struck his neck with his sword and loosened his limbs.

(11.232-240)

Unlike the larger battle which required a simile to describe the force of the armies' assault, the *locus* brings listeners into close proximity with every action taking place. They follow Agamemnon's spear as it misses its mark and falls to the ground (Ἀτρεΐδης μὲν ἄμαρτε, παρὰ δὲ οἱ ἐτράπετ' ἔγχος, 233); they track the movement of Iphidamas' spear and can even envision where it strikes Agamemnon's armor (Ἴφιδάμας δὲ κατὰ ζώνην θώρηκος ἔνερθε νύξ', 234-235). Every detail in the scene is specific, and furthermore, the intent behind each violent deed is laid bare. In general, this point may seem trivial—more often than not, the intent of violence is not a mystery—but when this intent does not produce the expected result, the failed act of violence may produce an element of *pathos* where there was none before. Therefore, Iphidamas “trusts” (πιθήσας, 235) that he will wound Agamemnon, but very quickly that trust leads to disbelief as listeners envision the point of his spear bending (μόλιβος ὧς ἐτράπετ' αἰχμή, 237). With this unexpected detail, Iphidamas' attack is rendered impotent, and the warrior himself is made vulnerable. The precise details, which the *locus* affords, highlight the odds set against the Trojan. Iphidamas is not only contending with Agamemnon but with the craftsmanship of his armor as well.

Conversely, Agamemnon's half of the *locus* emphasizes the ferocity of his counterattack. Whereas Iphidamas' actions were matters of faith, Agamemnon's violent retorts are matters of certainty. As such, the focus on Iphidamas' hand switches to emphasis on Agamemnon's hands as he tears the spear away from its owner and then strikes with his own sword (238-240), and piteous expectation is overtaken by the assuredness of a mortal blow. Unlike the stilted and frustrated nature of the duel between Paris and Menelaus, the successful implementation of violence in this *locus* enables the audience to fully understand the subtle details of the scene alongside those which are more explicit. Moving forward, the scene also illustrates the effects of a new warrior entering the *locus* and what occurs when he attempts to leave it without adhering to its tenets.

στῆ δ' εὐράξ σὺν δουρὶ λαθὼν Ἀγαμέμνονα δῖον,  
 νύξε δέ μιν κατὰ χεῖρα μέσσην ἀγκῶνος ἔνερθε,  
 ἀντικρὺ δὲ διέσχε φαεινοῦ δουρὸς ἀκωκῆ.  
 ῥίγησέν τ' ἄρ' ἔπειτα ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων·  
 ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὧς ἀπέληγε μάχης ἠδὲ πτολέμοιο, (255)  
 ἀλλ' ἐπόρουσε Κόωνι ἔχων ἀνεμοτρεφὲς ἔγχος.  
 ἦτοι ὁ Ἴφιδάμαντα κασίγνητον καὶ ὄπατρον  
 ἔλκε ποδὸς μεμαῶς, καὶ αὖτει πάντας ἀρίστους·  
 τὸν δ' ἔλκοντ' ἀν' ὄμιλον ὑπ' ἀσπίδος ὀμφαλοέσσης  
 οὔτησε ξυστῶ χαλκήρεϊ, λῦσε δὲ γυῖα· (260)  
 τοῖο δ' ἐπ' Ἴφιδάμαντι κάρη ἀπέκοψε παραστάς.  
 ἔνθ' Ἀντήνορος υἴες ὑπ' Ἀτρεΐδῃ βασιλῆϊ  
 πόντον ἀναπλήσαντες ἔδυν δόμον Ἄϊδος εἴσω.

Then [Coön] stood on one side with his spear, escaping the notice of noble Agamemnon, and he stabbed him through the middle of his arm, below his elbow, and straight through did the point of the shining spear go. And there and then did Agamemnon, king of men, shudder at [it]. But even so, he was not desisting from the battle and the war, but bearing his wind-fed spear, he leapt upon Coön. Indeed, [Coön] was earnestly drawing by the foot Iphidamas, his brother by the same father, and calling out to all the best men; but [Agamemnon] struck him while he was dragging him through the

throng with his bronze-tipped spear beneath his  
bossed shield and loosened his limbs; and standing  
over Iphidamas, he lopped off [Coön's] head. There,  
the sons of Antenor, fulfilling their fate at the hand  
of the king, son of Atreus, descended to the house  
of Hades. (11.251-263)

After his brother's death, Coön takes his place, but unlike Iphidamas, Coön does not intend to duel Agamemnon. Instead, Coön's acts are driven by sorrow (248-250). Thus, he enters the *locus* lacking the courage to face his opponent head on. He maintains his position on the edges of the *locus* (στῆ δ' εὐράξ σὺν δουρὶ λαθῶν Ἀγαμέμνονα δῖον, 251) and denies the audience a view of a direct confrontation. Coön strikes Agamemnon more successfully than his brother (νύξε δέ μιν κατὰ χεῖρα μέσσην ἀγκῶνος ἔνερθε, ἀντικρὺ δὲ διέσχε φαεινοῦ δουρὸς ἄκωκί, 252-253), but he does not commit to the battle. From the perspective of the audience, Coön is a ghost—he disappears immediately after he stabs Agamemnon through the arm. The rhapsode may narrate the motion of Coön's assault, but then all focus is suddenly placed on Agamemnon's arm and the path Coön's spear takes through it. The effect of such a blow is supremely graphic in its precision, but the intent behind it is nonexistent. Despite the fact that he has entered the space of battle, Coön refuses to play the part he implicitly assumed when he entered the *locus*—opponent. Nevertheless, the narrator does not simply let him leave the *locus*. As he states, Coön struggles to leave the space and tries to call others to help him (256-258).

Alternatively, the audience can see that Agamemnon is under no illusions about what his role in the *locus* is. For him, the battle did not end once he killed Iphidamas because Coön unwittingly stepped in before he could move on to *face* a different opponent. Therefore, Coön's presence in the dueling space transforms him into an extension of his brother and, in turn, makes him Agamemnon's opponent. For this reason, Agamemnon does not hesitate to respond to Coön's attack as soon as he musters up the strength to continue fighting. He is direct—he attacks

and means to kill—and this time, the audience has a clear view of both the mortal blow and its effects (τὸν δ' ἔλκοντ' ἀν' ὄμιλον ὑπ' ἀσπίδος ὀμφαλοέσσης οὔτησε ξυστῶ χαλκήρεϊ, λῦσε δὲ γυῖα, 259-260). Coön falls, and if there was any doubt before that this is what Agamemnon intended, his subsequent act puts it to rest once and for all. He lops off Coön's head in the immediate presence of Iphidamas' corpse (τοῖο δ' ἐπ' Ἰφιδάμαντι κάρη ἀπέκοψε παραστάς, 261). He resets the purpose of the *locus* by gathering his opponents together, and he ends it by killing them both.

With the passages above as models, it is possible to see that visualizing heightened details within the *locus* forms the crux of a violent event. The more an audience is compelled to participate within its borders, the more acutely different emotions are felt. This is especially true when the violence involved is more than an act of aggression. When violence is a matter of uncontrollable rage and cruelty, it becomes an overwhelming act of personal imposition. In Book 22, the *locus* of the duel between Hector and Achilles shows how intense rage fuels Achilles' need not only to defeat his opponent but to obliterate his being as well.

Ὡς ἄρα φωνήσας εἰρύσσατο φάσγανον ὄξύ,  
τό οἱ ὑπὸ λαπάρην τέτατο μέγα τε στιβαρόν τε,  
οἴμησεν δὲ ἀλείς ὥς τ' αἰετὸς ὑψιπετής,  
ὅς τ' εἴσιν πεδίον δὲ διὰ νεφέων ἐρεβεννῶν  
ἀρπάξων ἢ ἄρν' ἀμαλήν ἢ πτώκα λαγῶν· (310)  
ὥς Ἴκτωρ οἴμησε τινάσσω φάσγανον ὄξύ.

And so, having spoken, [Hector] immediately drew his sharp sword, a great and broad [sword], which had hung along his flank, and having drawn himself together, he swooped like a high-flying eagle, which flies to the plain through dark clouds seizing either a soft lamb or a cowering hare; thus, did Hector swoop after brandishing his sharp sword.

(22.306-311)

Similar to Agamemnon in Book 11, the Homeric rhapsode has instilled Achilles' role in the war with a definite sense of suspense. This suspense, though, has been augmented by the amount of time which has passed since the events of the *Iliad's* first book. By this point in the epic, the audience has been awaiting Achilles' return to battle for the greater part of twenty books. Throughout this time, listeners have heard several mentions of Achilles' ruthless and unrelenting nature. They understand Achilles' wrath and his potential for violence. And once the rhapsode's hearers reach the moment of his duel against Hector, they have run the gamut of shorter, violent acts. They are perhaps *overly* prepared to visualize the violence of battle, but on the other hand, they are not completely prepared to imagine the full force of Achilles' ferocity. To do so, the Homeric rhapsode begins organizing the space of the *locus*. All the preliminary events of Achilles and Hector's confrontation—the chase around the walls of Troy, Hector's appeal regarding the loser's body, Achilles' callous retort, and Athena's deception—establish the *locus'* frame and effectively limit the scope of the audience's field of vision to the plain in which Achilles and Hector are about to fight.<sup>85</sup> No other space matters, and so the rhapsode can take his time with the *locus* and complement it with a series of suspenseful similes.

One of the most salient aspects of these preceding similes is the manner in which they highlight the disparity of power between those who possess it and those who do not.<sup>86</sup> First, the Homeric narrator aligns Achilles' pursuit of Hector with the image of an eagle swooping upon a

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<sup>85</sup> It is important to note that the space of the duel, and thus the space of the *locus*, does not have to be narrow or, in other words, small. The *focus* is narrow in the sense that the narrator does not place any attention on other battles while the duel is taking place, but the "physical" space can be either narrow or vast (as is the case here).

<sup>86</sup> Richardson (1993), 137. Although the commentary on this page refers to a later passage, the inequality it emphasizes appears much earlier, namely in the similes describing Achilles' pursuit of Hector. There, the similes offer another direct view of one man/animal being far superior to another man/animal. When these similes are combined with the passage originally mentioned in the commentary, they form what seems to be a tricolon crescendo of nature-based similes.

timorous dove; then he presents the image of a fawn being pursued by a hunting dog.<sup>87</sup> In each of these similes the Homeric rhapsode forms a supplementary *locus* which is exemplified by a predator and its prey, and when the narrator pairs these images with the duel between Hector and Achilles, he frames their battle in such a way as to suggest that their actions are akin to those of the animals within the similes. As such, the violence within the duel takes on a different form because instead of it arising from a heroic society of men, it seems to fall completely in line with the tenets of nature. From this perspective, the battle is not just violent, but *necessarily* violent because the natural interactions the rhapsode describes in these similes reflect a penchant for violence.<sup>88</sup> Just as listeners can imagine an animal unleashing its ferocity against its prey, they can envision Achilles and Hector accessing their baser instincts to commit violence. Thus, it is with this idea in mind that the rhapsode introduces the next set of similes, and through brief misdirection<sup>89</sup> and an expansion of the notion of predator versus prey, the epic rhapsode underscores the brutality of the duel as it echoes the violence of nature.

When the focus of battle switches to Hector, it seems as if the scene repeats the formula for this supplementary *locus*. Every aspect of Hector's simile above is comparable to the features of the earlier passages, but in spite of those similarities, the narrator makes Hector's attack more vicious by amplifying the simile's details in such a way that it makes Hector's assault appear to not only match that of Achilles but surpass it as well (οἴμησεν δὲ ἀλείς ὡς τ' αἰετὸς ὑψηπετήεις,

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<sup>87</sup> Book 22, lines 139-140: ἦῦτε κίρκος... οἴμησε μετὰ τρήρωνα πέλειαν, and 189-190: ὡς δ' ὅτε νεβρὸν ὄρεσφι κύων ἐλάφοιο διηται ὄρσας ἐξ εὐνῆς διὰ τ' ἄγκεα καὶ διὰ βήσσας.

<sup>88</sup> Gottschall (2008), 163-164. Gottschall discusses the importance of seeing warriors and animals as beings playing the same role during acts of violence. The heroes of the *Iliad* are not infallible; they are striving to move out of the "limbo between the brute and the sublime human ideal."

<sup>89</sup> de Jong (1997), 321. In her brief discussion of misdirection, de Jong notes that the scholia were highly aware of "the phenomenon of ἀπροσδόκητος." Despite the formulaic nature of Homeric epics there is still room for what James V. Morrison calls "false anticipation," which occurs when the fulfillment of a prophecy is delayed. In the case of the duel between Hector and Achilles, there are no explicit prophecies regarding Hector's fate, but Achilles' assertions of Hector's defeat and, more overtly, Zeus' consultation of his golden scales enable us to expect Hector's death. Furthermore, Morrison's idea of "epic suspense" is another form of delay and misdirection which is frequently used by Homer to heighten the experience of violence and other features in a scene.



ὅς τ' εἴσιν πεδίον δὲ διὰ νεφέων ἐρεβεννῶν ἀρπάξων ἢ ἄρν' ἀμαλὴν ἢ πτωκά λαγῶν, 308-310).

Because of the subtle change in each supplementary *locus*' presentation of predators and prey, the Homeric narrator leads listeners to think that they can place Hector on an equal footing with Achilles. And based on the precedent set by the details in Achilles' similes, they wouldn't be without merit to think Hector could defeat Achilles in battle. This idea, however, is contingent on the details of his simile repeating the same dynamic as before. If this were the case, Hector *would* be as dominant as Achilles proved to be in previous scenes, but the Homeric rhapsode eliminates this possibility by introducing another simile and using it to elevate Achilles to a cosmic level.<sup>90</sup>

After Hector's simile, the epic narrator immediately shifts listeners' attention toward Achilles, and they finally get a glimpse of him fighting at full force:

ὀρμήθη δ' Ἀχιλεὺς, μένεος δ' ἐμπλήσατο θυμὸν  
ἀγρίου, πρόσθεν δὲ σάκος στέρνοιο κάλυψε  
καλὸν δαιδάλεον, κόρυθι δ' ἐπένευε φαεινῇ  
τετραφάλῳ· καλαὶ δὲ περισσεῖοντο ἔθειραι (315)  
χρύσειαι, ἃς Ἥφαιστος ἴει λόφον ἀμφὶ θαμειάς.  
οἶος δ' ἀστὴρ εἴσι μετ' ἀστράσι νυκτὸς ἀμολγῶ  
ἔσπερος, ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν οὐρανῶ ἴσταται ἀστὴρ,  
ὥς αἰχμῆς ἀπέλαμπ' εὐήκεος, ἦν ἄρ' Ἀχιλλεὺς  
πάλλεν δεξιτερῇ

And Achilles was urged on, and he filled his heart  
with savage rage, and before his torso, he placed his  
beautiful and cunningly-wrought shield as a

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<sup>90</sup> Moulton, 393. On this page, Moulton describes how the similarity of images in similes can produce a more variegated form of comparison. He states, "The similes of the *Iliad* provide some indication of deployment through the association of ideas. For example, when Achilles and Hector attack in book X, they are both compared to birds of prey (X 139; 308). This technique is more remarkable, however, when it leads to the juxtaposition in the poem of two similes related in content which are not prompted by the same occasion in the narrative." While he says that the innovative aspects of comparison appear when similes refer to unrelated scenes, it seems that, at least in the bird of prey example, there is more subtlety and innovation to examine. This example is much more complex, as the analysis above argues, because even though Hector's simile arises from circumstances almost identical to those of Achilles, the Homeric narrator uses these similarities to produce *pathos*—not terror—once the limitations of the simile's imagery are able to be seen. There is more to be said about this point, but for now, it seems even more noteworthy to see how the Homeric rhapsode can manipulate and produce differing emotional responses from similar events.

covering, and he was nodding forward with his shining, four-horned helmet; and floating all around was the beautiful, golden horsehair, which Hephaestus was making flow compactly around the crest. And just as a star goes among [other] stars in the dead of night, an evening star, which is set as the most beautiful star in the sky, thus was he shining from well-pointed spear, which Achilles was brandishing in his right hand... (22.312-320)

From a compositional standpoint, the decision to have μένεος (313) and ἀγρίου (314) bookend θυμόν (313)—the principle of life, feeling and thought—is symbolic of the overwhelming presence of Achilles’ violent fury. Much like the earlier discussion regarding the lexical armor of Paris and Agamemnon, this construction creates a metaphorical shell around the core of Achilles’ being. In this moment, the narrator envelops whatever thoughts or emotions Achilles may have had with sheer anger, and in doing so, the Homeric rhapsode seems to emphasize the fact that Achilles is not only encased in beautiful, elaborate armor but his entire body is also consumed by relentless rage. At the forefront of the auditors’ minds, the narrator places not physical characteristics but intensified emotional details which prompt listeners to imagine and relate to Achilles viscerally. Their focus turns to the force of μένος as the core of Achilles’ assault and, furthermore, as a subtle call back to the heart of the *Iliad* itself.

When audience members look at μένος and its context, it is unsurprisingly similar to the beginning of the *Iliad* where they encounter the word μῆνις (1.1). Like μένος, μῆνις has immediate evocative power because, at once, listeners are urged not just to imagine but to feel. It is the focal point of the epic and represents the origin of the audience’s endeavor to experience the narrative on a more emotive plane. In relation to the above passage from Book 22, it is synonymous to μένος in meaning and similar to it in sound. Yet, when listeners hear μένος, the term is not merely another way of portraying rage. Rather, its meaning and effect are augmented

by the severity of all the events which have come before. Μένος is striking in this passage because it is emblematic of a dramatic increase in the amount of violence attached to the terminology of irrepressible anger. Therefore, by hearing μένος in this particular scene the Homeric narrator brings the audience back to the start of the *Iliad*, but it returns with its perspective fundamentally changed. After traversing the landscape of war and violence, the audience encounters Book 22's expression of rage with its experience transformed because the visualization of this emotion is more nuanced.<sup>91</sup> In this way, μένος represents the completion of a compositional ring of wrath. In other words, μένος is a culmination—a re-collection and re-presentation of μῆνις as it is finally expressed in the battle between Hector and Achilles.

With Achilles' anger firmly established, the Homeric narrator is now free to move the listeners' view away from the internal aspects of Achilles' person to the more ostensible details of Achilles' armor. First, the Homeric rhapsode guides their gaze from Achilles' torso to the shield which he uses to protect himself (πρόσθεν δὲ σάκος στέρνοιο κάλυψε καλὸν δαιδάλεον, 313-314). In the simplest terms, the mention of the shield only seems to indicate Achilles' desire to guard himself while he drives against Hector. But in actuality, the mention of the shield serves a dual purpose because, in addition to being a description of Achilles' charge against Hector, the reference to Achilles' shield is both a nod back to the ecphrasis in Book 18 and a preview of the simile to come. At that time, the epic's detailed description of the shield contained a number of celestial bodies and constellations alongside scenes from everyday life. These cosmic features

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<sup>91</sup> Prier, 169. On the return to μῆνις, Prier writes, "the beginning words of the *Iliad*, *mēnin aeide*, 'Wrath, sing,' gain a central significance from their formal, metrical placement. The lexical material lodged in the place of most common colonic transfer introduces the point of eternal place (*mēnis*) and the way (*hodos*) by which this return must be accomplished throughout the creation of the bard and the audience: the act of singing (*aeidein*). It is in their *recognition* of return to the *Iliad*'s central, protonarrative focus, a focus that loses its luster if looked upon as thematic in the modern sense of that term but gains its proper power and definition if perceived as an experienced phenomenological revelation. The *Iliad* is, then, an archaic creation that returns to the recognition of Achilles' wrath, not to, say, some modernly conceived 'characterization' of the heroes predicated on 'force,' in itself an argument more psychophilosophical than linguistic. The phenomenology of wrath far exceeds an annotation of character and plot. It must ultimately deal with the affective effect, the effective affect of language."

were a means to conveying a more expansive view of the world, but more importantly, these details were indicators of Achilles' inherent link to the gods. To be sure, this in itself is not unique—many others can claim ties to the gods, directly or otherwise. What sets Achilles apart, however, is the manner in which he is able to take advantage of that connection. Unlike others, Achilles is able to call upon his mother who, in turn, is able to appeal directly to the Olympians on her son's behalf. Her connections to gods, such as Zeus and Hephaestus, instill Achilles with a sense of divine credence.<sup>92</sup> Thus, whenever listeners encounter Achilles there is the feeling that what he does—or does not do—carries more weight because his actions merit the support of at least one of the gods. Additionally, in the examination of other parts of Achilles' armor, the Homeric narrator continues to enhance the association between Achilles and those representative of the greater cosmos.

Following the mention of the shield, the epic narrator directs the audience to the features of Achilles' helmet (314-316). Just as others' helmets inspired fear in those who looked upon them, Achilles' helmet nods forward and elicits otherworldly terror.<sup>93</sup> The Homeric narrator does not evoke this fear through Achilles alone. Though Achilles is a fearsome warrior and a force to be reckoned with, the fear which arises from seeing him and his armor comes about because the light emanating from both is, as Prier states, "a *sēma*."<sup>94</sup> It is a symbol for the power of the gods

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<sup>92</sup> Achilles' ability to drive the gods to action for his benefit gives him a level of privilege unprecedented among the heroes at Troy. Interestingly enough, this privilege, or entitlement, seems to act as a sort of mythological recompense for losing the role he was meant to have, namely the subjugator and successor of Zeus. Because Zeus devises a way to prevent Thetis' child from continuing the cycle of divine sons overthrowing their divine fathers, Achilles was denied his full potential. It is as Holway (2012), 20, states: "Zeus must honor Thetis's son to compensate her for exchanging superiority to Hera for the humiliation for the humiliation of mortal marriage. He owes Achilles honor for accepting the loss of immortality and the kingship of the gods that Achilles would have wrested from Zeus as Thetis's divine son."

<sup>93</sup> Prier, 52-53, explains how Achilles' armor and even he himself radiate light which is characteristic of the "other/that world." This "other" or "that" encompasses what is projected at a viewer rather than what the viewer himself gazes upon—it is the *phenomenon* of light emerging from an external source, namely the gods, whose brilliance is meant to impress upon the viewer the fact that their power is overwhelming. This point will become clearer in the subsequent discussion of the details of Achilles' helmet.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 52.

*projected* upon the figure of Achilles.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, when Hector and others see the bright gleam of Achilles' helmet in this scene, they are not only seeing him; they are seeing Achilles' manic rage augmented by the blinding, overwhelming force of the gods. There are layers of imagery at work which propel Achilles' power beyond that of mortal men. The effect of this layering is terror compounded with awe—a brilliant manifestation of violent intent—or, as Prier states, it is light which “creates an archetypal experience of war.”<sup>96</sup>

Here, too, the epic presents a challenge—to see, or in the audience's case, imagine the overwhelming luminescence of Achilles' armor. When the Homeric narrator describes the helmet's gleam, the audience endeavors to visualize Achilles, and it is successful to a point because it can undoubtedly imagine Achilles' bright armor. Yet, in spite of the relative ease with which hearers envision his radiant helmet, the *degree* of brightness is what is difficult to visualize. Since the narrator enhances the intensity of the armor's gleam through Achilles' connection to the gods, he asks listeners to grasp an image which is essentially too overwhelming to be seen. That is to say, the narrator confronts auditors with a sort of light which is startling in its divinity and devastating in its likeness to the sun.<sup>97</sup> When the Homeric narrator first describes Achilles charging through the plain (131-135), he strikes the mind's eye with the severe glare of Achilles' helmet (ἀμφὶ δὲ χαλκὸς ἐλάμπετο εἵκελος ἀγῆ ἢ πυρὸς αἰθομένου ἢ ἡελίου ἀνιόντος,

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<sup>95</sup> There is also precedent for this effect in Book 18. There, Athena enveloped Achilles' head with golden glow and augmented his voice to such an extent that the sight of him and the amplitude of his shouting drove terror into both the Trojans and their horses (18.203-214).

<sup>96</sup> Prier, 52. Prier discusses the effects of light which is associated with Achilles' armor and highlights a central attitude regarding Achilles' armor. He states that when Achilles “presents his armor to Patroclus, he boasts that the Trojans are so bold and successful because they do not see (*leussousi*) the front of his blazing helmet (*korythos...lampomenēs*) (*Il.* 16.70-71)... Note here especially the staggering importance Achilles attributes to his arms; their light holds sway over armies of men.” According to Prier, the luminescence of the armor seems to represent the fear of violence which either stirs men to action or to flee. In terms of the gods, it appears that the light they overlay onto Achilles is meant to be equally alluring and terrifying. One cannot help but try to gaze upon the brilliance of Achilles/the gods even though one is likely to be completely consumed by it. Moreover, the mere attempt to visualize this sort of light poses its own challenge. An explanation of this point follows shortly.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 55. Here, Prier discusses the use of the term *phaos* and its cognates, *phaeinon* and *phainein*, and he notes that these terms are most often used by Homer to denote the light of the sun.

134-135) and tests the listeners' ability to visualize the full vividness of the gods. They cannot run or recoil from the sight of the combined powers of Achilles and the gods like Hector does ("Ἐκτορα δ', ὡς ἐνόησεν, ἔλε τρόμος...βῆ δὲ φοβηθείς, 136-137); there is no reprieve until the Homeric narrator finally relents and eases the intensity of the imagery by turning to the features of the horsehair crest. Thus, the details about the gleam of Achilles' helmet here represents an attack on an audience's sense of sight. What began with Achilles as a terrifying godlike figure of unstoppable rage and power, the Homeric narrator augments when he drives listeners to imagine the burning and blinding light which bounds off Achilles' helmet. Surely, these details establish Achilles' dominance in the coming battle, but the last image in the passage above truly underscores the finality of Achilles' supremacy through direct cosmic association.

After the epic narrator tempers the sun-like qualities of the helmet, a simile for Achilles is introduced which presents the audience with the contrasting image of a night sky (οἶος δ' ἀστήρ εἴσι μετ' ἀστράσι νυκτὸς ἀμολγῶ ἔσπερος, ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν οὐρανῶ ἴσταται ἀστήρ, 317-318). Like Hector's simile before, the audience begins this scene in movement. This motion, however, is different and does not evoke the liveliness of nature. Instead, the motion that members of the audience envision marks an immediate shift in perspective because the narrator asks them to follow the trajectory of a star. Within this environment, the scene expands its scale rather than compresses it. In that respect, everything that they imagined before—the act of predator against prey and even the loudness of the Achilles' armor—appropriately gives way to the intangibility and deafening silence of the evening sky. And altogether, this skyscape seems to have little to compare to Hector's simile, but a glance back to the details of the eagle within it gives the audience the link through which it can form a comparison.

As Hector runs toward Achilles, the predatory eagle associated with him lends him an especially threatening and powerful appearance. But, again, these heightened qualities only exist as long as the imagery of Achilles' current simile either matches or falls short of Hector's. Unfortunately, it is now possible to see that Hector lays his odds on an imposing eagle while Achilles counters with an entire sky and a single, remarkable star (κάλλιστος ἐν οὐρανῷ...ἀστήρ, 318). Indeed, the eagle is a menacing hunter, but its power is still curtailed because its abilities fall under the domain of the sky. If this simile and Hector's earlier simile is considered in terms of space, or again as supplementary *loci*, the subservience of the eagle to the sky is clear. While Hector's *locus* would encompass the area in which an eagle hunts its prey, Achilles' simile would create a *locus* which extends to the furthest limits of the sky and anything within those limits. The two *loci* would not be opposed to each other. Rather, Hector's *locus* would exist *within* the space of Achilles' *locus* because Achilles' imagery would completely envelop the space taken up by the eagle.

The light portrayed in this simile also plays a part in emphasizing Achilles' deadly superiority. As noted above, his simile highlights the movement of a single, conspicuous star. While it moves, this star is striking because its beauty far exceeds that of all the others (κάλλιστος, 318), and in terms of light, the star's exceptional brilliance is the result of a compression of images. What the audience had before—the elaborate shield and the dazzling helmet—acted as implicit signs of violence. The simile, on the other hand, is explicit. Light becomes violence at the edge of Achilles' spear (ὥς αἰχμῆς ἀπέλαμπ' εὐήκεος, 319). It is a threat which, in the transition from star to spear, has maintained its intensity and increased its immediacy. The Homeric narrator may ground the stellar imagery of the simile by returning to the spear, but through that process, listeners are prompted to realize that the light they formerly

saw at a distance is, at present, all too close (Ἀχιλλεὺς πάλλεν δεξιτερῆ, 319-320). The light which began at Achilles' shield has slowly grown to encircle other aspects of Achilles' form until it augments Achilles' side of the *locus violentus* with the power of the stars.

From the ecphrasis of Book 18 to the duel between Achilles and Hector, all these images have worked together to associate Achilles with notions that extend beyond the realm of men.<sup>98</sup> Regardless of the similarities between prior similes, Achilles, at present, is completely out of reach. He is superhuman, akin to the cosmos, and Hector is ultimately no match for him in battle:

φρονέων κακὸν Ἴκτορι δίῳ (320)  
εἰσορόων χρῶα καλόν, ὅπη εἵξειε μάλιστα.  
τοῦ δὲ καὶ ἄλλο τόσον μὲν ἔχε χρῶα χάλκεα τεύχεα  
καλά, τὰ Πατρόκλοιο βίην ἐνάριξε κατακτάς·  
φαίνετο δ' ἧ κληῖδες ἀπ' ὤμων ἀχέν' ἔχουσι  
λαυκανίην, ἵνα τε ψυχῆς ὄκιστος ὄλεθρος· (325)  
τῆ ρ' ἐπὶ οἷ μεμαῶτ' ἔλασ' ἔγγει δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς,  
ἀντικρὺ δ' ἀπαλοῖο δι' ἀχένος ἦλυθ' ἀκωκῆ·  
οὐδ' ἄρ' ἀπ' ἀσφάραγον μελίη τάμε χαλκοβάρεια,  
ὄφρα τί μιν προτιεῖποι ἀμειβόμενος ἐπέεσσιν.  
ἦριπε δ' ἐν κονίης· (330)

...intending evil for noble Hector,  
and looking upon his beautiful skin for which part  
was most possible [to strike]. Beautiful bronze  
armor was holding so much of his other skin,  
[armor] which after having killed [him], he stripped  
from the strength of Patroclus; there appeared where  
the collar bones keep the neck and throat away from  
the shoulders, where the destruction of life is  
quickest; there, having eagerly pressed upon him,  
noble Achilles drove forth with his spear, and  
straight on through his tender neck went the point;  
there and then the ashen spear, heavy with bronze,  
did not cut his throat, so that responding with words,  
[Hector] might say something to him. And he fell  
into the dust.... (22.320-330)

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<sup>98</sup> Richardson, 137. In contrast to the straightforward simile attached to Hector, the elaborate description of Achilles' armor and the simile which refers to it emphasize Achilles' superiority.



Immediately after the simile, the narrator positions hearers directly in line with Achilles' vantage point. From here, they join Achilles as he readies his attack, and together they look for a vulnerable place to strike. In the middle of their search the listeners get a glimpse of Hector's skin, and suddenly it is surprising to hear the narrator describe it as beautiful.<sup>99</sup> Κακόν (320) unexpectedly becomes χροά καλόν (321), and Achilles' violent intentions momentarily give way to a consideration of Hector's beauty. Even as wrath drives Achilles to strike and destroy, his sight and proximity compel him to admire the skin he is about to pierce. In this way, violence and beauty are given the time to coexist and comingle within the mind of Achilles and that of the audience. With such a confluence of ideas, the confrontation between the two warriors is suddenly jarring—the epic rhapsode seems to give the audience a reprieve precisely when the decisive act of violence appears most imminent—but a closer look at the juxtaposition reveals how Achilles uses the idea of beauty to exact an even more terrible form of violence.

After commenting on Hector's beautiful skin, the narrator pulls away and turns to the armor Hector is wearing. This, too, is beautiful—it is χάλκεα τεύχεα καλά (322-323)—and immediately the repetition of καλός would seem to indicate that the rhapsode wants listeners to continue examining the aesthetic aspects of the scene, but the armor itself is a hindrance because it is also a reminder. In simplest terms, the armor signifies war and the present duel, but more than this, its presence prompts the audience to recall Patroclus as its former owner. This fact steers hearers back on the course of violence because it forces them to return to his death which, in turn, compels them to remember the source of Achilles' anger. Wrath re-emerges, and the Homeric narrator also returns the audience to the aim of it, namely κακός. It is no coincidence that the rhapsode describes Patroclus' death with the participle κατακτάς (323). Throughout all

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<sup>99</sup> Peponi (2012), 6-9. Here, Peponi describes the effects of the aural components of narratives. From her perspective, these components share a strong connection to the concepts of beauty and pleasure which are prevalent in the above passage.

of these lines, the epic presents a succession of sounds which evoke the sound of κακός. Even though this term is left behind to visualize imagery which reflects the meaning of καλός, the repetition of καλός and other words create a circuit of consonantal sounds which implicitly retain the presence of κακός in the passage. As the rhapsode narrates this passage he embeds κακός in the utterance of other words so that it is subliminally present in the scene. Thus, κακός remains the goal. Achilles never strays from it, but the audience, on the other hand, loses sight of this for a short time because the Homeric narrator successfully lures it away to focus on the beauty of Hector and the armor he is wearing. Charmed and placated by their appearance, the audience stares aimlessly until Achilles finally discovers the weakest point on Hector's body (φαίνεται δ' ἢ κληῖδες ἀπ' ὤμων αὐχέν' ἔχουσι λαυκανίην, ἵνα τε ψυχῆς ὄκιστος ὄλεθρος, 324-325). Then it returns its full attention to the task at hand.

Now that the Homeric narrator resets the narratees' perspectives, they can visualize the angle of Hector's neck, and through the rhapsode's precise description of it in lines 324-325, the audience can expect that Achilles only needs a single strike there to immediately end Hector's life.<sup>100</sup> But it is not enough for the strike to come quickly if the audience cannot envision the brutality of Achilles' rage. The violence Achilles inflicts must be prolonged so far that members of the audience can imagine the details occurring with a heightened sense of anger.

Consequently, when they visualize the spear point pierce all the way through Hector's neck, the narrator also gives them an interior view of the wound. The spear does not sever Hector's throat (ἀσφάραγον, 328), and the Homeric rhapsode tells listeners that it remains intact so that Hector can speak to Achilles again. At once, the audience can see that the rhapsode plans to extend the

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<sup>100</sup> Richardson, 139. On a different note, Richardson notes the "assonance of initial *alphas*" in line 327. Like the earlier lines which had a prevalence of the letters *kappa* and *chi* to signal the presence of κακός, the frequency of *alphas* could act as an audible nod to the sounds of mourning. Further research would have to be done, however, to make a more definitive statement.

very things it expected to occur quickly—both the violence of the wound and Hector’s death will be mercilessly delayed.

When Hector falls to the ground, the epic’s listeners get a further glimpse at the level of Achilles’ hatred. Hector pleads for a proper burial, but Achilles rejects him outright and instead proclaims that he would rather carve into Hector’s body and eat his flesh raw (αἰ γὰρ πως αὐτόν με μένος καὶ θυμὸς ἀνήη ὄμ’ ἀποταμνόμενον κρέα ἔδμεναι, 346-347).<sup>101</sup> He also condemns Hector’s body to be eaten by dogs and large birds (κύνες τε καὶ οἰωνοὶ κατὰ πάντα δάσσονται, 354)<sup>102</sup> and refuses to let his parents have his body (349-353). Since Achilles has already wounded Hector physically, he proceeds to harm Hector verbally, and the images the audience receives through Achilles’ imprecations are especially graphic because they depict things which are contrary to custom.<sup>103</sup> Unlike Book 7, which shows the Achaeans and the Trojans establishing a truce in order to retrieve their dead companions, Achilles defies convention to torment and increase Hector’s agony. If there is any solace for the audience in Achilles’ words it is in the fact that they remain threats. This changes, however, as soon as Hector’s dies.

Even as Hector lies dead on the ground and the duel comes to an end, the Homeric narrator maintains the listeners’ view on Achilles. They watch as Achilles strips the armor off of Hector’s corpse (367-369), and they stay with him when the other Achaeans rush to join him

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<sup>101</sup> Segal (1971), 38. Segal believes these lines are the “most savage utterances in the poem.” They emphasize Achilles’ lack of restraint and act as verbal precursors to the “physical” expression of savagery.

<sup>102</sup> Richardson, 141. The summary of these lines notes that Achilles’ rejection of Hector’s requests gains vehemence through the use of gutturals in this line. This perhaps is a continuation of the aural signifiers examined earlier.

<sup>103</sup> Segal, 14. Segal offers an example from the *Odyssey* which is comparable to the scene here. Near the end of the epic, the suitors threaten to allow dogs or vultures to “eat the corpse of Eumaeus (21.363-4) or Odysseus (22.30),” and as Segal notes, “both cases these threats of mutilation are expressive of the lawlessness of the suitors at the very point when they are about to pay the penalty for their reckless violation of established sanctions.” In this scene, Achilles is guilty of the same violation on a more extreme level because he compounds his initial crime by actually committing violence against Hector’s corpse. For a view on the overturning of *biological* norms, cf. n. 79 and also Garcia’s treatment of bodily decay on pages 65-94. Garcia’s comments about the abuse and restoration of Hector’s corpse (90-91) is especially useful as well since they relate to the actions and frustrations of Achilles.

(369-371). Together, the epic listeners and the Achaeans gaze at Hector’s corpse,<sup>104</sup> and while they are doing this, the narrator draws out another stark contrast. He places the marvel of Hector’s stature and wonderful beauty alongside the Achaeans’ callously indifferent stabs and their mocking tones (370-374). Their actions reflect the mentality of a “low mob” which greatly contrasts with the beauty and heroism evoked by Hector’s death.<sup>105</sup> But more so, their deeds remind the audience of the coming onslaught of Achilles’ final act of violence. Achilles, as the embodiment of wrath, still demands satisfaction, and as such, the Homeric rhapsode forces the audience to proceed and see beauty as the catalyst which drives Achilles to a greater form of violence in the mutilation of Hector’s corpse:<sup>106</sup>

Ἦ ῥα, καὶ Ἑκτορα δῖον ἀεικέα μῆδετο ἔργα. (395)  
 ἀμφοτέρων μετόπισθε ποδῶν τέτρηνε τένοντε  
 ἐς σφυρὸν ἐκ πτέρνης, βοέους δ’ ἐξήπτεν ἰμάντας,  
 ἐκ δίφροιο δ’ ἔδησε, κάρη δ’ ἔλκεσθαι ἔασεν·  
 ἐς δίφρον δ’ ἀναβάς ἀνά τε κλυτὰ τεύχε’ ἀείρας  
 μάστιξέν ῥ’ ἐλάαν, τὸ δ’ οὐκ ἀέκοντε πετέσθην. (400)  
 τοῦ δ’ ἦν ἐλκομένοιο κονίσαλος, ἀμφὶ δὲ χαῖται  
 κυάναει πίτναντο, κάρη δ’ ἅπαν ἐν κονίησι  
 κεῖτο πάρος χαρίεν·

Thus [Achilles] spoke, and he was planning  
 shameful deeds for godlike Hector. He pierced the  
 tendons of both feet from behind, from his ankle to

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<sup>104</sup> Peponi, 19. According to Peponi, stillness and silence mark a clear-cut response to beauty. Here, the Achaeans are taken aback by Hector’s appearance, so for a moment their reactions act as aesthetic and narrative cues. These sorts are highly significant to the reception of the *locus*, a point which is argued later in the discussion of the roles of Priam, Hecuba and Andromache.

<sup>105</sup> Richardson, 144.

<sup>106</sup> Vernant, 62-63. “While the warrior is alive, his youth appears primarily in vigor (*biē*), strength (*kratos*), and endurance (*alkē*); when he has become a weak, lifeless corpse, the glow of his youth persists in the extraordinary beauty of his body... After being the subject of and medium for various actions, more or less spontaneous, [the corpse] has become wholly an object for others. Above all, it is an object of contemplation, a visual spectacle... this is truly Patroklos, and this Hector.” It is important to note that Hector’s “beautiful death” is an affront to Achilles as long as Patroklos remains unavenged. For this reason, Achilles reminds the Achaeans that Patroklos remains unwept and unburied (*ἄκλαντος ἄθαπτος πάτροκλος*, 386-387). Moreover, there is an explicit and implicit layering of imagery in Achilles’ statement. Explicitly, the Homeric narrator uses a repetition of phrases to link the duel between Hector and Patroklos with the duel between Hector and Achilles. This parallel then contributes to the complexity notion of ownership concerning Achilles’ first set of armor—Patroklos fights Hector while wearing Achilles’ armor and later, Hector wears the same armor to battle Achilles. The epic rhapsode conspicuously intertwines the images of these three warriors so that one is always seen in terms of the others.

his heel, and he was fastening [them] to ox-hide straps; then he was tying [them] to his chariot, and he allowed [Hector's] head to be dragged; and mounting his chariot and raising up the glorious armor, he then whipped into motion [his team], both willing to rush off. There was a cloud of dust from [Hector] as he was dragged, and on both sides his dark hair was being spread out, and his entire head, formerly beautiful, was lying in the dust.  
(22.395-403)

As Achilles looks back to Hector's body, his thoughts return to violence. From the perspective of the audience, this is not new, but because Hector is clearly dead, the Homeric narrator treats this turn to violence differently. Achilles' intentions were *κακός*, but his actions are now shameful (*ἀεικέα*, 395).<sup>107</sup> The Homeric narrator shifts listeners' view from threats and stationary observations to rapidly paced deeds of violence, and for this reason, they quickly move away from the language of intent (*μήδετο*, 395) into a "concrete and dramatic"<sup>108</sup> space overtaken by Achilles' vengeful acts. To start, the audience sees Achilles cut into Hector's feet. The listeners follow the course of the incision through and then up from Hector's heel to his ankle (396-398). With each detail, the rhapsode is precise, and audience members can envision the damage being done, but up to this point, it is not apparent what they are observing. Next, the narrator describes the leather straps and the way Achilles attaches Hector's feet to the end of his chariot (*βοέους δ' ἐξήπτεν ἰμάντας, ἐκ δίφροιο δ' ἔδησε*, 397-398). With this addition, the audience begins to understand the sort of brutality Achilles plans for Hector's corpse, and it is able to realize that the narration of this scene is developing in a completely different way. Rather

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<sup>107</sup> Richardson, 147. The commentary refers to the scholia for this word and offers two interpretations for its use. In each it is difficult to ascertain whether the Homeric narrator is attempting to condemn Achilles' actions on moral grounds. This idea, of course, is the central theme of Segal's work, and still has no definitive answer. Regardless of what it may be, it is important to use this word as a way to contrast it with his previous use of *κακός* and with other terms used to qualitatively describe violent acts.

<sup>108</sup> Segal, 34. Here, Segal rightly illustrates the importance of foreboding threats. Once there is a preliminary image threatening future violence, or the results of impending violence, the Homeric narrator brings "us a degree closer to the reality of the agony inflicted on the victims." Likewise, Achilles' threats of violence to Hector's corpse become exceedingly terrifying when they are fulfilled.

than proceed with each action as it happens, this scene unfolds having already been imagined. Because what is happening has been planned by Achilles, the epic rhapsode does not *narrate* Hector's mutilation but *reveal* it. Thus, aforementioned details have gradually uncovered the presence of an implicit *locus*, and through this form, the narrator has been able to evoke the terror of violence without the bloodshed the audience would expect. He has shown violence in its cruelest form, violence which emerges as mutilation from sheer malice against an inactive opponent.

### **Internal Spectators of the *Locus Violentus***

After Achilles drags Hector's body away, the Homeric narrator composes a scene in which the spectators' response to the battle and the *locus* contribute to the overall effect of violence. As mentioned earlier, the reactions others have to the space of the *locus* is significant because they provide narrative cues for the audience at large. These responses are almost purely emotive, and as a consequence of that quality, members of the audience may see themselves represented in the narrative if characters confirm their responses with those of their own. The visceral association between listeners and the internal viewers is accordingly enhanced as emotions are reduplicated within the epic itself. This connection can be seen at work in Book 22 when the observers on the ramparts of Troy respond to the death of Hector:

Ὡς τοῦ μὲν κεκόνιτο κάρη ἅπαν· ἦ δέ νυ μήτηρ (405)  
τίλλε κόμην, ἀπὸ δὲ λιπαρὴν ἔρριψε καλύπτρην  
τηλόσε, κώκυσεν δὲ μάλα μέγα παῖδ' ἐσιδοῦσα·  
ᾧμωξεν δ' ἔλεεινὰ πατὴρ φίλος, ἀμφὶ δὲ λαοὶ  
κωκυτῶ τ' εἶχοντο καὶ οἰμωγῇ κατὰ ἄστν.  
τῷ δὲ μάλιστ' ἄρ' ἔην ἐναλίγκιον ὡς εἰ ἅπασα (410)  
Ἴλιος ὄφρυόεσσα πυρὶ σμύχοιτο κατ' ἄκρης.

And so, [Hector's] entire head had been covered with dust; his mother was tearing her hair, and she

cast her brilliant veil far off and shrieked  
exceedingly loudly as she saw her son; his dear  
father piteously wailed aloud, and all around the  
people were bearing with the wailing and  
lamentation throughout the city. In this way it was  
most similar as if all of beetling Troy were  
smoldering from above with fire. (22.405-411)

In these moments, the audience is able to see how what the epic narrator once described as beautiful is, in death, gradually succumbing to the effects of violence. Just as the brilliance of Hector's head is lost in the dust, the beauty of Hecuba's veil is lost because its splendor means nothing in the context of Hector's death. Therefore, Hecuba casts it off at the sight of him (*ἀπὸ δὲ λιπαρὴν ἔρριψε καλύπτρην τηλόσε*, 406-407),<sup>109</sup> and in doing so, she indicates not only her hopelessness at the loss of Hector but the hopelessness of Troy as well.<sup>110</sup> Adding to the desolation of her gesture is the mention of her familial bond with Hector—he is explicitly identified as her son (*παῖδ'*, 407). This detail would typically, and momentarily, unite the two figures in the audience's mind, but the reality of scene sets far more space between them.

The moment Hecuba throws her veil far off (*τηλόσε*, 407), the narrator signals back to the physical distance between her and Hector. In this newly expanded space the rhapsode's focus turns away from Hector. *Ἄπό* (406), apart from indicating the place from which the veil was taken, seems to direct the audience to abandon the sight of Hector because the loudness of Hecuba's cries suddenly compels it to gaze back in her direction. With this in mind, the use of the phrase *κώκυσεν δὲ μάλα μέγα* (407) transitions the scene into a space of sound, and when Priam joins Hecuba in her lamentations (*ᾄμωξεν δ' ἔλεεινὰ πατὴρ φίλος*, 408), they augment the

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<sup>109</sup> Segal, 17. Segal argues that the Homeric narrator places Hector's death away from the view of Priam and Hecuba as a way to spare them "the grisly details of mutilation." It seems, however, that Hecuba sees Hector's body at once since the epic follows the image of Achilles binding Hector's feet immediately before this. It does not appear that Achilles had to drag Hector's corpse far for his parents to see what transpired. The idea of Hector fighting within view of his parents would seem to make his death more tragic because it would emphasize their overall helplessness in the matter.

<sup>110</sup> Richardson, 150. His commentary on lines 407-409 notes that "the repetition of nouns in 409, after the verbs in 407-8, and the spondaic hemistich, add to the mournful effect."

scene’s aural component further. Moreover, he and Hecuba introduce a new bond—as parents and man and wife—to replace the one lost between Hector and Hecuba. The space they now inhabit is filled with groaning and sorrow, and because of their royal status, their grief becomes the grief of the Trojan people (ἀμφὶ δὲ λαοὶ κωκυτῶ τ’ εἶχοντο καὶ οἰμωγῇ κατὰ ἄστυ, 408-409).<sup>111</sup> As Priam and Hecuba affect more and more people, they create a chain of sound whose sole purpose is to announce Hector’s death to his wife, Andromache.

Once the sorrowful news reaches Andromache, her reaction is immediately frantic and belies a more hopeful result:

Ἦς φαμένη μεγάροιο διέσσυτο μαινάδι ἴση (460)  
παλλομένη κραδίην· ἅμα δ’ ἀμφίπολοι κίον αὐτῇ  
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πύργον τε καὶ ἀνδρῶν ἴξεν ὄμιλον  
ἔστη παπτήνας’ ἐπὶ τείχεϊ, τὸν δὲ νόησεν  
ἐλκόμενον πρόσθεν πόλιος· ταχέες δέ μιν ἵπποι  
ἔλκον ἀκηδέστως κοίλας ἐπὶ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν. (465)  
τὴν δὲ κατ’ ὀφθαλμῶν ἐρεβεννὴ νύξ ἐκάλυπεν,  
ἦριπε δ’ ἐξοπίσω, ἀπὸ δὲ ψυχὴν ἐκάπυσσε.  
τῆλε δ’ ἀπὸ κρατὸς βάλε δέσματα σιγαλόεντα,  
ἄμπυκα κεκρύφαλόν τε ἰδὲ πλεκτὴν ἀναδέσμην  
κρήδεμνόν θ’, ὃ ρά οἱ δῶκε χρυσοῦ Ἀφροδίτη (470)  
ἦματι τῷ ὅτε μιν κορυθαίολος ἠγάγεθ’ Ἔκτωρ  
ἐκ δόμου Ἡετίωνος, ἐπεὶ πόρε μυρία ἔδνα.

And so speaking, she was darting through the hall quivering in her heart like a madwoman; and at once her attendants were going along with her. Nevertheless when she came to the tower and the crowd of men, she stood upon the wall looking around, and she understood that he was being dragged before the city: the swift horses were dragging him ruthlessly toward the hollow ships of the Achaeans. Gloomy night covered her over her eyes, and she fell backwards and breathed out her spirit. Far off from her head she cast her

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<sup>111</sup> Richardson, 150. In addition to the aural components of the passage, it is important to note Richardson’s remarks on the “untypical language” of line 411. He believes this unique line augments the solemnity of the Trojans’ lament which, in turn, makes it more memorable. Moreover, he cites Bowra who comments on the effects of the word ὀφρυόεσσα, stating that the epithet “not only conveys a vivid impression of Troy on its ridge overlooking the plain but helps by contrast to strengthen the note of menace in its coming doom.”



glittering headdress, the frontlet, the netting and  
both the plaited band and the veil which golden  
Aphrodite gave her on that day when Hector with  
the glancing helm led her from the house of Eetion,  
when he gave [her] countless wedding gifts.  
(22.460-472)

When Andromache is walking toward the walls of the city, the sounds emanating from people outside are echoed in the quivering of her heart (παλλομένη κραδίην, 461). Her rapid pulse becomes the pace at which the audience can envision her movements through the palace. The listeners move along with her, just as her attendants do (ἀμφίπολοι κίον αὐτῆ, 461), and all together they imbue the loud atmosphere of the scene with frenzied tension until she finally reaches the walls and comprehends what the audience already knows—Hector is dead. Despite having heard the wailing of others nearby, she fears the worst but does not wholly believe because she herself has not seen Hector die.<sup>112</sup> The chain of audible wailing does not have an effect until Andromache returns to the walls and the audience joins Andromache and looks over the wall.

As soon as Andromache witnesses Hector's mutilation, the scene seems to grow silent. There is no somber wailing or movement within the city, but there are Achilles' movements beyond the city walls. While he continues to enact the savage defilement of Hector's corpse, his actions show Andromache the horrible and ruthless visual proof of Hector's fate.<sup>113</sup> Like the people of Troy, the audience is prompted to await Andromache's reaction, understanding what the expected response appears to be because of Hecuba, Priam and other Trojans' previous lamentations. Surprisingly, the epic rhapsode does not describe what Andromache sees but

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<sup>112</sup> Richardson, 156. Richardson's commentary on line 463 quotes the scholia (bT) which states, "it is well observed that she [Hecuba] does not ask the truth of others: it is the mark of an agitated spirit to want to be an eyewitness."

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. The commentary on lines 464-465 takes the repetition of ἐλκόμενον... ἔλκον as explicit evidence of the "horror of the sight."

rather, the gloomy night which envelops Andromache's eyes (τὴν δὲ κατ' ὀφθαλμῶν ἐρεβεννὴ νύξ ἐκάλυψεν, 466). In this moment, the unexpected onset of darkness seems akin to turning one's gaze from something abhorrent. The Homeric narrator seems, if only for a passing moment, to mercifully turn the audience's view away from Hector's corpse, while Andromache unfortunately has no choice but to feel the brunt of what she has seen.

Similar to Hecuba, Andromache's final act involves the tossing of a headdress (468-475). In Andromache's case, however, the Homeric rhapsode uses this action to relay an anecdote to the audience. Once Andromache faints and she casts off her headdress, the narrator describes each part of it as if flies through the air. With each detail, the headpiece does not appear to retain its shape but rather, to separate and come apart. The frontlet (ἄμπυκα, 469), netting (κεκρύφαλόν, 469), plaited band (πλεκτὴν ἀναδέσμην, 469) and veil (κρήδεμνόν, 470) all fall, and as they do, they travel forward in time. But conversely, the scene which follows gradually moves backward in time since the epic gives the audience a glimpse of the joyous beginning of Hector and Andromache's marriage (ἤματι τῷ ὅτε μιν κορυθαίολος ἠγάγεθ' Ἴκτωρ ἐκ δόμου Ἡετίωνος, 471-472). There, the headdress represented their union and the start of Andromache's life under Hector's care. Here, the casting of the headdress represents loss and the downturn of fate—Andromache's acknowledgement her marriage's end and, by extension, her life as a free woman.<sup>114</sup>

Therefore, the radiance of Andromache's headdress acts as the crux which holds the entire scene together. Its presence mirrors not only the brilliance of the goddess Aphrodite and

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<sup>114</sup> Kardulias (2001), 29-30. Kardulias discusses the importance of clothing as social signals which denote status, gender, class, age, etc. In terms of Homeric society, the veil was an important symbol of "intactness" and in the case of women, chastity. Therefore, the casting off of a veil represented not only general destruction but the loss of women's αἰδώς. In the above passage, both ideas are represented by the fact that several things are broken or are in danger of being destroyed (Priam and Hecuba's family, Andromache's family, the city of Troy) and the loss of women's propriety is imminent since Hecuba and Andromache will soon become spoils of war.

the gleam of Hector’s helmet, but it also recalls the shine of Hecuba’s veil (λιπαρὴν...καλύπτρην, 406) and the befouling of Hector’s head (405). It stands as the point of transition,<sup>115</sup> marking the moment when a more idealized view of the past becomes the recognition of the tragic, realized present—when Aphrodite’s luminosity transforms into the mournful gleam of Hecuba’s falling veil, or when the image of Hector’s shining helmet is exchanged for the view of his head sullied with dirt. Each juxtaposition heightens the contrast of these images which, in turn, amplifies the effect of the violence inflicted upon Hector. In other words, all the preceding comparisons magnify Hecuba’s sorrow and the savagery of Achilles’ treatment of Hector’s body until the point crystallizes when the audience sees the anecdote about their budding marriage ironically become the horrible sight of Hector being led away behind Achilles’ chariot.

Along with the “civilian” response to the *locus*, the epic offers yet another group of internal spectators—the Olympian gods. They play a special role in the narrative because they are not burdened by the lack of knowledge. They are omniscient and ever-present, and more so than their mortal counterparts, their presence in the epic offers a supplement to the epic rhapsode’s narration. To illustrate, consider the opening moments of Book 5. As the book begins, Athena marks Diomedes as her chosen hero and sets his *aristeia* into motion (1-8). While he charges into battle, she turns to Ares, her compatriot in all martial matters:

ἀτὰρ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη  
χειρὸς ἔλοῦσ’ ἐπέεσσι προσηύδα θοῦρον Ἄρηα· (30)  
Ἄρες Ἄρες βροτολοιγὲ μαιφόνε τειχεσιπλήτα  
οὐκ ἂν δὴ Τρῶας μὲν εἴσαιμεν καὶ Ἀχαιοὺς  
μάρνασθ’, ὀπποτέροισι πατήρ Ζεὺς κῦδος ὀρέξῃ,

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<sup>115</sup> McCoy (2013), 27-28. On these pages, McCoy discusses the liminality of a corpse before burial and the liminality of the mourners as they see said corpse. While the corpse is in between the stages of life and death, the mourners are in between memorializing the deceased (that is, remembering the past) and eventually moving forward with life. Unfortunately for Hector’s family, “moving forward with life” means a life of servitude, or for Priam, looming death.

νώϊ δὲ χαζώμεσθα, Διὸς δ' ἄλεώμεθα μῆνιν;  
ᾠς εἰποῦσα μάχης ἐξήγαγε θοῦρον Ἄρηα· (35)  
τὸν μὲν ἔπειτα καθεῖσεν ἐπ' ἠϊόεντι Σκαμάνδρῳ,  
Τρῶας δ' ἔκλιναν Δαναοί·

...nevertheless bright-eyed  
Athena, grasping his hand, addressed furious Ares  
with the words, “Ares! Ares, bane of men,  
bloodthirsty stormer of cities, should we not allow  
the Trojans and the Achaeans to fight, whichever  
of the two father Zeus would give glory, and draw  
back and avoid the wrath of Zeus?” Having spoken  
thus, she led furious Ares away from the battle; then  
she sat Ares down upon the high-banked  
Scamander, and the Danaans turned the Trojans....  
(5.29-37)

Throughout Book 5, gods such as Apollo and Aphrodite have been part of the battle (431-518 and 297-351, respectively), but Athena in particular has had a definite impact on what has happened. She is instrumental to Diomedes' current rout of the Trojans, but more so, she is a significant player in this scene because her point of view contrasts with that of the mortal figures around her. Whereas people like Andromache and the men on sidelines of the battle feel terror at acts of violence, Athena is not surprised or shocked by them. Instead, she calmly addresses Ares, another god participating in the battle, and convinces him to stay out of the fray (ᾠς εἰποῦσα μάχης ἐξήγαγε θοῦρον Ἄρηα, 35). Before she takes him away, however, Ares seems intent on relishing everything that has just happened in the battle. Every epithet Athena uses to describe him shows Ares' penchant for destruction (βροτολοιγὲ μαιφόνε τειχεσιπλήτα, 31).<sup>116</sup> But in spite of his proclivities, Athena convincingly lures Ares away by offering him a way to participate without incurring the wrath of Zeus—he can watch.

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<sup>116</sup> Kirk, 56-57. Kirk, while commenting on Athena's appeal to Ares, mentions that Ares “would enjoy the savage epithets.” Furthermore, Kirk supports the idea of the gods' aloof view of violence by noting the “partly comical” and “almost obsequious” nature of Athena's address to Ares.

As Athena leads Ares away and sits him down near the banks of the Scamander (τὸν μὲν ἔπειτα καθεῖσεν ἐπ’ ἠϊόεντι Σκαμάνδρῳ, 36),<sup>117</sup> the epic narrator provides another group of spectators for the *locus*. The pair’s view is detached and has little investment in the people fighting in the battle. The viewpoint of the gods is distinct because they possess no fear of death. Even though they may suffer bodily harm, as Aphrodite does so later,<sup>118</sup> their wounds are momentary annoyances which are immediately relieved. And although the gods choose certain men to be their champions, they do not mourn the same way mortals do when they die. Their concern only extends as far as the chosen mortal’s interests align with their own. Because of this, Athena and Ares become interested, yet distant observers. In this way, they are similar to the epic narrator in that they have a vested interest in the observation of violent acts. The Homeric narrator, despite his physical and temporal distance from the narrative, strives to make the audience visualize or “observe” violence as much as possible because visualization leads to an acute visceral response. He comments on what the gods and mortals have seen, but it is the gods’ perspective that provides the most uninhibited view of violence. They are able to observe all aspects of the battle, and thus, they confer the most complementary view for the epic narrator’s commentary.

Athena and Ares’ roles as involved, but separate observers of violence call to mind another figure whose function is almost completely defined by his ability to observe—the tragic messenger.<sup>119</sup> In tragedy, the messenger speech is almost exclusively reserved for the description of violent acts. Violence rarely occurs onstage, and as such, the messenger is responsible for

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<sup>117</sup> Kirk, 57. Yet another example of the gods’ detachment from the violence occurring around them comes in the form of Athena sitting Ares down by the Scamander and Ares allowing himself to be led away and sat down. Kirk says these two things creates a scene which “is surely humorous.”

<sup>118</sup> Specifically, 5.335-342.

<sup>119</sup> Barrett (2002), 98. As Barrett notes, there is “no ‘pure’ messenger” but rather a figure which takes up the “conventional” characteristics of a messenger in his speech acts. Therefore, the term “messenger” above is used in a more general sense to designate a character who announces and describes acts of violence without necessarily having the title of messenger/herald.

forming the tragic version of the *locus*. Through it, he offers the tragic audience the opportunity to experience tragic violence through the visualization of the details he provides. Similar to Athena and Ares, the messenger stands aside but is present during a violent event. His involvement is largely defined by his ability to be present for every aspect of the violent act. As a result of this, the messenger also takes a role which is similar to that of the epic narrator because his description of the violent scene has to include as many details as possible in order to help others get a better sense of how violence is committed. Therefore, the messenger of tragedy takes the most important aspects of the epic narrator and an internal viewer and combines them in a way to present the most vividly violent scene possible. Consequently, whenever the epic rhapsode offers an internal spectator/narrator, he is supplying a model for description, or a meta-narrator, through which an audience can take cues and better envision the details of the scene, violent or otherwise.

### **Conclusion**

In each of these selections, the Homeric narrator shows that violence is not simply an aspect of an epic about war. Violence is the medium through which the *Iliad* affects its listeners. It is the idea which tests an audience's resolve as it forces listeners to come into close, imaginative contact with the chaos of war. But even as it challenges listeners, violence is also the thing which enriches their experience of the narrative because it fully involves them in the creative (and destructive) process. During moments of violence, the narrator asks his narratees to have the utmost focus and to actively visualize images which emphasize death and annihilation. This is an imaginatively involved process which requires its own space to be fully immersive. As discussed above, the *locus violentus* is that very space. It is the space in which the words of epic

transform into cognitive actions which produce an effect on both the figures within the narrative and the audience as well. In the following chapters, I explain how this process continues to occur as the *locus violentus* supersedes the boundaries of genre. Within tragedy, the *locus violentus* is the source of its dramatic force. It is its climax and its most horrific aspect.

## Communing with the Dead: the *Locus Violentus* in Tragedy

Earlier, I emphasized the development of the *locus violentus* via an analysis of epic attributes, and I measured its effectiveness by examining specific battle scenes. This chapter continues in a similar vein but does so through an analysis of the characteristics in tragedy. Overall, the qualities which produce the tragic version of the *locus* are not drastically different from those of its epic counterpart—violence in tragedy preserves a sense of challenge and allure in its presentation, and it continues to construct its own narrative spaces. But these narrative spaces have elements which are both cognitive and physical. They are the products of significant advances which affect the form and function of the *locus*, and so, they necessitate their own study, separate from epic. To begin, I provide the defining characteristics of the tragic *locus violentus*. There are five main pillars which constitute the essential characteristics of the tragic *locus*, namely a physical act of violence which results in the injury or death of a tragic figure, a site which isolates the figure or figures involved in the execution of violence, and a narrative which details the elements of the violent deed through visualization and the use of suspense. Besides these attributes, the *locus* may also include other, supplementary characteristics to augment the delineation of a violent event. These are: similes, metaphors and the presentation of the victim.

Given the essential and supplementary characteristics of the *locus violentus*, it is beneficial to explain how these characteristics are employed within tragedy at large. In the sections that follow, the examination of each characteristic begins with a brief overview of the trait within the genre and then moves to that characteristic's function specifically within the *locus*. At this point, I analyze various scenes of physical violence from across the extant tragic



corpus in order to illustrate their contribution to the development of the *locus*. Some plays, such as Sophocles' *Oedipus* and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, appear in more than one section, and others, such as Euripides' *Heracles*, appear only once, but the number of appearances (or lack thereof) should in no way indicate the significance of one scene over another. That said, in light of Chapter 1 and the constant interplay between epic and tragedy, particular attention *is* paid to those tragedies which exemplify the link between these two genres.

The establishment of this criterion is useful because allows me to highlight the development of the *locus* in the transition between the two genres, and in particular, it helps me focus on the ways in which tragedy chooses to reconstruct epic characters and storylines. Furthermore, because Chapter 1 was exclusively a treatment of the *Iliad* and very few plays<sup>1</sup> deal with the affairs laid out in the *Odyssey*, my discussion favors plays whose source material is Iliadic, meaning I focus on tragedies whose characters and plot have direct links to the events in the *Iliad*. This does not mean to suggest that the material of these plays consists of narrative episodes referenced only in the epic but rather, that they relate to circumstances that are chronologically proximal to the events of the Trojan War.

The sacrifice of Iphigeneia represents an appropriate starting point for this timeline since it is one of the most significant events leading up to the Achaean fleet reaching the shores of Troy, and the death of Agamemnon serves as the culminating Iliadic event because it portrays the definitive end of the conflict through the hero's *nostos*.<sup>2</sup> With this in mind, the Iliadic plays

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<sup>1</sup> The only play with an explicit reference to the events of the *Odyssey* is Euripides' satyr play, *Cyclops*, which due to its genre is naturally not included in this study. Other plays are tangentially related to the *Odyssey* either through the inclusion of Odysseus as one of the *dramatis personae* or by oblique references to specific scenes in the epic. Lowe (2000), location 2309, for instance, argues that Sophocles' *Trachiniae* employs "an Odyssean narrative template" in its characterization of Deianeira and Hyllus.

<sup>2</sup> Although the Mycenaean queen, Clytemnestra, can be considered an Iliadic figure, her death at the hands of her children, Electra and Orestes, represents an inherent generational, and so temporal, shift. The rationale behind her death has less to do with the Trojan War and more to do with "contemporary" (read: 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE) considerations regarding revenge and the establishment of the Athenian judicial system. Consequently, Sophocles'

are the following: Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, and Euripides' *Hecuba*, *Helen*, *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, and *Trojan Women*. These plays feature prominently in the examination of the *locus*' characteristics, and at the end of the chapter, these plays set the parameters by which I establish the tragedy with the least cognitively engaging form of the *locus* and the tragedy with the most cognitively engaging form of the concept.

### **The Essential Characteristics of the Tragic *Locus Violentus***

#### **Violence**

Violence, as a formal concept, changes very little in the transition from epic to tragedy. It continues to be the product of conflict and continues to result, more often than not, in one character inflicting bodily harm upon another. The emergence of this concept, however, differs between the genres because the situations reflected in each are largely distinct. For instance, scenes of violence within epic typically ensue to highlight the innate physical prowess of heroes. Achilles and Hector in the *Iliad* commit acts of violence as a demonstration of their martial abilities, while Odysseus in the *Odyssey* inflicts violence as a means of establishing or restoring his heroic stature, as in the raids against the Cicones in Book 9 and the slaughter of the suitors in Book 22, or for the sake of survival, as in the blinding of Polyphemus in Book 9. Furthermore, the characters committing violence against one another usually have no pre-existing relationship but are often compelled to such acts because of considerations for war or some other overarching

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and Euripides' *Electra* plays and Euripides' *Orestes* and *Iphigeneia in Tauris* are excluded from the list of tragedies above. Furthermore, despite having a number of Iliadic players, Euripides' *Andromache* is several years removed from the events of the *Iliad*, and the violence which occurs within its plot places focus on Orestes once again. Therefore, it, too, is omitted from the selection of plays.

circumstance.<sup>3</sup> Hence, external forces justify epic deeds of violence; there is a set framework within the epic storyline which calls for the frequent execution of violent acts.

Conversely, violence in tragedy does not necessarily emphasize the physical strength or prowess of the characters inflicting it. Instead, the central concern surrounding tragic violence is not only *how* a character commits it but *why* he commits it as well.<sup>4</sup> The messenger appearing near the end of *Oedipus* (1237-1284 and 1286-1296), for example, comes in to tell the audience about the death of the Theban queen, Jocasta, and the gruesome self-blinding of the Theban king, Oedipus, and among the details he provides his audience is the rationale behind both of their acts. Jocasta, he states, commits suicide out of the shameful realization that her current husband is not only her first husband's killer but also her son (γοῶτο δ' εὐνάς, ἔνθα δύστηνος διπλοῦς ἐξ ἀνδρὸς ἄνδρα καὶ τέκν' ἐκ τέκνων τέκοι, 1249-1250), while Oedipus chooses to gouge out his own eyes because he now understands his dual crimes of murder and incest (ἄρας ἔπαισεν ἄρθρα τῶν αὐτοῦ κύκλων, αὐδῶν τοιαῦθ', ὀθοῦνεκ' οὐκ ὄψοιντό νιν οὔθ' οἷ' ἔπασχεν οὔθ' ὀποῖ' ἔδρα κακά, 1270-1272). With the inclusion of these details, the messenger augments the impact of Jocasta's and Oedipus' actions since he is able to describe why violence becomes their only recourse to relieving their changing circumstances. He is able to delineate how both characters' fates have turned for the worse and why the extent of that turn leads them, respectively, to death and self-mutilation.

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<sup>3</sup> While the examples of all-out war and violence in the *Iliad* are plentiful, there are some instances in which heroes specifically choose not to commit violence against one another even in the midst of battle. Most notably, the scene between Diomedes and Glaucus in Book 6 (119-236) of the *Iliad* explicitly illustrates a case in which established ties cause the warriors to forego fighting and exchange gifts. Many thanks to Professor Andromache Karanika for highlighting the importance of this exception. Another example, albeit with a less amiable result, appears in Book 21 (34-119) of the epic. There, Achilles encounters Lycaon, a Trojan prince whom he had previously captured and sold. Worn out and showing no intention of fighting, Lycaon comes to Achilles and supplicates him, but Achilles disregards his request and kills him anyway. Interestingly, at the moment of their encounter the Homeric rhapsode relates the journey Lycaon took in order to return to Troy, and Lycaon gives a brief account of his lineage, making this scene into a sort of bitter recasting of the meeting from Book 6.

<sup>4</sup> Hall (2007), 20.

Another scene which emphasizes the reasoning behind violence can be found in the messenger speech in *Heracles* (922-1015). Here, the messenger outlines Heracles' turn to violence as a result of a fit of madness. He begins by detailing the sudden change in Heracles' demeanor. He notes the turning of Heracles' eyes (ἐν στροφαῖσιν ὀμμάτων ἐφθαπμένος, 932), their bloodshot appearance (ρίζας τ' ἐν ὄσσοις αἵματῶπας, 933) and the foam dripping down his beard (ἀφρὸν κατέσταζ' εὐτρίχου γενειάδος, 934). He also describes the hallucinations Heracles is suffering.<sup>5</sup> Lastly, he illustrates how these images lead Heracles to attack his own family. His sons flee to escape their father's grasp (οἱ δὲ ταρβοῦντες φόβῳ ὄρουν ἄλλος ἄλλοσ', ἐς πέπλους ὁ μὲν μητρὸς ταλαίνης, ὁ δ' ὑπὸ κοίνος σκιάν, ἄλλος δὲ βωμὸν ὄρνις ὡς ἔπηξ' ὕπο, 971-974), but one-by-one they and their mother, Megara, are all cut down.<sup>6</sup> With the stages of Heracles' insanity laid out, the messenger enhances the effects of the violence he reports. He can juxtapose the strength and frenzy of Heracles with the helplessness and fear of Heracles' family and show how Heracles' capacity for violence loses its grandeur when it is used against his loved ones. Thus, with these scenes in mind, it becomes apparent that physical strength and prowess are only two of many possible contributing factors which can be considered during a violent act.

Additionally, the boundary between the perpetrator of violence and the victim is not always clearly defined in tragedy. In fact, many tragedies center on the idea of victimizers becoming victims.<sup>7</sup> *Agamemnon*, for example, shows Agamemnon, the sacrificer of his daughter

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<sup>5</sup> Among the visions Heracles sees are a chariot (αὐτοῦ δὲ βαίνων ἄρματ' οὐκ ἔχων ἔχειν ἔφασκε, δίφρου δ' εἰσέβαινεν ἄντυγας κάθεινε, κέντρον δῆθεν ὡς ἔχων, χερί, 947-949), the city of Nisus (μέσον δ' ἐς ἀνδρῶν' ἐσπεσὼν Νίσου πόλιν ἤκειν ἔφασκε, 954-955), a wrestling match (πρὸς οὐδέν' ἡμιλλᾶτο κάκηρύσσετο αὐτὸς πρὸς αὐτοῦ καλλίνικος οὐδενός, ἀκοὴν ὑπειπών, 959-962) and the father of his enemy, Eurystheus (ὁ δὲ νιν Εὐρυσθέως δοκῶν πατέρα προταρβοῦνθ' ἰκέσιον ψαύειν χερός, ὠθεῖ, 967-969).

<sup>6</sup> The first of Heracles' sons is killed by an arrow to the heart (ἐναντίον σταθεῖς βάλλει πρὸς ἦπαρ, 978-979); the second dies when Heracles smashes his head with his club (ὑπὲρ κᾶρα βαλὼν ξύλον καθῆκε παιδὸς ἐς ξανθὸν κᾶρα, ἔρρηξε δ' ὄστᾶ, 992-994); and the third is crushed alongside his mother (σκάπτει μοχλεῦει θύρετρα, κάκβαλὼν σταθμὰ δάμαρτα καὶ παῖδ' ἐνὶ κατέστρωσεν βέλει, 999-1000).

<sup>7</sup> Sagan (1979), 142. Sagan argues that "cruelty needs a victim." Suffering often causes the victim of cruelty to seek vengeance and so become the victimizer of those who have caused the suffering in the first place.

(224-225), become the victim of violence at the hands of his wife, Clytemnestra (1372-1398), and Sophocles' and Euripides' *Electra* plays see Clytemnestra become the victim of murder after her murder of Agamemnon (1398-1418 and 1142-1231, respectively). Likewise, the examples above illustrate another particularity of tragedy, namely the genre's affinity for featuring conflict among characters who are connected through kinship or some kind of friendship.<sup>8</sup> Unlike violence between known enemies or violence by happenstance, which are two situations limited in their affective scope, acts of interpersonal violence<sup>9</sup> have greater narrative potency because they destabilize associations which, by their nature, are meant to epitomize stability. In other words, the more tragic violence accentuates the significance of characters' bonds the more it is able to strain them. Accordingly, one can say that tragic violence appears to thrive in conditions which are somewhat contrary to those in epic—if epic violence profits from external influences, tragic violence profits chiefly from internal influences. Even if there is an all-encompassing concept like war governing the need for violence in a tragedy, the play stands to benefit further by taking advantage of internal sources of conflict.

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This is naturally the case in *Hecuba*, which is the play he is analyzing when he makes this statement, but to make his assessment applicable as a general quality of tragedy and tragic violence, in particular, it would seem to be more accurate to state that the perpetrators of violence tend to become victims.

<sup>8</sup> Halliwell (1998), 147. Halliwell only mentions “tragic myths [which] revolve around family relationships” during his discussion of Chapter 14 of the *Poetics*, but it would behoove us to also consider the *φιλίας* (1453b19) Aristotle mentions in this section with the more common translation of “friendship.” This inclusion is essential not only for the sake of thoroughness but also because there are moments in which significant actions (read: violent actions) explicitly occur between people who are not related by blood. Heracles' actions against his herald, Lichas, in *Trachiniae* (772-782) and Hecuba's violent deeds against the Thracian king, Polymestor, in *Hecuba* (1044-1055 and 1148-1177) are but two examples of this sort.

<sup>9</sup> Krug et al. (2002), 6. The term “interpersonal violence” comes from the World Health Organization's typology of violence. Interestingly, the definition the organization provides nearly correlates directly with the Aristotelian conception of pity- and fear-inducing action. Like Aristotle, the organization divides this type of violence into two categories. The first category, family and intimate partner violence, consists of “violence largely between family members and intimate partners, usually, though not exclusively, taking place in the home,” and the second, community violence, designates “violence between individuals who are unrelated, and who may or may not know each other, generally taking place outside the home.” Of course, as the organization defines each of these categories further, they lose some of their applicability, but nevertheless, they are broadly pertinent.

That said, the internal forces accompanying a scene of impactful, tragic violence do not have to be so overwhelming that a character is rendered completely passive by them. A tragic figure must continue to have some agency, and he or she must still have the chance to take some decisive action amidst the trials and tribulations he or she is confronting.<sup>10</sup> Plainly stated, if a tragic scene of violence demands an emotive response, its characters should be able to evoke some form of tension which prevents the scene from simply progressing to its potentially-fatal conclusion. A character's capacity to shape the outcome of violence, whether as a victimizer or a victim, is precisely what makes violence worthy of attention; it is what makes a *locus violentus* a vital attribute of a narrative and not a wanton aspect of it. Moreover, it is the reason why it is especially beneficial to examine scenes of physical violence. Scenes of physical violence emphasize action, both potential and actual. They portray faculty, intent and ideally, the enactment of violence. When all three of these ideas work in concert with one another, the effects of a scene are enhanced and an audience's engagement with that scene is deepened.

If one examines the messenger speeches from Euripides' *Bacchae* and *Trojan Women*, one can see how one scene amplifies the significance of its violence by bolstering tensions within the act, while another diminishes its violence's potency through the removal of tension from the scene. In *Bacchae*, a messenger appears near the end of the play to announce the death of the Theban king, Pentheus (1043-1152). As he explains, Pentheus has gone into the mountains to observe the activities of the Bacchae, the female followers of Dionysus (1048-1057). Unfortunately, Pentheus is soon discovered (ὄφθη δὲ μᾶλλον ἢ κατεῖδε μαινάδας, 1075) and finds himself assailed by the women—specifically, his mother and her sisters—after Dionysus rouses them from their rest (ὡς δ' ἐγνώρισαν σαφῆ κελευσμὸν Βακχίου Κάδμου κόραι, ἦξαν, 1088-1090). When the women take hold of Pentheus, the messenger recalls Pentheus' exact

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<sup>10</sup> Halliwell, 145-148.

pleas to his mother (Ἐγὼ τοι, μήτηρ, εἰμί, παῖς σέθεν Πενθεύς... οἴκτιρε δ' ὦ μήτηρ με, μηδὲ ταῖς ἐμαῖς ἀμαρτίαισι παῖδα σὸν κατακτάνης, 118-1121). The messenger's quotation here is important because it highlights the bond between mother and son and how Pentheus endeavors to use that bond to stop his mother's assault. He is not quickly overtaken but has some time to attempt to forestall his own death. Thus, Pentheus creates a moment of tension within the scene when he is given a slight chance to affect his fate and the audience is given the opportunity to consider the prospect of violence.

In *Trojan Women*, one sees the aftermath of the Trojan War and the fates which befall the women of Troy. Andromache, the wife of Hector, is now a widow, and as such, she is at the mercy of the Greek army. Talthybius, the Greeks' messenger, tells Andromache that her young son, Astyanax, is condemned to die by being thrown from the city walls (725-739). The news brings Andromache great sorrow, and she laments for the impending loss of her son (740-779). Yet, when Talthybius returns after Astyanax's death, he does not dwell on the act of violence. He confirms that Astyanax is dead and has the body brought back as evidence of the fact,<sup>11</sup> but the brunt of his message is concerned with the suffering of Andromache as she is forced to leave before she can bury her son's body (1130-1146). The fact that Astyanax is only a boy and cannot change his circumstances and the fact that Talthybius does not describe the proceedings of Astyanax's death at length means the scene develops without much tension with which to engage the audience. Needless to say, the scene is impactful and evokes deep feelings of pity, but the act of violence itself is not the primary factor eliciting these feelings. It is secondary to the misfortunes of Andromache.

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<sup>11</sup> Even though Talthybius' speech consists of 33 lines (1123-1155), he references the killing of Astyanax in only three: καὶ σφ' ἠτήσατο θάψαι νεκρὸν τόνδ', ὃς πεσὼν ἐκ τειχέων ψυχὴν ἀφῆκεν Ἴκτορος τοῦ σοῦ γόνος, 133-1135.

With this in mind, my examination of the tragic *locus* also places focus on the tragedies which can objectively portray characters in conflict who successfully inflict the violence they intend. This, then, begs the question of which characters fulfill these terms. In epic, the perpetrators of violence are almost exclusively male heroes because a majority of the action takes place on the battlefield, but as the examples above show, tragedy lessens this restriction and includes women and those who are not necessarily from established heroic stock.<sup>12</sup> To be sure, this does not mean that anyone in tragedy can fulfill the role of the victimizer in a *locus*. Choruses, regardless of their gender, are generally excluded from being murderers and/or mutilators, but aside from these figures, most others are viable enforcers of violence in a *locus*. Furthermore, as tragedy expands the definition of the victimizer, it also extends the possibilities for what can be defined as a conflict. Rather than limit scenes of violence to duels, tragedy allows for self-directed and collective violence as well.<sup>13</sup> A tragic *locus* does not need to produce a conflict by offering a character a single opponent or an opponent at all. It only requires that there be conflict and that that conflict lead to the completion of a violent deed.

## Space

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<sup>12</sup> One example of “non-heroic” killers is the aforementioned group of Theban women in *Bacchae* who rather handily inflict violence upon different groups in the play (against herds and a group of men, 734-768, and against Pentheus, 1088-1147).

<sup>13</sup> Krug et al., 6. The terms “self-directed violence” and “collective violence” are the two other categories of violence from World Health Organization’s typology. In contrast to interpersonal violence, the organization defines these concepts in the following manner: self-directed violence pertains to “suicidal behavior and self-abuse,” and collective violence is “violence committed by larger groups of individuals or by states.” The organization also adds the social, political and economic subcategories for collective violence. For my purposes, I limit self-directed violence to self-abuse since, as I explained above, a *locus* requires intent *and* the execution of violence to work, and I restrict the definition of collective violence to acts of social violence committed by large groups because the other subdivisions reflect modern concerns. Furthermore, “large groups” must also be limited in scope because they must be able to be envisioned clearly. This does not mean I have a set quantitative range in mind, only that the group cannot be *excessively* large. Instances of self-directed violence are those similar to the scene I discussed in *Oedipus* in which a tragic figure commits violence against himself, and cases of collective violence are analogous to the scene in *Bacchae* which portrays groups fighting against a common enemy.



Just as in epic, the purpose of space in the tragic *locus* continues to be to limit the audience's imaginative field of vision. In the *Iliad*, this was essential because without it, the scale of the epic would make the process of visualization too difficult. In tragedy, scale is not a factor since its very form resists expansion. That is, the scope of tragedy is tempered by the configuration of the theater. Despite the fact that a tragedy's narrative offers it the chance to expand the scope of its performance, the theater sets the main boundaries within which a tragedy can portray its story, and it also provides a play the opportunity to define its spaces further. Three spaces, in particular, develop within the frame of the theater. These are: scenic space, extrascenic space and distanced space.<sup>14</sup> Each of these zones is important because it can more narrowly focus the extent of theatrical space, but more importantly, each is significant because it affects how a messenger reports a scene of violence and how an audience visualizes and engages with that narration.

Scenic space, for instance, seems to complicate the idea of a *locus*. Since scenic space pertains to the area which is visible to the viewers,<sup>15</sup> a *locus* would technically need to appear in front of the audience as well. This goes against the general consensus regarding onstage violence, but this does not make it an impossibility. Violence and suffering can, and have, appeared on stage in select plays to great effect. *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, for example, do not shy away from presenting the full brunt of violence and suffering, respectively, in front of their audiences, and in fact, they utilize the openness of their protagonists' circumstances to enhance

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<sup>14</sup> Rehm (2002), 1-2. Rehm details several scholars' approach to the categorization of theatrical space. Admittedly, there is no "correct" way of separating the theater, but Rehm's three major categories appear to offer us the simplest and most productive way of delineating the possible spaces of the *locus*. Furthermore, it is important to note that Rehm actually names four areas and not three. The fourth, theatrical space, simply pertains to everything which is housed within the theater.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid* (2002), 20.

the effect of the rest of the play.<sup>16</sup> Questions of convention aside, a *locus* in scenic space is a *locus* which seems to have no need of a messenger, narration and/or visualization because the viewers themselves have direct visual access to the violence at hand. Thus, the thought of a scenic *locus* does not appear plausible if the overall concept depends on offstage violence to produce the characteristics of narration and visualization. Luckily, this need not be the case. Even if someone commits a violent deed on stage, a messenger may still cause audience members to envision and “re-animate that violence in their minds’ eye.”<sup>17</sup> Provided that the messenger’s speech is vivid enough to activate the listeners’ imaginations, the possibility of a *locus* has validity. Thereafter, the task of the scenic *locus* is to relate its own effects in the face of what happens before those in the audience. In other words, it must transform some aspect of the scene so that the audience may be able to imaginatively reconstruct it in terms of the violence committed on stage. The scene cannot remain exactly as it was before the violent deeds happened; the rarity of onstage violence necessitates a fundamental change in the scene’s affective composition. This change comes not only from the violence itself but also from the techniques the messenger(s) employs to reconfigure the audience’s cognitive interaction with the scene.

Looking back on *Ajax*, one can observe this process at work. After Ajax commits suicide on stage, his concubine, Tecmessa, discovers his body and quickly concludes that the hero has taken his own life (898-907/908). As she observes his corpse, Tecmessa notes the position of Ajax’s body (κρυφαίῳ φασγάνῳ περιπτυχίς, 899) and that of the sword upon which Ajax has

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<sup>16</sup> Specifically, *Ajax* portrays the hero’s suicide in a short interlude between lines 865 and 866, and *Philoctetes* depicts Philoctetes explicitly speaking about his physical suffering while he is on stage in lines 255-316, 468-472, 649-650, 674-675, 732-826, 874-878 and 1170-1172. Technically, any time Philoctetes appears on stage he is in a constant state of pain, but the line numbers provided indicate which statements of his are a direct acknowledgement of his suffering.

<sup>17</sup> Rehm (1992), 62.

impaled himself (ἐν γάρ οἱ χθονὶ πηκτὸν τόδ' ἔγχος περιπετοῦς κατηγορεῖ, 906-907/908), and through these details, she enables the chorus accompanying her to reconstruct the hero's death. She allows the chorus to know what the audience has seen, but more than this, Tecmessa highlights how Ajax's death affects her in particular. Without Ajax, both Tecmessa and the chorus are rendered powerless, but she especially has no safeguard against Ajax's enemies (ὄμοι ἐμῶν νόστων· ὄμοι, κατέπεφνες, ἄναξ, τόνδε συνναύταν, τάλας· ὃ ταλαίφρων γυνή, 900-903). Tecmessa brings attention to this fact by aligning her sorrows with the image of Ajax's corpse so that the chorus and the audience come to regard her as a stand in for the fallen hero.<sup>18</sup> Tecmessa's narration of the scenic *locus* functions to recreate Ajax's suicide *and* to re-envision Tecmessa herself as an emblem of Ajax's death; she affects the presentation of the scenic *locus* by specifically reconfiguring the listeners' view of her. Therefore, she continues to engage the audience with the *locus* even though it did not originally need to visualize the act of Ajax's suicide.

The second area in which a tragic *locus* can manifest is extrascenic space. Extrascenic space consists of the area immediately behind the *skene*.<sup>19</sup> It is the location which typically houses the interior of a building or structure, as in the palaces of Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* and Euripides' *Hippolytus*, and it is the realm which is simultaneously conspicuous and inconspicuous because it often hides what eventually demands to be seen.<sup>20</sup> This duality is most

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<sup>18</sup> After describing the state of Ajax's body, Tecmessa distinguishes herself from the chorus first by keeping the chorus away from Ajax's body (οὔτοι θεατός· ἀλλά νιν περιπτυχεῖ φάρει καλύψω τῷδε παμπήδην, 915-916) and then by prompting the chorus to regard her misfortunes (χωρεῖ πρὸς ἦπαρ, οἶδα, γενναία δύη...οὐδέν σ' ἀπιστῶ καὶ δις οἰμῶξαι, γύναι, τοιοῦδ' ἀποβλαφθεῖσαν ἀρτίως φίλου, 938 and 940-941) with repeated expressions of sorrow for herself (ἰὼ μοί μοι, 937 and 939). The alignment between Tecmessa and the fallen Ajax is something treated extensively in Chapter 3, but for the time being, it is more important to demonstrate how scenic space still allows for the development of a *locus*.

<sup>19</sup> Rehm (2002), 21.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. Rehm notes other scholars' comments on this sort of space and states, "Lefebvre puns on the 'seen and the obscene,' implying that what lies immediately offstage is physically dangerous and must be kept out of

notably encapsulated by the stage's central doors. More than forming the boundary between the "inner" and "outer" sections of the stage, the doors mark the gateway to knowledge, and that knowledge largely concerns itself with violence. Hence, the audience is drawn to this part of the stage when it is about to learn the details behind a violent act. For instance, a servant in *Choephoroi* pleads for someone to help him open the palace doors in order to reach his fallen master, Aegisthus (ἀλλ' ἀνοίξατε ὅπως τάχιστα, καὶ γυναικείους πύλας μογλοῖς χαλάτε, 877-879), and a short time later, those doors are opened so that Clytemnestra can see his corpse (οἷ ᾿γώ. τέθνηκας, φύλτατ' Αἰγίσθου βία, 893) and hear why he has been murdered (905-927). In *Hippolytus*, a similar process takes place as the Athenian king, Theseus, calls upon his servants to open the doors of his palace when he first hears news about the death of his wife, Phaedra (χαλάτε κλῆθρα, πρόσπολοι, πυλωμάτων, ἐκλύεθ' ἄρμούς, ὡς ἴδω πικρὰν θέαν γυναικός, 808-810). After the servants do so, Theseus is able to ascertain Phaedra's reason for taking her own life (877-886).<sup>21</sup>

In terms of the *locus* itself, extrascenic space gives it the opportunity to be experienced on a variety of levels. For one, the *locus* is surely experienced cognitively. Since the *locus* materializes outside of the view of the audience and those on stage, narration and visualization are necessary to bring the effects of violence forward. This call for narration and visualization is not limited to the messenger speech after the fact. It may similarly include a preemptive description of the *locus* which seeks to prepare listeners for the events to come. Moreover, because the *locus* is just behind the *skene*, there is also the possibility that the audience can

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sight. In similar vein, Ruth Padel sees tragedy's expulsion on the *ekkuklēma* of what lies within as a visual metaphor for exposing the hidden workings of the mind."

<sup>21</sup> Of course, the closing of the stage's central doors can also be associated with the notion of violence, especially when the play's storyline concerns the notion of revenge. In *Agamemnon*, for example, the prophetess, Cassandra, gives the chorus the first of many warnings about the murder of Agamemnon after the doors of the palace are closed (1107-1111).

perceive it aurally. In such circumstances, the comprehension of the victim's cries or the perpetrator's exaltations immediately thrusts audience members into the middle of the act of violence. Granted, they actually have no direct involvement or knowledge of the deed, but they are nevertheless complicit by their proximity. From that position, they experience the act of violence at the height of its emotional core, at the moment of extreme downfall or triumph, and so, this addition acts as the catalyst for visualization as well.

One instance which employs anticipatory visualization, aurality and a subsequent reassessment of violence within extrascenic space can be found in *Hecuba*. There, the chorus provides the audience with a preliminary vision of violence after the Trojan queen, Hecuba, lures Thracian king, Polymestor, away in order to take vengeance upon him (1018-1034). The chorus is unable to see within the *locus*, which in this case consists of a tent, so its rendition is based on the expectation of death (ψεύσει σ' ὁδοῦ τῆσδ' ἐλπὶς ἢ σ' ἐπήγαγεν θανάσιμον πρὸς Αἴδαν, ὃ τάλας, ἀπολέμωι δὲ χειρὶ λείψει βίον, 1032-1034). Even though Hecuba later appears and reveals that she has chosen to blind and not kill Polymestor (1049-1055), the chorus nevertheless prompts the audience into first imagining Polymestor being murdered. The chorus maintains this image until Polymestor cries out from within the tent and explicitly states that he has been blinded (ὄμοι, τυφλοῦμαι φέγγος ὀμμάτων τάλας, 1035). From here, the image of the scene changes to account for Polymestor's statement—the audience and the chorus immediately have to reconsider the chorus' initial account—and the remainder of the *locus* re-engages the audience as it learns the exact details of Hecuba's plot (1148-1177).

The third area available for the production of a *locus* is distanced space. This region pertains to any and all spaces which lie outside of the theater but are still narratively linked to the

events of the tragedy.<sup>22</sup> The setting in distanced space, like Phocis in *Oedipus*, Thrace in *Hecuba*, the lands surrounding Trachis in *Trachiniae* or Mount Cithaeron in *Bacchae*, is usually brought before the audience by means of narrative and is generally not clearly defined. A *locus* set in distanced space, however, gives the locale form and emphasizes specific features within the larger locale. So, the *locus* limits *Oedipus*' Phocis to the three-forked road (τριπλῆς ὅτ' ἤ κελεύθου τῆσδ' ὁδοιπορῶν πέλας, 800-801) for *Oedipus*' account about the murder of the Theban king, Laius (800-813), *Hecuba*'s Thrace to the burial mound of Achilles (παρῆν μὲν ὄχλος πᾶς Ἀχαιικοῦ στρατοῦ πλήρης πρὸ τύμβου, 521-522) during the sacrifice of *Hecuba*'s daughter, Polyxena (518-582), *Trachiniae*'s Trachis to altars in a sacred grove (ἔνθα πατρώφ Διὶ βωμοὺς ὀρίζει τεμενίαν τε φυλλάδα, 753-754) in the description of Heracles' mutilation and the death of Lichas (749-806) and *Bacchae*'s Mount Cithaeron to a grassy grove (οὖν ποιηρὸν ἴζομεν νάπος, 1048) for the depiction of Pentheus' murder (1043-1147). In all, the *locus* in distanced space forms a delimited area which brings focus to the messenger's speech and focus to the audience's attempts at visualization.

Another quality of events described in distanced space is that they can be temporally flexible. A messenger describing a *locus* in distanced space can narrate anything from matters of historical importance to those occurring contemporaneously with the plot of the tragedy. There are layers of distance in this *locus*, and these layers can be used to buffer or magnify the effects of the violence being inflicted; they offer a brief semblance of safety since the violent deed is “physically far” from the stage, but at the same time, they can illustrate the far-reaching and psychologically immanent force of violence as it inevitably comes to the fore. Thus, the “historical” murder of Laius in *Oedipus* becomes, in its delivery, the scene which begins to unravel the mystery of *Oedipus*' identity and to elucidate the severity of *Oedipus*' crimes (1182-

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<sup>22</sup> Rehm (2002), 22.

1185), and Polyxena's sacrifice in *Hecuba* comes to affect and compound Hecuba's suffering after she realizes that Polyxena is one of two children she has lost (681-687).

Taken altogether, scenic, extrascenic and distanced space offer audiences different points of contact through which they can feel the effects of violence. Scenic space places the audience directly in front of the violent act, whereas extrascenic and distanced spaces allows some separation from violent deeds. Regardless of which one is used to portray the acts of a *locus*, all three are significant because they provide a framework which affects all the other characteristics of the *locus*. A messenger needs to be aware of the site he is working with before he can decide which methods he will use to present the *locus*, and moreover, an audience needs spatial focus before it can fully engage with the details the messenger provides.

### **Narration**

In the preceding sections, I have made mention of narrative in messenger speeches and in characters' accounts of violence, but I have not discussed how narrative is specifically used within a *locus*. To do so, I need to discuss who in a tragedy are the sources of narrative and what kinds of techniques these sources employ in their presentation of violent scenes. First and foremost, the overall storyline of a tragedy owes its development to a tragedian acting as the chief, external narrator.<sup>23</sup> He is the "commanding intelligence" which dictates the kinds of narrative which are used throughout the course of his play,<sup>24</sup> but unlike the narrator in epic, he is

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<sup>23</sup> The designation of narrators (and narratees/audiences) as "internal" or "external" comes from the work of de Jong, Nünlist and Bowie (2004). There, they describe "internal" narrators as characters who are present or are directly involved in the events they are describing. In contrast to these characters, "external" narrators are figures who are able to provide accounts of events but lack any sort of participation in them. Thus, the Homeric narrator would be an example of an external narrator, while the messenger describing the death of Jocasta and the blinding of Oedipus in *Oedipus* would be an illustration of an internal narrator. It is important to make these distinctions clear because, as I soon note, tragedy can complicate the idea of "internal" and "external" narrators/narratees, especially when the subject of narration is violence.

<sup>24</sup> Markantonatos (2002), 4.

not explicitly at the forefront of conveying those narrative forms. Once he has determined the overall structure of his play, the tragic playwright effaces his own presence from his work and leaves the task of narration to his characters.<sup>25</sup>

Placing the characters in a tragedy in the position of a narrator opens the range of possible narratives which an audience can receive during the course of the performance. Alongside common, narrative techniques like analepsis and prolepsis, there are also prologues, choral odes and other forms of narrative discourse to consider. As Goward notes, each of these narrative forms “communicates to the internal and external narratees in its own particular way, with different truth effects and emotional colouring.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, within the span of a single performance, audiences turn to different characters at different times and receive a variety of perspectives and responses. No single figure in a tragedy lays claim to overarching, narrative significance or the undisputed truth.<sup>27</sup> All are valid sources of narration. Nevertheless, the previous sections in this chapter have shown that there is one character who is frequently designated as the figure who presents a professedly objective narrative relating to violence—the tragic messenger. In Chapter 1, I described the messenger as a figure who was able to view and describe a scene with a high level of detail. In retrospect, this description for the tragic messenger was appropriate in the sense that it mentioned the fact that the definition of a “messenger” should also include characters who are not clearly designated as such, but it did not

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<sup>25</sup> Goward (2004), 12. As Goward notes, the decision to allow characters to narrate is not exclusive to tragedy. One can consider Odysseus and Nestor as examples of epic utilizing other narrators alongside the epic singer, but nevertheless, at no point in the course of the epic is one led to believe that these heroes are on the same “narrative level.” The Homeric narrator continues to dictate when his heroes begin and end their narration through various techniques and with phrases, such as “so he spoke.”

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 10-11. Goward addresses the problem surrounding the veracity of tragic narratives by contrasting the “definiteness” of epic focalization, which emerges with the “two-fold, overlapping authority” of the epic narrator and the divine Muse, and the “multiple focalisations” which come from the many physical presences in tragedy. At first, she states that tragedy’s lack of a singular narrative source may be a disadvantage, but after analyzing the genre’s “hybrid form,” she comes to the conclusion that these varied sources of focalization are constantly re-engaging the audience as it attempts to grasp the meaning of each source’s narration. Cf. Barrett (2002), 6-7.



adequately explain why this is the case or account for the expansion of narrative styles in tragedy. Now that I have connected the plurality of narrators with the variety of narrative forms, however, I can go on to do so.

If the main function of the tragic messenger is to recount a scene of violence in extreme detail, it becomes apparent that any character who is capable of this sort of retelling has the potential to act as a messenger. Violence is the narrative equalizer of tragedy because it is a pervasive enough theme that most, if not all, characters on stage can discuss their experience of it. Clytemnestra in *Agamemnon*, for instance, can recount the murder of Agamemnon in vivid detail; Deianeira in *Trachiniae* is skillfully able to describe Heracles' slaughter of the centaur, Nessus, and *Bacchae* can show a messenger giving his listeners an excruciatingly grotesque account of the dismemberment of Pentheus. In these examples and many more across the tragic corpus, different characters become the prime conveyors of violence; they become "messengers" even if their form of narrative is not explicitly rhesis because their knowledge and relation to their messages' content grant them the ability to speak and disclose information to an audience. Therefore, the figure of the tragic messenger cannot be exclusively defined by either his title or by the kind of narration he uses.

Considering the above in relation to my discussion of the *locus*, it is now possible to see that not only is the *locus* presented by a variety of "messengers" but it is also narrated using a variety of methods which exhibit their own form of authoritativeness. Consequently, it is useful to organize my discussion of narration in broad categories which I can then break down and analyze. Since the *locus* begins and ends with a messenger, it makes the most sense to form the basis of my categorization around this figure. On the whole, there are three messenger types: the

heraldic messenger,<sup>28</sup> the chorus and the perpetrator/victimizer. Each approaches narration according to the role he plays in the *locus*, so one can expect to see certain narratives appearing with certain messengers. Next, because the heraldic messenger is most often associated with “the truth,” I can begin the classification of messengers with this character and take note of subsequent messengers according to their ability to relate “truthful” events. This ordering is important because it helps me elucidate not only how narrative has developed from epic to tragedy but also how the varying levels of credibility can affect the narratives of each messenger. Altogether, this schema enables me to elucidate the most important aspects of narrative in a *locus*, and this analysis of narration, in turn, helps me explain why other aspects of tragedy pertain to the *locus*.

As the designated reporter of “facts,” the role and narration of the heraldic messenger is very much akin to that of an epic narrator. Like the epic narrator, the heraldic messenger is responsible for a narrative that brings the audience into close imaginative contact with the details of a violent event. This figure’s narration illustrates not only clarity of view but flexibility of discourse. Just as the epic narrator moves within a *locus* and takes on the point of view of the people he is describing, the heraldic messenger also maintains command over the perspectives presented to the audience. The heraldic messenger maneuvers through and around a scene freely, to the point that he or she may emphasize and de-emphasize his or her role in the action at will.<sup>29</sup> As such, this figure can extrude details, emotions, thoughts and the like from any and all

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<sup>28</sup> From this point, I refer to characters who are explicitly labeled as heralds/messengers with either the term “heraldic messenger” or by their name, if provided. Under this term, I also include minor characters whose sole purpose in the tragedy is to relay an account of violence. By “minor characters” I mean those figures who deliver their message and immediately leave the stage and are never heard from again. In all other instances, the terms “messenger,” “narrator” and the like are generally used to designate characters who narrate the *locus*. For an analysis showing the particular importance of the “herald” in relation to the epic rhapsode, see Barrett (2002), 56-69.

<sup>29</sup> Barrett (2002), 37. According to Barrett, the messenger has “omnipresence” and “nonpresence.” The messenger is able to minimize or even remove himself from a scene, and for this reason, he has ultimate control of his perspective of events within the play.

characters in a scene. The narrative the heraldic messenger offers, then, is both visually and narratively multifaceted. It consists of multiple narrative codes which he or she can access and switch between at any given time.

Still, there are limits to the authority of this figure, and these limits specifically come about because of his or her relationship to the narrative itself. As stated earlier,<sup>30</sup> the epic rhapsode receives his vision from the divine inspiration of the Muses. Through them, the rhapsode is able to give listeners the impression that he has seen everything he is describing with the utmost precision. Even though the epic rhapsode acts as an intermediary figure, the *locus* he presents communicates the truth of the divine and is, therefore, incontrovertible. Alternatively, a heraldic messenger like *Hecuba's* Talthybius has no such connection to the Muses or the divine.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, he is able to deliver his message as a version of the truth because the details of his speech appear to come from actual circumstances.

Talthybius confers a detailed account of Polyxena's sacrifice (518-582) because he is present *within* the *locus*. At different points in his narrative, Talthybius emphasizes his presence in the scene—he stands near Polyxena after she is led to the top of Achilles' burial mound (λαβὼν δ' Ἀχιλλέως παῖς Πολυξένην χερὸς ἔστησ' ἐπ' ἄρκου χώματος, πέλας δ' ἐγώ, 523-524); he calls for silence when the sacrifice is about to begin (Σιγᾶτ', Ἀχαιοί, σίγα πᾶς ἔστω λεώς, σίγα σιώπα, 532-533); and he sets himself among the mourners after the sacrifice ends (νῦν τε γὰρ λέγων κακὰ τέγξω τόδ' ὄμμα πρὸς τάφῳ θ' ὅτ' ὄλλυτο, 519-520). Overall, Talthybius has a role

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. note 27.

<sup>31</sup> Barrett (2002), 44. Barrett does not view the herald's lack of divine access as an issue. Instead, he argues that the messenger, while formally echoing the epic narrator, makes his participation in the events he is reporting a means of making himself an analog to the Muses. This gives his report authority and the appearance of truth. On pages 57-60, Barrett also explains that the figure gains privilege by presenting himself as one who reports on behalf of another with greater authority which, again, is comparable to the way the epic narrator presents himself as an emissary of the Muses. There is validity in this line of argumentation, but it is also important to resist a full comparison of the two in order to allow for the possibility of bias or greater personal reflection within a heraldic messenger's report.

in what happens; he has seen and perhaps participated in the event itself. This is the main distinction between the epic rhapsode and the heraldic messenger—the heraldic messenger is a member and a product of the *locus*. He or she exists to be part of the *locus*' proceedings and to bring the details of the *locus* to light. After the heraldic messenger accomplishes this, there is little else for him or her to do, and he or she leaves the stage.

For this reason, the heraldic messenger must make his or her presence and his or her narrative about the *locus* as impactful as possible. While on stage, every aspect of the heraldic messenger's speech has to be calculated to evoke the fullest experience of violence. This messenger must exert full control over every detail in a scene, but more importantly, the figure must exert full control over the audience. Yet, the power which the heraldic messenger holds over listeners does not merely stem from the fact that the form of his or her message is comparable to the form of the epic rhapsode's narration. It comes from the fact that his or her message is essentially filling a cognitive gap. Because violence in tragedy is usually an act undertaken in areas unseen by the majority of the people within a tragedy, there is a conspicuous narrative, visual and temporal rift which can only be closed through the reconstructive efforts of the heraldic messenger. In other words, the heraldic messenger's report holds sway over the audience because it offers knowledge in the face of the ignorance that arises from an imperceptible violent act; it reclaims the time unaccounted for when violence is committed. Accordingly, it makes sense that the techniques the heraldic messenger typically employs in his or her narrative have specific temporal components.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Markantonatos, 13. Here, Markantonatos describes the constant temporal shifts an audience may encounter throughout a tragedy's narrative. He singles out prolepsis and analepsis in particular and states, "the use of prolepses lets the audience glimpse the outcome before they have grasped all the causal chains that lead up to it, and the use of analepses only gradually reveals a prior event, so as to tantalize the audience with reminders of their limited knowledge."

The use of analepsis, for example, allows a heraldic messenger to retrospectively construct the details of a *locus*. While this messenger shifts the timeframe of the scene backward, he or she acquires “infinite power” over the narrative since he or she can “elide, magnify, pause [or] move anywhere instantaneously.”<sup>33</sup> The heraldic messenger chooses which parts of the *locus* are most important to divulge and decides how to re-present them before the audience. It is through this method that the heraldic messenger determines where listeners focus their attention and which elements best illustrate the effects of violence. Moreover, analepsis is also what enables this character to switch between different narrative modes. In lieu of “pure” rthesis, or straightforward narration, the heraldic messenger can directly quote himself/herself, or others in the *locus*, or even recreate dialogue to add depth and nuance to the proceedings surrounding the violent event. As long as the temporal dimension of this messenger’s report is situated in the immediate past, the heraldic messenger’s narrative has the utmost flexibility and the utmost dominance over the audience because each analeptic detail introduces a semblance of stability to the chaotic void of unknown violence.<sup>34</sup> If violence, in and of itself, represents a moment of chaos, a conspicuously absent instance of it is doubly so. Analepsis, then, is not the imposition of order on the *content* of the *locus* but the establishment of order on the *form* of the *locus*’ narration.

Again, *Hecuba*’s Talthybius offers a prime example of this technique’s versatility. When he narrates Polyxena’s sacrifice, he immediately sets the scene by emphasizing the Achaean army’s position (521-522). They surround the mound of Achilles and so, they effectively

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<sup>33</sup> Goward, 20. Goward makes these statements about narration in general, but these traits are being attributed to analepsis specifically because this technique shows more versatility than the others.

<sup>34</sup> Barrett (2002), 73. As Barrett notes, the tragic messenger generally occupies an ambiguous position in that he is forced to abide by the constraints of the theater while simultaneously claiming to supersede those constraints through his narrative. His narrative, in theory, is emblematic of the narrative control, but the control is limited in timeframe and scope because of his lack of Homeric divine inspiration.

establish the frame of the *locus*' space. Within this space, Talthybius is then able to direct his listeners to focus on the interaction between Achilles' son, Neoptolemus, and Polyxena. He takes hold of her and places her atop the mound (523-524), and afterward, he orders a group of Achaean soldiers to restrain her (525-527). From here, Talthybius shifts his audience's view to the cup Neoptolemus is holding (527-529) and switches to a direct quotation of himself and the prayers Neoptolemus offers to his father (532-533 and 534-541, respectively). A few lines later, Talthybius includes the exact words of Polyxena in the moments before her death (546-552), and with the inclusion of Polyxena's words, Talthybius places supreme emphasis on her stature. He prompts his auditors to focus intently on her and the actions which follow. Thus, they receive a narratively enhanced, cognitive view of Polyxena when Talthybius describes her stripping her torso bare in preparation for her death (557-561). At this point, he augments Polyxena's status again by including another direct quotation (563-565) and noting the Achaeans' reactions immediately after her speech (566-568) and in the aftermath of her death (571-580). By recreating the events of Polyxena's sacrifice in his narration, Talthybius brings out the effects of her death so that they may be felt by all on stage and all in the audience. Through his narration, he brings nuance and depth to a scene which, on the surface, would likely evoke horror above all else.

Next, the heraldic messenger may also make use of synchronous narration and prolepsis to bolster his narrative. Synchronous narration indicates the moment when "the brief time-lapse between the offstage event taking place and its onstage narration is entirely collapsed."<sup>35</sup> That is to say, this form of narration can be generally characterized as a "blow-by-blow description"<sup>36</sup> of violence. As such, there is little time for the heraldic messenger to expand upon what he is

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<sup>35</sup> Goward, 32.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 34.

narrating because his attention is split between hearing/viewing and disclosing the deeds occurring within the *locus*.<sup>37</sup> His narration is cursory at best. Consequently, synchronous narration alone does not form the basis of a *locus*. Something else, like proximal, auditory cues, is necessary to engage the audience with this type of narrative.

To illustrate this, one can look to Sophocles' *Electra* in which Electra<sup>38</sup> describes the death of Clytemnestra as it is occurring (1398-1418). After her brother, Orestes, lures Clytemnestra into the palace, Electra is effectively standing at the edge of the *locus*, and so, she must look inside in order to relay her narrative outside to the chorus. With this in mind, Electra immediately tells the chorus that it must be quiet while she observes the actions of Orestes and his friend, Pylades (1398-1399). The dynamics of her narration here are different than those seen earlier in Talthybius' narration because Electra's narration depends on her quickly acquiring successive waves of information from within the *locus*; she herself must have time to focus on the proceedings at hand. Thus, there is a distinct pattern in Electra's narration—she supplies a simple description or comment on events (1401-1402, 1403/1404, 1406, 1409, 1411-1412, 1416, 1418), and then she waits until she hears Clytemnestra cry out (1404/1405, 1408, 1410, 1415, 1417) or she receives a response from the chorus (1403, 1407, 1413-1414). There are no extensive details on her part, only short bursts of information which relate the progression of Clytemnestra's murder. Luckily for the audience, however, Clytemnestra's shouts of terror and the chorus' comments support her narration so that the entire scene continues to offer the audience an enthralling experience of violence.

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<sup>37</sup> Goward, 33-34. Goward cites both Sophocles' and Euripides' Electras as examples of characters who use synchronous narration, while Markantonatos, 11, marks the *teichoscopia* in Euripides' *Phoenissae* as an illustration of this narrative mode.

<sup>38</sup> Even though Electra is not a heraldic messenger, her narration of Clytemnestra's death is an important instance of synchronous narration, as the note above highlights, and so, it is the example I use to explain this narrative technique.

Similarly, prolepsis tends to come into a heraldic messenger's speech as a means of reinforcement for a more substantial analeptic report. As Goward notes, "proleptic narratives create a structure of expectation."<sup>39</sup> They shift the temporal frame of reference forward in order to elucidate its outcome. In this way, the heraldic messenger provides audiences a preliminary view of the victim or results of the violent deed. This messenger brings the impending future into the anxious present and assists the audience as its method of perception transitions from aural to visual. Furthermore, the heraldic messenger's decision to employ prolepsis in conjunction with analepsis and/or synchronous narration enhances the audience's understanding of the *locus* by repeatedly presenting the same material in a variety of ways.<sup>40</sup> Violence is made potent by the increased frequency of its presentation. It becomes something recollected and experienced and also potentially anticipated as the heraldic messenger elects to modify the form of his narration.

One example of extensive analeptic narration bolstered with proleptic narration appears in the aforementioned messenger speech near the end of *Oedipus* (1237-1284 and 1286-1296). The messenger begins by giving his listeners an account of Jocasta's death (1237-1251). First, he tells the chorus that upon discovering Oedipus' true identity Jocasta rushes through the palace's antechamber and into her bedroom (1241-1243). Once there, Jocasta establishes the site of the *locus*—it is in this location that she will commit suicide and Oedipus will subsequently mutilate himself. Within this space, the messenger also directs his listeners to regard the marriage bed (1242-1243). This object has particular importance within the *locus* because, as the messenger notes, it is the object which prompts Jocasta to recall Laius' death and the fact that she has had

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<sup>39</sup> Goward, 35.

<sup>40</sup> Markantonatos, 14. Here, Markantonatos states, "The very act of filtering events through multiple levels of editorial screening allows the mind to make connections between different narrative moments, to see past, present and future as a chain of events with strong causal connections between each link. Story-lines gain meaning by their repetition, which is both a recall of an earlier moment and a significant variation of it. The specific timing of the insertion is often of particular importance, given that the plot moves forward and thus our appreciation of scenic action changes accordingly, sometimes to a considerable degree."



children with their own son (1244-1247). From here, the messenger delves deeper into Jocasta's shame by describing how Jocasta now sees her marriage bed in twofold terms, namely the place where she has given birth to "a husband from a husband and children from her child" (1250).

After Jocasta's statement, the messenger turns his audience's attention away from her and toward Oedipus (1251-1284). With Oedipus at the center of the proceedings, the messenger describes the ferocity with which Oedipus rushes into the *locus* and sorrow he feels when he finds Jocasta hanging from a noose (1260-1266). Next, the messenger details Oedipus' actions. He tells his listeners that after Oedipus lays out Jocasta's corpse, he takes the brooches from her gown and suddenly drives them into his own eyes (1266-1270). As Oedipus does this, the messenger enhances the gore of the imagery by comparing the blood streaming from Oedipus' eyes to hail (1275-1278). Lastly, the messenger ends his analeptic narration by giving his listeners an overarching statement about the events which have occurred and the mournfulness of the scene which Oedipus and Jocasta have created (1279-1284). Altogether, then, the messenger's analeptic narration enables his auditors to gain insight into the intense shame and guilt which Jocasta and Oedipus feel. It allows them to experience the characters' acts of violence in an intimately visceral way.

Before Oedipus returns to the stage, the messenger switches to proleptic narration in order to give the chorus and the audience a preliminary glimpse of the blinded man (1286-1296). He explicitly tells his listeners that Oedipus wishes to put himself on display so they can see him as he truly is—the killer of his parents (1287-1288). Moreover, he explains that Oedipus wants to go into exile but requires assistance to reach the area of the stage (1292-1293). In this statement, the messenger asks listeners to ready themselves for the gruesome sight of Oedipus. He prompts listeners to realize that the mental image of Oedipus they have constructed during his analeptic

narration and have prepared for through his proleptic narration is about to confront the actual image of Oedipus as he steps back on the stage. With this juxtaposition, the messenger heightens the effects of violence because he melds the imaginative and physical aspects of the performance together. He makes narrative into something with clearly tangible results.

The examples above notwithstanding, the adoption of one type of narration or another is not exclusive to the heraldic messenger, but before I continue to describe the traits of narration under the chorus and others, it is important to acknowledge two other messenger types which can be classified as subsets of the heraldic messenger, namely the kin messenger<sup>41</sup> and the supernatural messenger. Both of these figures are particularly effective narrators because their discourse is augmented by their distinct relation to others. Supernatural messengers, for instance, are divine figures or ghosts who often act as either support or foils for the primary characters in a tragedy. Their appearance is typically limited to the beginnings or endings of plays, and their words usually consist of the tragedy's prologue or epilogue.<sup>42</sup> Despite these limitations, their status as non-mortal characters means they face little in the way of narrative restrictions because their purview extends far beyond the immediate past or future. Supernatural messengers have unlimited access to background events related to the plot of the tragedy, and their view of the future is exceedingly accurate because what they relate is frequently something they themselves

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<sup>41</sup> The term "kin messenger" is taken from Goward, 31, which defines these figures specifically by their connections to major characters and by their ability to remain on stage after they have given their description of events.

<sup>42</sup> Because gods and ghosts are less likely to be narrators, these characters are categorized as narratively subordinate to figures like the heraldic messenger. Furthermore, because prologues and epilogues are more often associated with the work of Euripides (cf. Goward, 122-123), it is important to label these forms of narration separately from the standard analeptic and proleptic forms of narration. Having said this, there are very few supernatural narrators who specifically give an account of violence. The Trojan prince, Polydorus, in *Hecuba* is one, but as I explain later, his message does not produce a *locus*; Athena in *Ajax* is another example, and her narration represents both an account of violence and a formation of a *locus*. Hence, I elaborate on her speech further in Chapter 3 where I discuss the tragic *locus* at work.

have ordained or foreseen.<sup>43</sup> There is no doubt about the veracity of their analeptic or proleptic narration; every detail a supernatural messenger provides offers the audience a clear glimpse of what has or will happen in a scene. Therefore, a divine figure like Athena who appears at the start of *Ajax* (51-67) can appear before the audience and immediately relate the source of Ajax's madness, the actions he takes because of his mental attrition, and the things which Ajax will say when he returns the stage in a frenzied state.

A kin messenger, on the other hand, is subject to many of the same restrictions which a heraldic messenger encounters when he delivers a narrative. The temporal framework of a kin messenger's narration is confined to events which have recently occurred, and the content of his or her message is highly dependent on his or her presence within the *locus*. Yet, the standard of reliability for the kin messenger's report is not as high as the heraldic messenger's because trust in the kin messenger's speech is granted through his or her association with the characters involved in the undertakings of the *locus*. Whereas heraldic messengers are characterized by their investment in producing clear, verifiable details, the kin messenger is defined by his or her ability to produce an equally detailed account *and* by his or her engagement with the *effects* of that account. The intensity of the kin messenger's own emotional response to the *locus* is the driving factor of his or her narration.<sup>44</sup> As such, the kin messenger is, to some extent, a liminal figure—as this figure narrates, he or she occupies the role of a narrator and a narratee at almost the same time.

Hyllus in *Trachiniae* is one such example. Having just seen his father, Heracles, succumb to the effects of a poisoned robe, he appears on stage and tells the audience about the violence which has occurred against his father's herald, Lichas (749-806). In the opening parts of his

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<sup>43</sup> Goward, 149-150.

<sup>44</sup> The importance of narrative conditioned by "personal beliefs and suppositions" is explained by Markantonatos, 14-15.

narration, Hyllus details how Heracles comes by the poisoned robe and what the effects of the robe are once Heracles places it on his body (756-771). He relates the fatal meeting between his father and Lichas (772-782), and after this, Hyllus describes the grief the people around Heracles feel as they see him still in the grips of pain (783-806). As he relays all of these details to the audience, there is a sense that everything he is saying is true not only because he is present in the scene of violence but also because his relationship with his father makes him uniquely invested in portraying the intensity of Heracles' emotions. There are no doubts around Hyllus because the sincerity of his account is inextricably tied to the sincerity of his own emotional responses.

Narration through the chorus is another form of retelling through which the tragic *locus* may be offered. Overall, the chorally-narrated version of the *locus* is also similar to the epic rendering of the *locus* in the sense that these messenger figures are not present for the deeds of violence. Their account is often informed through their ability to access more general sources of information. These sources, however, do not exist as any specific entity. Unlike the epic narrator who calls upon the Muses as the ultimate source of his narration, choral messengers refer to greater mythical narratives. As a result, there is the supposition that the details reported in their *locus* are part of an established, "historical" chronicle of events.<sup>45</sup> They are details which anyone with sufficient awareness of the past can reproduce, so they are the product of shared memory—an external and readily available analepsis.<sup>46</sup> An example of this (at least in form) appears in the chorus' rendition of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia in *Agamemnon* (218-248). There, the chorus offers a narrative full of details and insights which are in no way acquired through direct means (71-75). Nevertheless, the choral messengers maintain a semblance of authority in their narrative because their account represents an "accepted" or "communal" experience of violence. It is an

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<sup>45</sup> Barrett (2004), 238-239. Cf. Lowe (2004), 276, and Barrett (2002), 53-54.

<sup>46</sup> Markantonatos, 11.

act of violence which has long-reaching consequences. Thus, it is “universally-held” narration. To be sure, this is in no way meant to imply that narrative of this sort is somehow unaffecting but rather to say that choral messengers create an impactful narrative by concentrating their efforts on the “shared” effects of violence and not on their lack of presence within the boundaries of the space.

Predictably, these messengers offer their narration in the form of choral odes. A *locus* set in this narrative mode is unique because it essentially operates on the fringes of the performance. It exists as something which is part of the storyline of the play and also something which comments upon it. In other words, even as the chorus draws the audience’s attention to details it gives in its song, the chorus also momentarily alienates the audience from its narration.<sup>47</sup> The content of these songs not only relates what the chorus is thinking but also allows the audience to re-examine the effects which the play has produced.<sup>48</sup> Just as similes and anecdotes in epic offer audience members familiar images to comprehend scenes better and just as tragic messengers modify their narrative techniques to reconstruct certain features within a *locus*, choral odes re-present the aspects of a scene—either through their content or their performance<sup>49</sup>—in a way that compels viewers to reflect on how the scene generates its effects in the first place. Looking back on the example from *Agamemnon*, one can see how the chorus’ narration of Iphigeneia’s sacrifice sets the overall context for the play and likewise how it invites the audience to consider her sacrifice in light of the violence still to come. Odes take whatever emotional impact a scene has made or whatever emotion they are evoking and use the length of the choral performance to

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<sup>47</sup> Weiner (1980), 210-211. Weiner cites Brecht’s Alienation Effect (also known as the Distancing or Estrangement Effect) to describe the role of the chorus in tragedy. In his estimation, this effect explains why certain choral odes seem to be out of place. He argues that these “interruptions” are crucial to the overall understanding of the tragedy’s plot. Hall (2004), 64-65, also discusses the alienating effects of tragedy as a whole.

<sup>48</sup> Goldhill (1986), 257.

<sup>49</sup> Weiner, 211. Weiner believes scholars should see choral odes as significant musical interludes which. If this is the case, then even a choral couplet may be part of a more extensive choral performance. In other words, the length of the ode may not reflect its importance in the text.

emphasize the intellectual underpinnings of the tragedy. They let each member of the audience contemplate the force of a scene by placing the play's emotional and rational aspects under scrutiny.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, it is important to note that even though a chorus may have knowledge about greater mythological storylines, it is nonetheless largely deficient in terms of the information it possesses under its current circumstances. Like other characters in a play, the chorus requires mobility and presence to comprehend anything outside of its locale. Unfortunately, it has neither of those things; its domain is strictly confined to the orchestra, so it can only obtain knowledge through dialogue with other characters. Hence, along with extensive choral odes, the chorus often participates in dialogic narration. In such interchanges, there is little opportunity for the audience to reflect on the information being exchanged, so instead, the focus of the narration becomes the immediate search for knowledge. When the chorus finds itself in stichomythic dialogue with another character, there is an implicit understanding that what is being said is factual—everyone involved is quickly looking to grasp the details of a scene with exact precision. As a consequence of this, the chorus may, in its fact-finding mission, be part of the construction of a *locus* even if it is not the main narrator of it. As I showed with the synchronous narration in Sophocles' *Electra* (1398-1418), this is especially true when the chorus questions the perpetrator or victim of violence.

When a messenger can portray violence he himself is committing or violence occurring against him, the audience gains access to a unique version of the *locus*. This rendition necessarily favors the viewpoint of the doer or the victim over others, but by definition, that does not prevent

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<sup>50</sup> Goldhill (1986), 257. Goldhill describes the purpose of the alienation effect by saying, "The effect of the chorus' alienation is to prevent the unrecognized working of myth's ideological power to underpin a moral and social discourse. Rather, the ideological functioning of myth is held up to view, a recognition of its use is forced into the light, its value and manipulation as a paradigm is laid open to question."

either from presenting other frames of reference. A perpetrator or a victim *can* reconstruct aspects of a *locus* which are, perhaps, missing from others' narrations, but because both are so deeply affected by the acts of violence committed within the space, their reading of events cannot be the sole source of information. Violence may bear upon a perpetrator's and a victim's emotional, physical and psychological states to the extent at which it would be difficult to trust their narration outright. The semblance of objectivity in other messengers' accounts comes from their capacity to place some kind of distance between themselves and the events they are describing. In the case of an executioner or a victim as messenger, that distance is almost wholly missing. This is why a *locus* portrayed by a messenger who has inflicted or suffered violence is likely to have another messenger type character interact with him—to provide an auxiliary or more “objective” presentation of the violent deed.

The need for a supporting messenger figure naturally implies that the narrative techniques employed by perpetrators and victims may vary greatly. They themselves may use explicitly detailed analepsis or prolepsis to clearly re-present the details they are involved in, but as I noted above, they are likely to intersperse those techniques with others to convey their current state of mind and a more comprehensive view of the *locus*. Orestes and Electra in Euripides' *Electra*, for instance, take turns detailing the steps they took to lure and then kill Clytemnestra (at different intervals between 1177-1231). While they speak to one another, the chorus includes itself in the discussion by expressing its views on what Orestes and Electra have done and asking them questions regarding the murder (1185-1189, 1201-1205, 1210-1212, 1218-1220, 1226, 1232). Therefore, this *locus* has three different narrators who, in their interaction, fill in different aspects of the scene. The role every narrator plays in the course of describing the *locus* counteracts the potential bias which could emerge if Orestes or Electra were the sole narrators of their violent

acts. Their interplay reinforces each of their messages so that the audience can be assured that it is receiving reliable information. Thus, the perpetrator or victim often verifies his or her role in a violent *locus* by combining his or her narration with that of another messenger figure.

### **Visualization: Perception and Imagination**

At the beginning of Chapter 1, I defined the *locus violentus* as, first and foremost, a “visualized, narrative space.” Up to this point, I have discussed the particularities of tragic space and narration, but I have not addressed tragedy’s visualization as such. Simply put, visualization in this genre operates similarly to the way it functions in epic—a highly detailed narrative compels audience members to construct cognitive imagery their minds’ eyes. This use of individuals’ imaginations adds depth of meaning and, so, effect because it causes the act of violence to be something evoked out of one’s own conception of the images being put forth. However, this is only half of tragedy’s form of visualization. The other half arises from the fact that tragedy itself is visual; it is a type of performance which offers audiences a spectacle in the form of the theater, stage and actors. Visualization in tragedy is, altogether, a mindful combination of “real” and “fictional” (or imagined) elements within a tragic performance. As a result, it is useful to analyze perception and imagination in conjunction with one another, and it is beneficial to examine how this pairing works in the theater, on the stage and with characters to enhance the effects of the *locus*.

The theater introduces the audience to tragedy’s first level of visualization because it is inherently liminal.<sup>51</sup> It makes itself part of the tangible, surrounding landscape and yet separates

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<sup>51</sup> Rehm (2002), 10-11. As Rehm notes, “theatrical space demands *presence*” (emphasis his). He asserts that the stage’s presence is indispensable because it allows the “imagination and creativity [to] merge with [the] unshakeable (and often brutal) realities of theatrical production.” Because of this, *mimesis* in tragedy is not imitation but rather, performance as enactment or reenactment.



itself by emphasizing through narrative the artifice of what it presents within its boundaries. That is to say, even as it marks itself as a real-world space,<sup>52</sup> the theater is also a site of a tragedy's artificial reality, of an area which requires a different sort of interaction.<sup>53</sup> This point is evident in the very name of the theater. The *theatron* is, above all, an area in which one uses sight as a means for understanding. But the role of sight is not limited to what it informs viewers about the fundamental characteristics of a play (the aforementioned settings and characters). In their presentation, the optics of the theater also create a type of "iconographic language" which audience members are able to evaluate and interpret.<sup>54</sup> This language appears out of the aspects of the narrative which the actors and audience actively produce to support the performance. For example, despite having no movable parts or changeable features, the images on the surface of the *skene* can vary with the progression of the play's narrative so that one painting can stand in for multiple locales.<sup>55</sup> The theater and the scene painting work together with narration to form a space which is intrinsically concerned with a persistent "shifting of realities."<sup>56</sup> As Rehm states:

Above all the tragic playwrights were aware of the shifting relationship between the characters on stage and the audience, manipulating with artistry (and an admirable willingness to experiment) the spectators' perspective on, and commitment to, the action. They constructed their tragedies so as to implicate the audience emotionally and intellectually, consciously and unconsciously, not only in the story but in the very process of the

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<sup>52</sup> Rehm (1992), 33. Here, Rehm emphasizes the fact that the "early theater was conceived more as a space than as a building." He makes the statement to counter the idea of a fixed building for performances, but the statement seems to work more for his other discussion about the overall delineation of performative spaces. These spaces are discussed shortly, but suffice it to say, these demarcations are crucial for the development of the tragic *locus violentus*.

<sup>53</sup> Hall (2004), 68. Here, Hall briefly examines the phenomenology of the theater and its relationship to "truth"/"actuality."

<sup>54</sup> Zeitlin (1994), 140-141. Cf. Goldhill (2000), in particular pages 169-171 on the importance of evaluation through sight. Thumiger (2013) is also important in this respect.

<sup>55</sup> Rehm (1992), 37. Rehm uses Aeschylus' *Eumenides* as an example of one play which employs an imagined shift of location. According to him, there is no change in the actual scenery seen on stage when the tragedy finally moves to the courtroom setting in Athens.

<sup>56</sup> Lynch (1980), 21-22. Cf. Goward, 9.

drama.<sup>57</sup>

Moreover, the visual dynamism of the theater and the stage possesses a temporal dimension to it as well. In the course of a performance, there is an unspoken acknowledgement that what the actors portray and what the audience is seeing is a representation of the past—it is both something “made to seem present” and something which “cannot possibly be there since [it belongs] somewhere else, to an invisible beyond.”<sup>58</sup> The viewers of a tragic performance are able to inhabit a seemingly “real” space constructed by the site of the theater and the frame of the stage, and they can share in the experience of the events depicted before them, but they can never convince themselves that they are truly a part of it.<sup>59</sup> Tragedy consequently deals with a “consciousness of fiction,”<sup>60</sup> with its own version of “epic distance.” In Chapter 1, epic distance was the concept which described the inherent pull of the Homeric narrative away from the timeframe of its performance; it was the concept which kept listeners from fully identifying with the heroic figures in the story. Visualization, however, counteracted the effects of epic distancing by enabling listeners to inhibit the more incredible aspects of the narrative. Here, visualization works in much the same way: the audience’s capacity not only to literally see but also to imagine certain features of a performance helps it curb the distancing effect of the theater and the stage (and choral odes no less).<sup>61</sup> Even as parts of the performance temporally, visually and/or

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<sup>57</sup> Rehm (1992), 45.

<sup>58</sup> Kottman (2003), 93. This quote, cited by Kottman, is taken from page 243 of the 1990 work by Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy*. It specifically refers the implicit fictionality of tragic characters, but it can be extended to describe tragedy as a whole. In fact, Kottman goes on to do just that later on the same page.

<sup>59</sup> Padel (1992), 353-354.

<sup>60</sup> Kottman, 93. This is another Vernant and Vidal-Naquet quote cited by Kottman. Cf. Brown (2007), 3-4. Brown also has a conception of tragedy’s “fictionality,” but her idea focuses on the genre’s “intertextual or metatheatrical self-consciousness.” It is tragedy’s direct acknowledgment of the fact that it exists within a narrative continuum and of the fact that it is an interpretation of and reaction to the precedent set by myth and epic.

<sup>61</sup> Hall (2004), 77-78. Like others, Hall emphasizes the idea of a “virtual past,” but she also discusses this concept in terms of a “virtual future.” She introduces this additional temporal feature to account for tragedy’s “constant orientation towards *what will happen next*” (emphasis hers). The “virtual future” is something which also seems to be essentially encapsulated by the presence of the *locus*. Everything in a tragedy works toward the

narratologically draw away from the audience, visualization and narrative maintain the audience's grip on the events of the play. Thus, in the midst of a performance, audience members occupy a intermediate position in which they both engage and contend with the actual and representational aspects of a tragedy.<sup>62</sup>

Another characteristic of the genre which contributes to the continuous vacillation of visualized attributes is the actor himself. Actors, of course, are individuals of flesh-and-blood whom the audience recognizes as such. Likewise, the audience understands that the roles actors play have little to no relation to whom they actually are—they may play generals, slaves or women without ever having some such experience. Regardless of who actors are outside of a theatrical setting, their entrance into the theater immediately signals their readiness to reformulate the interaction they have among themselves and with those who are their patrons. More specifically, their presence in a performative space marks their giving over to a performative affectation, and this affectation has no better emblem than the tragic mask.

As soon as actors obscure their personal features behind a mask, they willingly abandon their own individual characteristics and submit their identities to the ever-fluctuating dynamic of the theater. They are an amalgamation of their own self and the self they embody.<sup>63</sup> In this way, the mask is analogous to the *skene*; both mark the layer of artifice before the real environment/individual, and both compel the audience to place concerted focus on their features.<sup>64</sup> Plainly stated, they are representative of the inherent push and pull within the

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culmination of a largely violent act, and as such, the virtual aspect of “what will happen next” is taken up by the visualization of the execution of violence.

<sup>62</sup> Zeitlin, 152.

<sup>63</sup> Bergmann (1999), 19.

<sup>64</sup> Meineck (2011), 121. Cf. Hart et. al. (2003), 137. The comparison between the mask and the *skene* comes from Sir Peter Hall, who says “If you think about it, the Greek stage, and this is very important evidence, the Greek stage is itself a mask.”

tragedy's presentation and performance; they are cognitive barriers which simultaneously encourage and hinder the audience's efforts to understand and interact with them.

Still, the mask takes advantage of the dual aspects of visualization to a greater degree.<sup>65</sup> Since the features of a mask give the *appearance* of a human face, there is an instantaneous effort by the audience to connect with it and decipher its expressions.<sup>66</sup> In spite of the fact that the mask conceals an actor's real traits, viewers nonetheless strive to project an imagined, recognizable mien onto its surface.<sup>67</sup> As much as the unwavering gaze and the artifice of the mask may repel, the sight of it and the accompanying movements and gestures<sup>68</sup> cannot help but coalesce memory and the grand cavalcade of human interaction to provide spectators with a stockpile of cognitive and emotional responses which they can call upon during a performance.<sup>69</sup> This process is assisted further by the actors' general orientation and appearance on stage. While they are performing, actors typically face outward rather than face one another. This is done for the sake of audibility, but it also has the added benefit of establishing a visual bond between the characters on stage and the people in the audience. There is a reflexive, reciprocal gaze—an understanding of viewing and simultaneously being viewed—which helps actors communicate

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<sup>65</sup> Meineck (2011), 132-134. On page 134, Meineck cites E.H. Gombrich who studies the connection between sight and psychological interpretation. He believes people “generally take in the mask before [they] notice the face.” There is more concern with making sure that a mask is depicting a human being than with understanding who is beneath the mask's surface.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 148. Here, Meineck describes Kuleshov's experiment, a study which attempts to show how context and setting affect the interpretation of human expressions. The results of the experiment show that people are naturally predisposed to assigning value to a person's face. They work to give a face an expression to fit the context they are shown. When a mask is used, the effect is even stronger. Viewers endeavor to fill in the gaps left by the mask's ambiguous features in order to grant it an expression.

<sup>67</sup> Rehm (1992), 41.

<sup>68</sup> Meineck (2011), 150-151. Cf. Rehm (1992), 40-41.

<sup>69</sup> Meineck (2011), 123. Cf. Hart et. al., 137, where Sir Hall also writes about the mask's ability to temper excessive emotion. He believes that it would be easier for an actor to “go the whole hog” and overact if he were to portray moments of extreme emotion without a mask. A mask is “a governance” which does not emote automatically. It is a token which requires concentration to create its effects, and the time it takes to concentrate moderates the potential for superabundant responses from the audience.

the emotional aspects of the narrative to their audience more effectively.<sup>70</sup> What is more, the characters which the actors make manifest possess many of the same features as their classical audiences; regardless of their mythological stature, these figures become participants in the community in front of them.<sup>71</sup> As Padel states, the separation between the actors and the audience “lies in architecture and role...not...in profession and experience.”<sup>72</sup> Therefore, visualization, as it currently stands, represents tragedy’s continual investment in the audience’s engagement with its characters and their circumstances. This changes, however, when a *locus* comes into play.

When an act of violence becomes the central aspect of a performance, the reciprocal gaze between actors and spectators is often lost because, as previously noted, violence tends to take place off stage. In its stead is a return to the epic configuration of visualization, namely cognitive imagery evoked through memory and narration. The memory used by the audience in the face of a *locus*, though, is not wholly based in the experiences of each individual viewer. It emerges from the experience of seeing the characters on stage and maintaining this image as they move to different, unseen areas. In other words, visualization within the *locus* utilizes memory not just in terms of audience members’ long-held, personal experiences but rather, in terms of their recent exposure to the characters’ immediate presence. Visualization in the *locus* is a matter of

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<sup>70</sup> Meineck (2011), 140-141.

<sup>71</sup> Rehm (1992), 65-66. In his discussion of tragic costuming, Rehm states that actors wore “modern dress.” Ritual dress and props were more consistent with “contemporary” Greek society than with the heroic communities represented in epic. Furthermore, classic tragedians did not attempt to modify the speech of the actor(s) to reflect a more archaic version of the Greek language. Cf. Davidson (2005), 10-11, for another take on the unique connection tragedy establishes with its audience. Cf. Goldhill (2000), 167 and 172-175. Similarly, Revermann (2006), 111-112, makes a point about the ancient Greek audience’s involvement and investment in a dramatic production. According to him, many Athenians would have participated in, at least, a tragic chorus. The techniques Athenians would have learned in such a role (and perhaps others) would have made them more attune to the intricacies of gesture, intonation and the like. Therefore, their experience would make them “connoisseurs” of tragedy, people who would demand more from a performance than the average ancient theatergoer.

<sup>72</sup> Padel, 338.

reimagining the tragic figures' immanent corporeality.<sup>73</sup> It is the endeavor to retain the visual and spatial link instituted by the performance. Although the characters are relatively close even after they have moved off the stage, the audience's connection to them continues to be strained because there is no guarantee that it will be able to deduce what is happening to the characters or even that the characters will return after the *locus* produces its effects. Alongside the notion that the figures of tragedy are present before the audience, there has also been the potentiality of absence, either through a *locus* or by the needs of the story.<sup>74</sup> Tangible presence has been subtly laying bare the prospect of conspicuous absence.

Consequently, within the span of a performance there is a constant undercurrent of destruction or, perhaps, destabilization which cannot help but be augmented by the execution of a violent act in a *locus*. Violence, as a continual possibility within a tragedy, threatens sight while at the same time making it a primary concern while it is still a viable avenue for understanding. It implicitly emphasizes the need for spectators to engage more fully in the act of seeing because it is persistently on the verge of eliminating imagery entirely. Thus, the *locus* sustains the "ebb and flow" present in the tragic performance to a slightly different degree. Like the theater, stage and actors can pull away or draw in an audience, the *locus* pulls away visually only to draw listeners in narratively and imaginatively. The cognitive lure of the *locus* casts the audience into the "optical unconscious,"<sup>75</sup> into a realm which expands the possibilities of what may occur when a character intends to commit violence.<sup>76</sup> For the time that characters are absent

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<sup>73</sup> Hall (2004), 70.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 76.

<sup>75</sup> Benjamin (1999), 263. The concept of the "optical unconscious" describes a viewer's need to "step out" of the range of an image in order to glean meaning and effect from it. In essence, this is precisely what the *locus* affords the audience. The *locus* separates it from the images it is accustomed to seeing and compels it to reconsider those images at a distance. As the audience does so, visualization helps it endow the cognitive images it recreates with a new sense of meaning.

<sup>76</sup> Barthes (2010), 57-59. Similar to Benjamin, Barthes sees a viewer's disengagement from an image as an opportunity to enhance its overall effects. This augmentation, however, comes about through what he calls a

from view, the audience is free (or even condemned)<sup>77</sup> to envision the potential horrors occurring within the *locus*. Until a messenger appears to tether the *locus* with his narrative, it exists in a “subtle beyond”<sup>78</sup> which compels and challenges the audience to confront violence’s manifold forms. This is why the messenger can only impose a sense of order on form of the *locus* and not on the content of it—the relative unknowability of violence allows it to remain unhindered in the imagination of the audience.

### Suspense

Throughout the previous sections, I have made passing references to the “tensions” a tragedy may derive from different parts of its performance. In many instances, these pressures or conflicts come from the personal dynamics between characters, but they also materialize because of tragedy’s particular concern with the transmission of knowledge.<sup>79</sup> As I stated before, there are several sources of information within the plot of a play. Some of these are “historical” and laid within the mythical foundation of the play’s storyline, while others arise out of the proceedings of the tragedy’s plot. Likewise, from the audience’s standpoint, the general understanding of myth brings its own sense of knowledge and familiarity even before a play begins. In all, there is a belief that there are aspects of a plot which are readily available from the outset, but as I have argued, violence and the *locus* make trust in this belief extremely tenuous. Violence encased within a *locus* is something which removes the security of sight; it is a

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*punctum*. A *punctum* is a particular detail which affects a viewer’s once it is out of his line of sight. This detail arrests the interest of the viewer and effectively creates “a blind field” which the viewer fills in through the imaginative process.

<sup>77</sup> Hall (2007), 19. Hall discusses the representation of suffering in tragedy and mentions the fact that the “very process of staging agony as aesthetic spectacle must in a sense be abusive.” There is an inherent mixture of agony and desire brought forth before an audience which it must contend with as it tries to comprehend the suffering it sees on stage.

<sup>78</sup> Barthes, 59. Cf. Hall (2007), 27.

<sup>79</sup> Goward, 13. Cf. Lowe (2000), loc. 2593.

combination which juxtaposes the known with the unknown. And therefore, it is something which naturally develops and then nurtures a feeling of suspense.

Before I delve into the details of suspense through violence and the *locus*, it is necessary to examine how tragedy can construct an overarching feeling of suspense in its plot. Overall, tragedy's preoccupation with knowledge and its need to create suspense out of that fixation is not altogether different from epic. Both genres benefit from the conflict generated when information is withheld from either its audience or its central characters. What *does* separate the tragic version of the notion from its epic forebear is the degree to which tragedy is willing to transform what is known about the information it presents. From the beginning, the visibility of the play and the plurality of narrators make tragedy seem immediately knowable. The moment an audience, a character or a chorus enters the space of the theater, they are sensorially bombarded—there are things to see and so, understand at every turn.<sup>80</sup> Yet, once dialogue becomes part of the performance, things have the potential to be less straightforward because social dynamics and other considerations begin to elucidate things which cannot be gleaned directly from sight. The quantitative elements of the performance cannot fully account for the qualitative attributes of the plot. There are the aforementioned “transformations” of larger myths to consider, and these cast any preconceived knowledge about his work immediately into doubt.<sup>81</sup> For example, Polydorus appears as one of Achilles' many victims in the *Iliad*, but Euripides' version of him in *Hecuba* removes him completely from the field of battle and instead places him in Thrace; Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* and Sophocles' *Electra* present Electra as the youthful, unmarried avenger of her father, while Euripides' version of her in his own *Electra* emphasizes the fact that she is married to a peasant, and so, the dynamics of her vengeance are

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<sup>80</sup> Thumiger, 223.

<sup>81</sup> Flint, Jr. (1922), 5-6.



different. These seemingly small changes produce an opening element of suspense in the tragedians' plays because the audience is suddenly cognizant of the fact that these may be the first of many modifications instituted by the tragic poet. At once, the audience loses confidence in the details offered by sight and precedent set by epic, and the tragic narrative becomes something new and potentially more horrifying as the possibilities for the plot expand. Moreover, this preceding instance of suspense sets off a chain reaction of effect in the sense that this scene will start to affect subsequent moments of suspense.

With or without changes to the details of a plot, there are other techniques which take advantage of the *locus* to stimulate feelings of suspense. One of the most effective techniques uses an extrascenic or distanced *locus* to highlight absence and promote silence. The deliberate decision to remove violence from the main action on the stage sets violence in a unique position because, in the time of its execution, it appears to exist in the interstitial spaces of the narrative. There is little to ascertain. Save for perhaps the identity of the perpetrator and the victim, there is no sure way to know anything about the violent act, and furthermore, in the absence of screams or cries for help, one cannot even be certain that violence is happening. Indeed, everything that makes epic violence compelling—a graphically thorough version of synchronically-occurring events—is absent when violence takes on this form, and all who lie outside of the space of violence are in almost complete ignorance. Thus, the acknowledgment of the *locus*' presence ironically heightens feelings of suspense by making conspicuous what is lacking; the delineation of space develops suspense through the purposeful formation of a physical and cognitive barrier.

Additionally, the messenger of a *locus* himself may act as the source of explicit silence. Any character who knowingly withholds speech from others presents another form of tragic suspense and is cause for concern. A refusal to speak is a refusal to participate, and this person's

willing resistance to communication is ultimately disconcerting because he or she is aggressively denying others knowledge.<sup>82</sup> Non-activity marks the silent character as a non-entity, as a person with unrecognizable motivations, and so this character becomes an intense conveyor of suspense, especially if he or she is a figure known to have a particular level of knowledge.

Cassandra in *Agamemnon*, for instance, is a character endowed with prophetic power. There is an acknowledgment, at least among the audience, that she possesses insight into events to come. As such, she is an ideal candidate for a messenger of Agamemnon's murder because she can foretell what violence will occur within the palace walls. Owing to her position as a captive and a woman standing among a group of men, however, she is completely silent.<sup>83</sup> Hence, everyone on stage is left to speculate about what she knows or is able to tell (1050-1052 and 1062-1063). While she remains motionless and taciturn, Cassandra is an unknown quantity and an undisputable figure of suspense. It is not until she starts to speak (1072) that some of the tension surrounding her presence can be alleviated.

Outside of absence and the silence of space and tragic characters, suspense can also emerge from narrative delays. Earlier in the discussion of Talthybius' speech in *Hecuba* (518-582), I examined how a messenger can play with the temporality of his narrative to fill in the gaps in an unseen scene of violence, but I have not discussed how this ability can intentionally be used to formulate a sense of anticipation and suspense. Altogether, the capacity to move narrative backwards and forwards in time and to engage in dialogic narration discloses a character's scope of knowledge. The chorus, as I illustrated in the examination of the choral ode at the start of *Agamemnon* (218-248), tends to offer external prolepsis recalling well-established events from a tragedy's past, while other messenger figures, such as the messenger appearing

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<sup>82</sup> Goldhill (2007), 94-95. Goldhill cites Cassandra and Ajax as two characters who are notable for their "marked" silences.

<sup>83</sup> Cassandra enters the play at line 782, and characters specifically note her silence during lines 1035-1071.

near the end of *Oedipus* (1237-1284 and 1286-1296), usually confer more immediate analeptic and proleptic sources of information. Regardless of the extent of a message's narrative chronology, each narrator offers glimpses of an event which do not necessarily assist the development of the current situation in the play.<sup>84</sup> Under such circumstances, the plot stalls and the audience can only gather the information offered without any real sense of how that information should be applied. Like characters confronting a reticent figure, an audience may only wonder and anticipate what will come next; until one of the characters offers context to help organize the material it possesses, the audience lingers and is forced to deal with its feelings of apprehension and anticipation.<sup>85</sup> Any preemptive attempt at description to mitigate suspense is merely a projection of knowledge because the audience's information consists of scraps of the past and glances of the present.

Returning to *Hecuba's* Talthybius, it is possible to see how the details in his narration contribute to the feelings of suspense within the *locus*. In his account (518-582), Talthybius delays the progression of Polyxena's sacrifice largely through the inclusion of direct quotation. When he mentions his call for the army to be silent (532-533), he effectively pauses the imaginative reconstruction of the *locus*. The audience experiences a slight delay as it takes the time to imagine the scene's violence. Furthermore, as he relays Neoptolemus' prayer to his father (534-541), he evokes the image of Polyxena's blood (536-537) without actually describing her death. In this way, the audience is given the opportunity to consider the prospect of violence and death even further. The effects of violence and death accumulate as Talthybius continues to delay the advancement of the scene. Finally, when the moment of Polyxena's sacrifice *does*

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<sup>84</sup> Goward, 60-61. On these pages, Goward discusses suspense as a trait of Aeschylean narrative, but she also states that many of Aeschylus' techniques provide the basis for the other tragedians' tendencies, either as they adopt Aeschylus' methods or as they modify them.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 87-88.

arrive (544-546), Talthybius adds Polyxena's statements to her sacrificers (547-552 and 563-565). Again, the audience seems to reach the *locus*' climax, and again, Talthybius redirects the audience's cognitive efforts to a character's words. He places the climax just out of reach which, ironically, only serves to enhance the climax's effects once it finally comes to pass.

Hence, delay is one of the most effective sources of suspense because it is inextricably tied to the act of narration which is the primary attribute of the *locus*. As part of narrative, delay extends the time it takes to reach the act of violence; it pressures the audience to coexist with and dwell on the prospect of murder, mutilation and the like. While a messenger employs narrative delays, he extends the possibilities for the kinds of violence which can occur. Suspense through delay makes violence something with visceral effects; it transforms it from an idea existing on the fringes of audience's consciousness into a concept which confronts listeners swiftly and wholeheartedly.

### **The Supplementary Attributes of the Tragic *Locus Violentus***

With each subsequent section, I have marked the development of the tragic *locus violentus*. No tragic *locus* can exist without all of these characteristics because, as the investigation above shows, they are all interrelated. One trait invariably relies on another to bolster the effects of the *locus*. The features which follow, however, are notable because they may be utilized in support of these essential features. Similes and metaphors, for example, may appear for the sake of heightening the impact of narration and suspense, whereas the presentation of a victim may affect the notion of space and visualization. To be sure, this is not to say that these are the only ways these subordinate features are associated with essential characteristics

but rather, to say that these supplementary characteristics have multiple avenues for exerting their influence upon the *locus*.

### Similes and Metaphor

While similes and metaphors are not unique to tragedy, their application in the genre *is* different from that in epic. As I discussed in Chapter 1, epic similes were of particular importance because they mitigated or amplified not only the scale of the poem but the intensity of the war imagery contained therein. In addition, Homeric similes had the potential to be extensive, often being as lengthy as the event with which they were being juxtaposed. Metaphors, too, were present, but their usage was not as pervasive.<sup>86</sup> Despite that precedent, in the movement to tragedy, and especially in the movement away from the works of Aeschylus, the inverse seems to be true—similes lose their expansiveness, but the frequency of metaphors increases.<sup>87</sup> Instead of introducing and then expanding similes' imagery, tragedians appear to limit their implementation so that they may consist of as little as a single line. As a result of this tendency, similes may seem ornamental or even decorative in the larger narrative.<sup>88</sup> Yet, what prevents tragic similes from being inconsequential additions to a scene is the continued potency of the comparisons and contrasts they illustrate and the fact that their employment alongside metaphors is part of the larger task of visualization characteristic to tragedy. Both figures of

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<sup>86</sup> Kirby (1997), 521-522. Kirby notes that similes can be considered a “species of the genus metaphor,” which is to say that similes are essentially a subset of the larger concept of metaphor. Nevertheless, Kirby also speaks of metaphors as their own technique which may appear alongside a separate simile. In such cases, metaphors are “characteristically brief” while similes tend to be “elaborated at leisure.”

<sup>87</sup> Rutherford (2012), 120-121. Here, Rutherford discusses the tragedians' natural tendency to insert pictorial language into their narratives and their overall preference for metaphor over similes. He also goes on to describe the general delineation between the two concepts and determines that, regardless of the differences in their forms, the tragedians' ability to “accumulate” or “mix” metaphors and similes grants tragedy a flexibility of imagery and narrative coherence.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 125. Cf. Barlow (2008), 96-97. On these pages, Barlow lays out some scholars' criticism of Euripides' use of similes and metaphors. According to them, Euripides is “uninspired” and does not employ similes and metaphors in an “organic” manner like the other two tragedians do. Thus, these techniques appear as “additional ornament” in his works.

speech are involved in the process of compelling an audience to generate cognitive images out of narrative. They support the methods of understanding and interpretation established by the essential traits of tragedy, and they multiply the effects of the scene into which they are being incorporated. Hence, a *locus* containing one or more similes and metaphors becomes an intensely multivalent instance of violence because the “tenor” and “vehicle” of the scene are not only affecting each other but are also contending with the physical presence of the characters themselves.<sup>89</sup> Whatever visceral force the similes or metaphors encapsulate is magnified by the actualization of the violent deed.<sup>90</sup>

The messenger speech in Euripides’ *Medea* offers a notable example of similes and metaphors’ ability to reconstruct familiar scenarios in horrifyingly repugnant terms. As the messenger vividly relates the death of the princess, Glauce, and her father, Creon, he describes the crown Glauce is wearing as something which is suddenly able to “cast forth a wondrous stream of all-devouring fire” (θαυμαστὸν ἔει νᾶμα παμφάγου πυρός, 1187). From there, he maintains the image of a voracious, fiery poison eating away at the flesh of the young girl and adds two similes to the *locus*. The first recasts the picture of the princess’ flesh separating from her bones as “a tear of the pine” (ὥστε πεύκινον δάκρυ, 1200), and the second envisions the fatal embrace between father and daughter as “ivy [clinging to] shoots of laurel” (προσείχεθ’ ὥστε κισσὸς ἔρνεσιν δάφνης, 1213). The details presented by the messenger paint a gruesome picture of death, but the similes he attaches to these details bear none of that violence themselves. They wholly reframe the deaths of Glauce and Creon with imagery which in most contexts would

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<sup>89</sup> Rutherford, 121. As Rutherford explains, the “tenor” of an image denotes “the actual event or emotion described,” while the “vehicle” is “the comparison or illustrative image.”

<sup>90</sup> Barlow, 105. Barlow describes several scenes of intense violence and remarks that the shortness of metaphors need not affect their efficacy because “they are alive with the force of physical realism. They make the moment of horror impossible to gloss over, or ignore, or soften, with an abstract or comfortably vague circumlocution.”

seem benign and merely a feature of nature. Consequently, it is through contrast that these similes achieve their perverse effects.

By juxtaposing the natural qualities of pine and ivy with the unnatural manner of these characters' deaths, these similes make the act of imagining within the *locus* challenging and simultaneously arresting. They force the audience to deal with differentiated layers of imagery in order to better comprehend the impact and significance of violence.<sup>91</sup> At the same time, if the similes are effective because they use a different frames of reference to evoke specific responses from the audience, the metaphorical language throughout the scene affects through its ability to keep the audience entrenched in the gory attributes of the *locus*. The metaphors in the messenger's speech do not turn to secondary imagery to draw out the power of the violence taking place. Instead, they bestow a level of agency upon certain objects and details so that the power they exert in the *locus* is felt in a completely new way. The crown upon Glauce's head becomes the literal devourer of the girl and her father because metaphors are able to transform it from a beautiful object into the source of inexorable death. Thus, taken altogether, one can see that although similes and metaphors are not essential to the *locus* as a whole, the example above calls attention to the ways in which these figures of speech can augment the portrayal of violent deeds. Their presence in a *locus* is not superfluous or ornamental but rather, a potent outlet for visualization and interpretation. They are supporting features which add nuance and depth to the proceedings of a violent scene.<sup>92</sup>

### **Presentation of the Victim**

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<sup>91</sup> Rutherford, 162. In discussing the effects of similes and metaphors Rutherford explains, "there is a tendency to use metaphorical language to bring out the abnormality, even the perversity, of the events dramatised and described: what is natural and healthy in everyday life is negated, darkened, and given a strange and horrific new form."

<sup>92</sup> Barlow, 113-115.

Like similes and metaphors, the presentation of the victim is a feature of tragedy which may enhance the effects of the *locus*. Unlike similes and metaphors, however, the presentation of a victim on stage is not a direct appeal to the cognitive or imaginative faculties of the audience but a direct appeal to the “basic level of [the] corporeal being.”<sup>93</sup> It marks a return to the emphasis on immediacy and the audience members’ ability to comprehend through their sense of sight. Yet in the aftermath of the *locus*’ events, visibility is no longer the same. The figures which appeared whole and unharmed re-emerge mutilated or completely devoid of life. The integrity of the human body is compromised because of the deeds committed within the *locus*,<sup>94</sup> and similarly, the integrity and the security of the environment is lost with the re-introduction of the victim into his or her community. As such, visibility under these circumstances is not merely a matter of comprehension but also a confrontation with the sources producing mutilation or death. Viewers in the audience and on the stage, who have only recently been subjected to *imagining* horrific acts, must now come to terms with the fact that their reactions to those acts are going to be amplified by the literal *prothesis* of the details they have visualized.<sup>95</sup>

In addition to affecting the visual component of the *locus*’ outcome, the unveiling of the victim alters the spatial elements of the *locus* as well. Because the victim is likely to be brought out on an *ekkyklema*, the distinction between theatrical spaces is disturbed.<sup>96</sup> Suddenly, the interior secrecy of extrascenic or distanced space infiltrates the stage—both effectively become

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<sup>93</sup> Segal (1985), 13.

<sup>94</sup> Some scholars have argued that the emphasis on specific body parts in epic and tragic texts highlights the Greeks’ propensity for using the human body and its organs as semiotic elements. Segal (1985) and Griffith (1998), in particular, focus on Aeschylus’ use of the body to amplify the effects of certain scenes. With that in mind, one could also suggest that the verbal segmentation of the human form mirrors the physical deformation of the body once violence has occurred—even if the victim reappears without any kind of dismemberment, his body is not fully whole. On the other hand, the attempt to separate a body into its constituent parts can be resisted. Polyxena in *Hecuba*, for example, rejects the near-fetishization of her body by associating her features with her stature and promoting her presence as a person rather than an object.

<sup>95</sup> Whitehorne (1986), 59-60.

<sup>96</sup> Lowe (2000), loc. 2436.



scenic space—and whatever safety or comfort the audience could take from the separation between it and the area of violence is eliminated.<sup>97</sup> Even in instances in which the victim comes back to the stage of his or her own volition, such as Oedipus in *Oedipus* or Polymestor in *Hecuba*, the notion of disparate theatrical spaces ends. *Ekkyklema* or no, the victim extends the scope of the *locus* to include both the people on stage and those in the audience. As the culminating figure of the *locus*, this character forcefully obligates the audience to inhabit the same space. The victim prevents viewers from believing they can escape the *locus*' effects;<sup>98</sup> he or she makes them unwitting participants in the spectacle of violence. By coexisting in the same space as the victim, the audience crosses into new, interactive territory.<sup>99</sup> It connects with violence visually and spatially whereas before its engagement was defined by narrative and imaginative visualization. Hence, the presentation of the victim magnifies the audience's experience of the violent act by giving it the opportunity to be immersed more fully in the final moments of the *locus*. Although the victim's appearance before the audience is not crucial for the development of the *locus*, its inclusion in the proceedings brings greater impact to the violent deed. The execution of violence combined with corporeal evidence of its actualization can only strengthen an audience's comprehension of the *locus* as a whole.

### **The Scope of Inquiry**

Throughout the sections above, I have used a broad number of plays to delineate which attributes of tragedy pertain to the concept of the tragic *locus violentus*. For the examination of the essential characteristics of the *locus*—violence, space, narration, visualization and suspense—I looked at scenes of violence in plays like *Heracles*, *Bacchae*, *Ajax* and *Agamemnon*.

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<sup>97</sup> Meineck (2006), 456.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 457.

<sup>99</sup> Whitehorne, 65.

And in my discussion of the supplementary characteristics—similes, metaphors and the presentation of the victim—*Medea*, *Oedipus* and *Hecuba* provided points of reference. On the whole, this swath of tragedies offered examples which showed violence’s prevalence across the genre, but in order to focus the parameters for study in Chapter 3, it is now more important to return specifically to the original selection of Iliadic tragedies.<sup>100</sup> After taking the essential and supplementary characteristics of the concept into account, it is apparent that some Iliadic plays do not possess a *locus* as I have defined it. At once, *Philoctetes* and *Helen* emerge as two tragedies which can be eliminated from consideration. *Philoctetes* falls outside of the purview of the *locus* because it has no examples of physical violence. Its storyline emphasizes its namesake’s pain and suffering, but it does not chronicle an act of violence. *Helen*, too, bears no scene of violence. Instead, it examines the pain and needless suffering of those who are affected by the abduction and consequent rescue of “Helen” from Troy.

Even among plays in which clear acts of violence exist, it is possible for no *locus* to appear. The prologue of *Hecuba* (1-58), for instance, sees Polydorus give a brief synopsis of the circumstances which led to his untimely death. He discusses how he came to be in Thrace (3-20), the motives which drove Polymestor to kill him (25-27) and the current condition of his corpse (28-30), but he offers no further details in those regards. His statements are purely declarative and do not grant that audience the opportunity to construct a specific site of visualized violence. There is no tension or build up surrounding the murder of Polydorus. Rather, the information taken from the young man’s account serves to heighten the tension and suspense of subsequent scenes in the tragedy. Likewise, the climax of *Trojan Women* in which Talthybius brings news concerning the death of Astyanax to Hecuba and others (1123-1155) falls short of developing a

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<sup>100</sup> Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, Sophocles’ *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, and Euripides’ *Hecuba*, *Helen*, *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, and *Trojan Women*.

*locus* because the act itself bears no extensive details with which the audience can engage and it also lacks suspense. Astyanax is completely at the mercy of his killers, so the statement confirming his killing (1134-1135) is merely that—an announcement of his demise with nothing more to accentuate the act of violence. The bulk of the narration, visualization and suspense in the scene comes from Talthybius relating Andromache's and Neoptolemus' actions before (1126-1134) and after (1136-1144) the act of violence. The fall of Astyanax is secondary to the suffering of Andromache, and for that reason, it must also be omitted from my study. Thus, what is left after I remove *Trojan Women* and the prologue of *Hecuba* designates the group of scenes which have the characteristics to support a *locus*. They boast moments of definite, physical violence along with messengers who apply the aforementioned narrative techniques in their accounts.

The application of the *locus* is not wholly similar across this group of tragedies however. There are degrees of implementation which amount to differing levels of engagement on the part of the audience. To be sure, this variety should not have any bearing on a *locus*' impact. All of the following scenes contain substantial moments of meaningful violence. But the diversity of methods each scene employs to evoke its effects *does* create a distinction between *loci* that an audience can approach directly and with minimal cognitive effort and those whose content demands enhanced cognitive interaction. In other words, the more a *locus* variegates its essential characteristics—the more layers a *locus*' narrative, visualization and the like possess—the more invested it requires its listeners/viewers to be. So, for instance, a *locus* with more than one messenger figure has multiple points of narrative focalization not only between the messengers themselves but also among the manifold perspectives a single messenger may wish to portray within his or her own narrative. This, in turn, is likely to give this sort of *locus* greater

complexity than a *locus* which is described by only a single messenger. Furthermore, when a *locus* has several narratives or narrative techniques in play, audience members must contend with successive layers of cognitive imagery which draw them further into the details of a violent deed. When visualization is limited, either by the lack of additional messenger figures or by the lack of narrative diversity, listeners cannot delve as deeply into the intricacies of violence and the effects of that *locus* can be muted.

The spatial components of a *locus* have the potential to affect an audience's cognitive involvement as well. A *locus* set in scenic space reduces the amount of imaginative visualization needed to understand the proceedings of a scene because there is less that needs to be mentally reconstructed, while a *locus* in extrascenic or distanced space immediately places a literal and figurative barrier between an audience and the site of violence which can only be penetrated through an audience's increased cognitive participation. Moreover, a messenger's techniques for rousing suspense, the expansiveness of his metaphors and the breadth of the imagery depicted in his similes may all impose challenges which call upon audience members to interact more fully with the space and act of violence. In all, repetition and re-presentation are the keys to developing a more complex, highly nuanced version of the *locus*. With this in mind, I can lay out the affective spectrum of the tragic *locus violentus* and explain why I have determined that the scene of Ajax's suicide in *Ajax* and the scene of Polymestor's mutilation in *Hecuba* represent, respectively, the least and most cognitively engaging examples of the *locus*.

Within the selection of scenes I have to choose from, the suicide scene from *Ajax* (815-865) denotes a *locus* with depth of meaning but limited audience engagement. This *locus* owes its standing as the least imaginatively involved site of violence largely because of its spatial composition. Since this *locus* exists in scenic space, it is literally and figuratively immediate—

the violence Ajax inflicts upon himself is guileless in its execution, and its narration lacks the ambiguity and suspense of the much-debated *Trugerde* (646-692). For the most part, the formal attributes of the scene make this *locus* appear “unadorned”; the audience does not need to flex its cognitive muscles to envision the act of violence itself. Nevertheless, Ajax’s use of synchronous narration and detailed prolepsis, and Tecmessa’s analeptic depiction of the suicide (898-943) continue to demand cognitive engagement from their viewers and listeners. Ajax, in particular, requires his audience to be attentive to the details in his narration and to his methods of visualization because of the madness he suffers earlier in the play, and Tecmessa asks her audience to be attuned to the particulars of her narration and visualization as well since she gives a cursory reconstruction of Ajax’s suicide and describes the effects of his death on her life.

The scene of Iphigeneia’s sacrifice in *Iphigeneia at Aulis* (1540-1612) offers another case of a *locus* which is impactful but ultimately limited in one specific characteristic, namely its violence. As the *locus* unfolds, narration, visualization and suspense are fully at play. The messenger vividly depicts Iphigeneia being led to the site of her sacrifice (1543-1547), and he prolongs and enhances the scene by relaying the words of several characters (1552-1560, 1570-1576).<sup>101</sup> At this point, however, the course of the sacrifice changes since the goddess, Artemis, intervenes and substitutes Iphigeneia with a deer (1582-1589). The substitution of the deer is the detail which complicates the climax of the *locus* and recasts the act of violence in a different light. With this modification, the violence inflicted loses some of its potency because its effects are redirected toward a victim whose death brings order to a scene whose very importance is supposed to be defined by the abnormality of its circumstances.

Although the suicide in *Ajax* demands the least amount of visualization from the audience, the narration of Ajax’s madness by Athena and Tecmessa (51-67 and 233-244,

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<sup>101</sup> The messenger also includes the words of the seer, Calchas, after the sacrifice takes place (1591-1601).

respectively) presents a *locus* with greater imaginative engagement. In the first depiction of the *locus*, Athena reveals that she is responsible for Ajax's insanity (51-54), and so, she is able to convey precisely the thoughts and motivations driving Ajax to violence. Moreover, she establishes a feeling of suspense by calling upon Ajax to reveal the slaughter he has brought about during his fit of frenzy (71-90) and asking him to relate his own twisted version of events (91-117). Conversely, Tecmessa interprets Ajax's actions wholly through the framework of her mortal experience. This fact, in and of itself, would call for the audience to pay close attention to the details she provides so that it, too, can overcome the uncertainties she initially expresses (216-220) and learn the truth behind Ajax's crazed deeds. The earlier narration of Athena, however, eliminates some of the tension and challenge the audience would encounter as it endeavored to envision the gruesome specifics of the violence inflicted. Needless to say, Tecmessa's description *is* significant, but it also requires less cognitive effort from the audience since much of that focus has already been taken up in Athena's narration.

The scene of Polyxena's sacrifice in *Hecuba* and the deaths of Agamemnon and Cassandra in *Agamemnon* also exhibit nuanced versions of the *locus*. The *locus* of Polyxena's sacrifice (518-582) takes full advantage of the essential characteristics and uses one of the supplementary features to present a cognitively complex account of violence. The scene contains an extensive use of analeptic narration and particular methods of suspense.<sup>102</sup> Additionally, the *locus'* messenger, Talthibius, creates an increasingly vivid rendition of the sacrifice by emphasizing the exact thoughts and feelings of those present at the sacrifice (532-533, 534-538, 547-552 and 563-565). Alongside these insights, he also includes a short simile (560-561) and painstaking detail in the execution of Polyxena's sacrifice (561-570) and in its aftermath (571-

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<sup>102</sup> As I noted in the examination of suspense, Talthibius repeatedly uses narrative delays to augment the effects of the scene.

580). Unlike *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, there is no sudden reprieve from the image of the slain girl. The *locus* proceeds to its fated conclusion, and so, it is more fundamentally poignant and engaging.

Similarly, the death scene at the end of *Agamemnon* (1372-1398) emphasizes the use of detailed narrative and suspense and extends them by presenting an additional narrative as well. Before she enters the palace, the prophetess, Cassandra, develops a feeling of suspense around the *locus* by giving the chorus and audience a proleptic glimpse of death (1107-1111, 1114-1118, 1136-1139, 1149 and 1172). Additionally, Cassandra's prospective look at the *locus* is augmented by her increased use of metaphor and similes (1125-1129 and 1227-1236). Next, when Clytemnestra reappears on stage with the corpses of her victims in tow (1372), she takes up the role of messenger and finally describes in detail the violence she inflicted upon Agamemnon (1384-1392). She also reinforces the audience's imaginative engagement with the *locus* by incorporating her own set of metaphors and similes in her narration (1381-1383 and 1390-1392). Hence, both Cassandra's and Clytemnestra's narratives offer depictions of violence which contain several layers of imagery that magnify the overall force of the *locus*' impact.

The *locus* of Polymestor's mutilation in *Hecuba* (1030-1177), however, outpaces all of these tragedies and shows the opposite end of the affective cognitive spectrum because it makes extensive use of all the fundamental and supplementary qualities and, in doing so, establishes multiple layers of imagery which must be unpacked by the audience over the course of the act of violence. From the initial conversation between Agamemnon and Hecuba (953-1022) to the final unveiling of Polymestor (1056), there is suspense and continual misdirection. Even as narrators come forth to assist the audience in their endeavor to understand the violence occurring within the *locus*' extrascenic space, a more intricate combination of synchronous narration (1024-1034 and 1044-1048), prolepsis (1049-1055), analepsis (1148-1177) and similes (1172-1174) plays

upon expectations and effectively manipulates the audience's capacity to visualize and make sense of Hecuba's act of vengeance. Hence, this *locus* requires the utmost attention from its audience because knowledge of one aspect of the violent deed introduces ignorance in another, and those who lie outside of the *locus*' sphere are constantly compelled to re-examine the details they have acquired before they can finally ascertain the events within the *locus*. As such, this scene stands out as the most sophisticated form of the tragic *locus*.

Thus, taken altogether, the particularities of the suicide scene in *Ajax* and the scene of violence near the end of *Hecuba* delineate the two affective ranges of the tragic *locus violentus*. *Ajax* epitomizes the most visually and cognitively accessible form of the concept through its protagonist's suicide, while *Hecuba* marks the most visually and cognitively nuanced form of the *locus* because it emphasizes a multilayered use of the essential characteristics of the *locus* bolstered by all of the supplementary features at the *locus*' disposal. Therefore, the study of these two plays signifies the ultimate guide for analysis; they are the minimum and maximum standards by which any other tragedy, regardless of its epic affiliation, can be discussed.



## *Ajax and Hecuba: The Minimal and Maximal Cases of the Tragic Locus Violentus*

In Chapter 2, I argued that the five essential elements of the tragic *locus violentus*—a physical act of violence, a demarcated space which isolates those participating in violent deeds, and a narrative which specifically employs visualization and suspense to describe the details of violence—together with the supplementary characteristics—similes, metaphors and the presentation of the victim—find their least and most cognitively engaging applications, respectively, in the suicide scene of *Ajax* and the mutilation scene of *Hecuba*. These two scenes represent the *locus*' two extremes of effect because the former limits the imaginative involvement of the audience, while the latter constantly prompts the audience to respond to the different elements of the *locus*. Accordingly, this chapter aims to demonstrate the affective differences between these two *loci* through an in depth analysis of each scene's characteristics.

*Ajax*'s suicide scene (815-865) is the least cognitively engaging instance of the *locus* because it utilizes scenic space to portray its violent deed. The audience is able to view Ajax's suicide immediately on stage, and so, from the beginning of the scene, the effects of other characteristics appear to be mitigated. Suspense, for instance, loses its impact after Ajax enters the space of the *locus* because very little is left uncertain after Ajax explicitly chooses to commit his act of self-directed violence. Visualization, too, loses emphasis due to the ocular clarity of the scene. Yet, upon closer inspection of Ajax's and Tecmessa's narration, it becomes clear that the *locus* continues to be complex and continues to demand the audience's cognitive engagement. This is the case because their narratives use a distinctly limited form of visualization which places much of the audience's focus on Ajax and Tecmessa themselves. In both of their narrations, they go to great lengths to present and re-present their own portrayals. Thus, even

though the scenic space of this *locus* lessens the visualization of the scene as a whole, the targeted visualization which Ajax's and Tecmessa's narratives require from their audiences renders this scene a significant, though cognitively limited, instance of the *locus*.

Alternatively, *Hecuba*'s mutilation scene (1030-1177) employs the *locus*' essential characteristics alongside all of the supplementary characteristics and in doing so, sets multiple, cognitively ambiguous layers with which the audience must contend. These layers emerge at the outset of the scene because the *locus* occurs in extrascenic space, but the complexity of these layers increases because the *locus*' narration comes from three different messenger figures. The first messenger figure, the chorus, draws its narration from the suspense established early on in the tragedy (1024-1034). It envisions the violence as it is taking place, creates a preliminary view of the *locus* and bolsters its narrative's imagery with metaphorical language. The second messenger figure, Hecuba, continues the trend of suspenseful, synchronous narration after she exits the *locus*' space (1044-1048), but she also provides a corrective, proleptic view of the *locus* as she begins to describe the results of her attack on Polymestor (1049-1055). The last messenger figure and the victim of the *locus*, Polymestor, provides the audience a thorough, analeptic narrative (1148-1177). He describes his entrapment and the things he suffers as Hecuba and her band of women assault him, and similar to the chorus before him, Polymestor supplements his account with several similes (1172-1174). Thus, throughout the presentation of this *locus* there is a concerted effort to re-evaluate the details of the scene and to re-engage the audience until the act of violence and its effects are made clear. Hence, taken together, *Ajax* and *Hecuba* represent the two case studies by which the *locus*' affective scope can be illustrated—*Hecuba* highlights deepened audience interaction with the *locus* through repeated engagement with its

characteristics, whereas *Ajax* underscores limited audience involvement through its emphasis on a circumscribed form of visualization.

### ***Ajax: The Minimal Locus Violentus***

*Ajax*'s suicide scene presents the least cognitively intricate version of the *locus violentus* because it is the most visually accessible. There is no need for the audience to imagine the space of the *locus* because *Ajax*'s suicide takes place in the scenic space of the stage, and violence occurs in full view and without any visual barrier to occlude spectators' understanding of the acts taking place. The effects of suspense which arise in the course of the tragedy are also diminished once *Ajax* develops the space of the *locus* and explicitly proclaims his intent to kill himself. Still, the narratives presented by *Ajax* and *Tecmessa* are complex because they continue to employ visualization. The use of visualization, however, is distinctly limited.

As *Ajax* and *Tecmessa* employ different temporal modes in their narratives, the visualization they call upon their audiences to employ is almost wholly centered upon the portrayal of the messengers themselves. *Ajax* and *Tecmessa* depict themselves narratively as they are and as they want to be seen by others. *Tecmessa*'s re-presentation of herself comes later as she accentuates her relationship with *Ajax*, but *Ajax*'s multifaceted depiction of himself emerges at the outset of the tragedy as a result of the complicated relationship he has with the information he endeavors to convey. Plainly stated, *Ajax* begins the play as a problematic messenger figure.<sup>1</sup> There is a feeling of unpredictability and suspense around him which arises because of the madness he suffers at the hands of the goddess, *Athena*. As such, before delving

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<sup>1</sup> Most scholars have not considered the narrative issues associated with *Ajax*. I believe this has largely been the case because *Ajax* is not typically considered a messenger figure. Messengers, by and large, have only been those characters who are explicitly labeled as such. Because of this, it would be easy for most to overlook the complexities of *Ajax*'s speech.

into the *locus* of Ajax's suicide, it is useful to discuss briefly aspects of Ajax's madness and further sources of suspense and ambiguity in order to explain how and why the audience's cognitive involvement in the *locus* of Ajax's suicide largely deals with the visualization of the messengers within their own complex narratives.

### **Suspense in the Duality of Ajax's Maddened Narration and Visualization**

When the tragedy opens, Athena finds the hero, Odysseus, in the midst of searching for Ajax (1-13). Odysseus is looking for Ajax because he has heard that Ajax has gone into the Argive camps and killed several herds of cattle and sheep (18-35). Athena is fully aware of the story, so she decides to reveal what has happened in order to help Odysseus in his search (ἔγνων, Ὀδυσσεῦ, καὶ πάλαι φύλαξ ἔβην τῆ σῆ πρόθυμος εἰς ὁδὸν κυναγία, 36-37). In disclosing all of Ajax's actions, she creates a *locus* and becomes its messenger figure. She describes in detail how Ajax has slaughtered the Argive herds,<sup>2</sup> and she tells Odysseus that Ajax has decided to bring a number of his victims back to his tent, making this space the chosen site of this *locus* (τοὺς ζῶντας αὖ δεσμοῖσι συνδήσας βοῶν ποιίνας τε πάσας εἰς δόμους κομίζεται, 62-63).

Standing outside the tent, Athena also explains that Ajax's assaults on the herds are the result of madness she has inflicted upon him (ἐγὼ σφ' ἀπείργω, δυσφόρους ἐπ' ὄμασσι γνώμας βαλοῦσα τῆς ἀνηκέστου χαρᾶς, καὶ πρὸς τε ποιίνας ἐκτρέπω σύμμικτά τε λείας ἄδαστα βουκόλων φρουρήματα, 51-54). Because of this, Ajax does not see that he has slaughtered several herds of cattle and sheep. Instead, he believes he has actually killed the Argive leaders who dishonored him by granting Odysseus the prize of Achilles' armor. Horrified by the story he has heard and envisioned, Odysseus hesitates to take in the full spectacle of Ajax's insanity (74-

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<sup>2</sup> On lines 55-60, Athena states: ἐνθ' εἰσπεσὼν ἔκειρε πολύκερων φόνον κύκλω ῥακίζων· κἀδόκει μὲν ἔσθ' ὅτε δισσοῦς Ἀτρείδας αὐτόχειρ κτείνειν ἔχων, ὅτ' ἄλλοτ' ἄλλον ἐμπίτων στρατηλατῶν.

82). Athena, on the other hand, continually mocks Odysseus for his fear and makes the scene more suspenseful by telling the maddened Ajax to come out of his tent (71-90).

Once Ajax appears and revels in the death of the “Argives” in his tent (91-117), there is no doubt that his vision is completely warped and distorted; what he sees in no way corresponds to what is really there.<sup>3</sup> According to his account, Athena is a close ally, a goddess who has granted him the opportunity to strike against his enemies (ὦ χαῖρ’ Ἀθήνα, χαῖρε Διογενὲς τέκνον, ὡς εἶ παρέστης· καί σε παγχρύσοις ἐγὼ στέψω λαφύροις τῆσδε τῆς ἄγρας χάριν, 91-93), and his enemies are now corpses who will never again have the chance to rob him of his honor (ὥστ’ οὔποτ’ Αἴανθ’ οἶδ’ ἀτιμάσουσ’ ἔτι, 98). “Odysseus” stands as the last of his victims, but for him, Ajax has reserved a prolonged death through extreme torture (101-113). Overall, the *locus* established by Athena’s irrefutable narration stands in contrast to the version envisioned by its prime enactor. Both renditions of Ajax’s frenzied acts assert the brutality of the violence he inflicts, but only in the hero’s mind is the spectacle a glorious one. Consequently, the introduction of a maddened Ajax to the stage adds a layer of apprehension, of pitiful misgivings, to this *locus*’ portrayal. There is an inherent disconnect between Ajax’s words and actions which causes those who would see him to receive him with a heightened level of distrust.

Therefore, Ajax is plagued by a “double personality.” He must contend with a consciousness split between what one half does and what the other half *thinks* it does. In this state of mind, Ajax epitomizes a conception of madness which Hegel describes in the following terms:

[The insane self] is aware of the disruption of his consciousness into two mutually contradictory modes;... here we see the soul in the more or less despairing effort to overcome [its] discord... and to restore its... self-identity; the insane subject is therefore in

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<sup>3</sup> Knox (1961), note 26.

communion with himself in the negative of himself...but knows himself [only as]... a subject disrupted into two different personalities.<sup>4</sup>

While he is insane, Ajax struggles with a fractured image of himself and his deeds, and similarly, the audience cannot take any solace in anything he says. The knowledge which it acquires as it hears and sees Ajax is repeatedly undermined by the twisted version of events Ajax cannot help but convey. As a result, the very figure of Ajax represents the ambiguity which emerges when certainty collides with doubt.<sup>5</sup> He himself is an emblem of sheer suspense. That said, other characters in tragedy undoubtedly have the ability to do or say things which do not directly correspond to their intentions, and they, too, bring about feelings of suspense through their ability to mislead or be misled. Nevertheless, Ajax is notable in this respect<sup>6</sup> not only because the suspense he generates stems from his madness but also because his frenzy separates reason from intent.<sup>7</sup>

Like many tragic figures before him, Ajax wholeheartedly means either to inflict massive amounts of pain or to bring death to his victims; there is no doubt in his motives when he leaves

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<sup>4</sup> Berthold-Bond (1994), 76. Here, Berthold-Bond cites Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Mind* to elucidate tragedy's general and *Ajax*'s specific propensity for emphasizing disunity. As he also explains on page 73, the world, or more specifically, the setting of tragedy and the madness of Ajax both highlight an inherent contrast between how things "should" be and how things actually develop during the course of a play. Both underscore the concept of *peripeteia*.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 90-91. Berthold-Bond rightly notes, "[all] tragic action is fundamentally ambiguous and double in meaning" and Ajax (along with Hegel's other preferred subject, Oedipus) represents a bolstering of this duality because his presence highlights the innate conflict between the conscious and unconscious which, he argues, is one of the main sources of tragedy's predilection for portraying inversion.

<sup>6</sup> The concept of madness in Greek tragedy is surely not unique, and the thought of suspense derived from madness is not new either. Heracles, for example, has often been used by scholars (see Oyeboode (2012), 11-13, for one instance) as a figure of comparison with Ajax since the physical symptoms of his insanity and the causes and effects of his lunacy are highly similar. In spite of the resemblance between these two heroes, there is one significant difference which sets Ajax apart. What this is exactly is discussed shortly.

<sup>7</sup> Though Heracles, the Bacchae and others inflict violence while under the influence of divinely-inspired madness, Ajax—and in particular, the Sophoclean Ajax—stands alone as someone who is driven mad *after* he is already intent on killing. As Heath and Okell (2007), 365-366, explains, "the evidence is at least consistent with Ajax's plot being a Sophoclean innovation, and that would make a vitally important difference to the dynamics of the opening scene... When [Odysseus] asks Athene to explain the attacks on the flocks (42), the audience would expect the traditional explanation, that Ajax had gone mad as a consequence of his defeat in the adjudication; her unexpected reply overturns what they thought they knew... If that is right, Sophocles has sprung on his audience a more extreme and more starkly problematic Ajax than any they had previously known." Cf. Knox, 5.

his tent. But the fact that he cannot visually discern who his victims are means his deeds are literally acts of senseless violence.<sup>8</sup> They are acts without reason or logic because they are acts committed with an impaired sense of sight. Hence, the more Ajax is taken in by deceptive imagery, the more the feeling of suspense surrounding him grows and supersedes any amount of narration or visualization he can provide for his audience. The uncertainty which his skewed vision creates enhances the audience's inability to anticipate what Ajax will say or do next, and it is this sense of foreboding to which the audience is attentive while Ajax is under the influence of Athena's spell.

### **Suspense and the *Trugrede***

After he regains control of his mind and faculties (333-376), Ajax's speech continues to be the wellspring of the tragedy's feelings of apprehension and suspense. The seemingly rational shame and guilt he now feels at his violent acts cannot supplant the trepidation felt by others in his presence. Tecmessa, for instance, tells Ajax that she has intentionally kept their son away out of fear that Ajax would kill him in a fit of madness (μη σοί γέ που δύστηνος ἀντήσας θάνοι, line 533), and instead of faulting her, Ajax commends her for her perspicacity (ἐπήνεσ' ἔργον καὶ πρόνοιαν ἦν ἔθου, 536). The chorus, too, adds its own reservations about Ajax and what he is capable of doing.<sup>9</sup> Interchanges such as these all serve to condition the audience into feeling a heightened level of tension whenever Ajax is present. Because the effects of Ajax's derangement are still being felt, the appearance of stability on stage or a return to normalcy, as it were, are

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<sup>8</sup> Oyeboode, 10. As Oyeboode states, "madness is the obverse of reason" and requires other methods to make sense within the logic of a tragic storyline.

<sup>9</sup> At lines 583-591, the chorus and Tecmessa both discuss their fears as Ajax begins to express thoughts of death. Moreover, lines 545-547 depict another example of fear being immediately associated with Ajax. In this selection, Ajax speaks to his son and says that the boy will not shrink away at the sight of blood because his lineage should prevent him from feeling any fear (ταρβήσει γὰρ οὐ...εἴπερ δικαίως ἔστ' ἐμὸς τὰ πατρώθεν).

tenuous at best. Heretofore, the sole constants on which the characters in the play and the audience at large have been able to rely are violence and its presentation. Thus, violence and its prospect remain at the forefront, especially since Ajax proclaims that the violence he has committed needs to be remedied by more violence, this time against himself.

The turn to self-inflicted violence, however, is not without its own evocation of tension and suspense. Over the course of the play, characters have alluded to the appearance of Ajax, or they express thoughts which make Ajax's suicide seem immanent (596-645);<sup>10</sup> they have implied a return to mythical "tradition" which holds to the notion of Ajax's suicide being reported by a messenger (585-595).<sup>11</sup> But on all these accounts, the play overturns expectations and delays Ajax's inevitable end. This is particularly apparent in the play's so-called *Trugrede*, or Deception Speech (646-692). This speech extends the trend of ambiguous, and so, suspenseful discourse as it simultaneously points to and away from the possibility of Ajax taking his own life.<sup>12</sup>

As Gasti notes, the speech operates on two separate but complementary levels. The first, taken from the point of view of the characters within the play, appears to present the image of an enigmatic Ajax who uses language full of double meaning and cannot help but deceive his coterie into thinking that he will refrain from killing himself, while the second, seen from the perspective of an audience who is familiar with the larger myth, portrays a steadfast Ajax who

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<sup>10</sup> Heath and Okell, 367 and 369-370. On these pages, Heath and Okell mark the various points at which the expectation of Ajax or his death are subverted or delayed. Cf. Mueller (2016), 21.

<sup>11</sup> Heath and Okell, 369. As Heath and Okell rightly note, the announcement of Ajax's death by messenger is particularly expected because of the precedent set by Aeschylus' *Thracian Women*. Cf. Mueller, 16-17, which, in addition to comparing the suicide scenes in *Thracian Women* and *Ajax*, also examines Exekias' potential influence on Sophocles' version of Ajax's death.

<sup>12</sup> Even now, there is no consensus among scholars as to the form and function of this speech. Some believe Ajax never wavers in his decision to commit suicide, and as such, his words can be taken as inherently truthful and, perhaps even, a form of soliloquy; others, however, see in Ajax's statements either signs of a reluctance to die or outright falsehoods. Thus, for these scholars, there are various elements in the speech which inevitably deceive those in Ajax's entourage. For a brief synopsis of the arguments for and against Ajax's words being a deception speech, see Crane (1990), note 1, and Farmer (1998), note 1.



readies himself for his impending death.<sup>13</sup> On both fronts, Ajax's words perpetuate the feelings of suspense established earlier during his fit of madness.<sup>14</sup> They provide a preliminary glimpse at the steps he will take before he reaches the site of his suicide, and regardless of whether Ajax uses them to deceive his followers outright, his words also afford his informed listeners a precursory glance at the sort of dynamic Ajax intends for his *locus*.

During the course of his ruminations, Ajax repeatedly employs language which either directly refers to or calls to mind the image of his sword. To start, he uses a sword-related metaphor to characterize his past conversation with Tecmessa. At that time, his words were like a sharp blade which struck deeply at the heart of his concubine, but because of the pity he now feels for Tecmessa and his son, Ajax finds the blade's edge presently dulled (κάγω γὰρ...βαφῆ σίδηρος ὡς ἐθελύνθην στόμα πρὸς τῆσδε τῆς γυναικός· οἰκτίρω δέ νιν χήραν παρ' ἐχθροῖς παῖδα τ' ὄρφανὸν λιπεῖν, 650-653). Next, the sword which Ajax explicitly used to slay the Argive herds now appears in the *Trugrede* as something which must be hidden (κρύψω τόδ' ἔγχος τοῦμόν, ἔχθιστον βελῶν, γαίας ὀρύξας ἔνθα μή τις ὄψεται, 658-659). Ajax takes great efforts to explain that the sword is the target of his ire because of its link to its former owner, Hector. According to him, his tensions with the Argives begin with the reception of this "gift" from the Trojan hero (ἐξ οὗ χειρὶ τοῦτ' ἔδεξάμην παρ' Ἑκτορος δῶρημα δυσμενεστάτου, οὐπω τι κεδνὸν ἔσχον Ἀργείων πάρα, 661-663). Therefore, Ajax's disposition toward the weapon undergoes a shift as he comes

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<sup>13</sup> Gasti (1997), 39-40.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 27. Among the many statements Ajax makes in the *Trugrede*, Gasti highlights lines 664-682 in which Ajax says that he will yield (εἶκειν) to the gods and honor (σέβειν) the sons of Atreus. According to her, these lines appear to "be inconsistent with Ajax's determination to die and with his adherence to the world of *ἀεί*." Upon further analysis, however, these lines underscore "a vision of the world in terms of alternation and permanence." Even though Ajax displays regret at the thought of leaving Tecmessa and their son alone which would, in turn, signal that he has doubts about committing suicide, his newfound reverence for the gods and the Atreidae and his comments on the cyclical nature of the world (specifically, his references to winter/summer, night/day, storm/calmness and sleeping/waking) signal his acknowledgement of death as a means to "re-establish the stability and the unity of the cosmic framework and to confirm again his place within it." Despite his new understanding of life, his thoughts never stray from his need for death. For the details of Gasti's analysis, see pages 28-33.

to associate the sword with events of the past more than with its current use. He begins to transfer bygone events to a conflict which requires resolution in the present, and through his speech, he indicates that this resolution can only be achieved by reciprocal violence by means of the sword—the instrument of Ajax’s acts of violence against others must be the instrument of Ajax’s self-destruction.<sup>15</sup> With this in mind, the *locus* which he subsequently creates becomes a space in which Ajax can finally enact a confrontation with the object of his hatred and bring an end to his suffering.

Unfortunately for the characters in the play, this plan remains elusive. Despite the prevalence of the sword imagery and even the presence of specific verbal cues<sup>16</sup> in the *Trugrede*, there is a psychological disconnect between Ajax and his retinue. Tecmessa and the chorus lack the will or the wherewithal to consider Ajax’s comments as a sincere statement of his plan to commit suicide. Hence, they stand in direct contrast with the audience. The members in the audience fully understand what Ajax aims to do, so their insight gives them cognitive proximity with the hero. There is a sense of intimacy which Ajax institutes between himself and the audience as he develops his fatal plan and it recognizes that plan in turn. And this intimacy only gains strength once Ajax moves away from his compatriots to form the space of the *locus*.

### **The *Locus* of Ajax’s Suicide: Scenic Space and the Limitations on Visualization**

After Ajax, Tecmessa and the chorus exit the stage (in the interval between 814 and 815), the scenic space of the stage transforms into an area which is distinct from the area the audience

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<sup>15</sup> Mueller, 26. Here, Mueller notes that the sword possesses “a biography that remains stable through time and across genre.” As such, it has a purpose which it can “fulfill” as the implement of Ajax’s death.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 28. As Mueller explains on these pages, Ajax switches to a distinctly “plural” voice during the *Trugrede* which confirms “his awareness of the physical presence of both Tecmessa and the weapon” as “interlocutors.” He addresses both equally because his “singular speaking voice has been subsumed by the sword—just as his body will be drawn to the sword’s metallic edge.”

has seen up to this point. Instead of being a space which is available to all the characters in the tragedy, this locale is marked by the isolation it affords Ajax while he is in the process of committing violence. Visually, however, nothing on the stage has changed outright. There is perhaps a small prop meant to indicate the mound of earth in which Ajax will plant the hilt of the sword,<sup>17</sup> but everything else remains the same. Thus, this new setting has little to offer in terms of visualization because the outdoor scenery seen at the beginning of the tragedy continues to be perceived as outdoor scenery; even though the locale is separate, the view of the space is consistent.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, as the site of the *locus*, the space does not impose a visual and cognitive barrier between the audience and Ajax's violent deed. Because, from the audience's standpoint, Ajax has been forthcoming with his plans, the *locus* he creates reflects a sense of openness and minimized imaginative reconstruction. Within this area, the candor of his words aligns with the visibility and clarity of the scenic space, and together, they counteract doubt and ambiguity. Regardless, these qualities do not eliminate the feelings of suspense and the complexity of narration which have been developed in earlier parts of the play. This is apparent when Ajax appears on stage with sword in hand.

### **Ajax's Narration of the *Locus***

Once Ajax enters the scenic space of the *locus*, he effectively becomes the messenger of his own death. In this role, he does not recount but rather, synchronously narrate the details of

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<sup>17</sup> Mills (1980-1981), 131.

<sup>18</sup> As Meineck (2006), 455, notes, the recontextualization of the stage comes from largely from the removal of the chorus and from the potential reintroduction of the *ekkyklema*. Meineck speculates that the mound of earth could have come preset on the *ekkyklema*, and so, the *ekkyklema*'s return to the stage would ultimately be the marker for the setting shift. Rather than disclosing interior scenes, the device "[subverts]...convention...in order to depict the most private and intimate act of Ajax."

the *locus* as he performs them before the eyes of the audience. Hence, the audience's attention is not set upon the cognitive reconstruction of his actions. Instead, its focus is on Ajax's thoughts about what he is doing. Just as when Ajax was in the grip of madness, the expression of his mindset is the emphasis of the scene:

ὁ μὲν σφαγεὺς ἔστηκεν ἧ τομώτατος (815)  
γένοιτ' ἄν, εἴ τῳ καὶ λογίζεσθαι σχολή,  
δῶρον μὲν ἀνδρὸς Ἴεκτορος ξένων ἐμοὶ  
μάλιστα μισηθέντος, ἐχθίστου θ' ὄραν.  
πέπηγε δ' ἐν γῆ πολεμία τῇ Τρωάδι,  
σιδηροβρῶτι θηγάνη νεηκονής· (820)  
ἔπηξα δ' αὐτὸν εὖ περιστείλας ἐγώ,  
εὐνούστατον τῷδ' ἀνδρὶ διὰ τάχους θανεῖν.  
οὕτω μὲν εὐσκευοῦμεν·

The slayer has been set up where it may cut the sharpest, if I have the leisure to reckon [such things], a gift from Hector, the man among hosts most hateful to me and most hostile to my sight. It is fixed in the earth, in hostile Troy, newly-sharpened with the iron-eating whetstone; I fixed it well, having wrapped [it with earth], so that it might be most well-disposed to this man through a quick death. Thus, we are well-equipped...

(815-823)<sup>19</sup>

When Ajax starts his narration, there is already the indication that his words bear more than a purely descriptive function. He begins by making the surprising decision to name his sword his “slayer” (σφαγεὺς, 815). As many scholars have argued, there is a specific reason for this designation, namely its aforementioned history with the Trojan warrior, Hector. As such, Ajax's interaction with the sword represents more than a flight of verbal fancy or a possible relapse into madness.<sup>20</sup> It signifies his intention to recreate cognitively the circumstances of the duel in Book

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<sup>19</sup> Passages from *Ajax* are from the Pearson's 1957 edition of the text. All translations are my own unless stated otherwise.

<sup>20</sup> Kane (1996), 22-23. Here, Kane discusses Ajax's interaction with the sword, and specifically his intent to “bury” the sword, as a kind of “riddle.” To Kane, the idea of burying the sword partly within the Trojan ground and partly within Ajax's own body reveals the “ ‘psychological’ background” of Ajax's speech. From his assessment, it

7 of the *Iliad*. By endowing the weapon with the qualities of Hector and bestowing upon it a sense of agency,<sup>21</sup> Ajax reconfigures the elements of the battle and calls upon his viewers to regard the scene on those terms. Thus, the presence of the “slayer” in Ajax’s narration is his call for a conscious suspension of disbelief. It is Ajax’s attempt to compel his audience to visualize the confrontation between him and the sword through two lenses.

The first lens prompts the audience to view the “battle” as it is—Ajax facing an instrument of death before his suicide—whereas the second urges the audience to imagine the sword in the guise of Hector and Ajax as a man in the prime of his life. Similar to most other messenger figures, Ajax uses this perspective to direct his audience to use its imagination to enhance the details of the scene, but contrary to other messenger figures, Ajax asks his viewers to create aspects of the *locus* which have no basis in current reality. In essence, he spurs the audience into inhabiting the same kind of mindset he had when he was insane. If the first *locus* marked the time Ajax was suffering from a “double personality,” this *locus* marks the moment he assumes a “double persona.” It is the moment when he consciously shifts his mindset so that he can offer a narrative which enhances his audience’s understanding of the *locus*.

He presents himself as he is and as he hopes he could be, and in this hope, he offers spectators a frame of reference which will enable them to visualize him at the pinnacle of his martial prowess. There is an effort to look back while in the process of describing conditions in the present. This dual view, however, centers solely on the “individuals”<sup>22</sup> within the *locus*. In other *loci*, narrative promotes the mental reimagining of people *in the midst* of their violent

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seems as if he is trying to say that there are lingering elements of madness in Ajax. While it seems that the characterization of the sword is, as he says, “unorthodox” and *does* have a tinge of insanity in its presentation, it also seems that Ajax is completely in his right mind when he speaks to the weapon. A sane Ajax would bring more *pathos* to the suicide and the *locus* overall because it would imbue it with a sense of nostalgia and regret. This point is something Kane also touches upon on page 26 but in regards to a later section of Ajax’s speech, whereas I see this idea appearing through the entirety of the “dialogue” between Ajax and the sword.

<sup>21</sup> Mueller, 9 and 29-30.

<sup>22</sup> The “individuals” in this case would be Ajax and the sword as the personification of Hector.

deeds; actions *and* the figures doing the actions are the targets of visualization. Here, Ajax limits his listeners' cognitive engagement to the reconstruction of himself and the sword. The audience may not need to visualize the actions committed or, in fact, the space itself, but the details within Ajax's narration keep the audience cognitively invested in the *locus*' portrayal.

As Ajax draws closer to his time of death, the allusions to the past lose their potency as the details in his narration emphasize the reality of the present. While the sword initially brought forth images of hostility in the figure of Hector and the land of Troy (ἄνδρὸς Ἑκτορος ξένων ἐμοὶ μάλιστα μισηθέντος... γῆ πολεμία τῆ Τρωάδι, 817-819), the continuation of Ajax's preparations changes the characteristics of the weapon so that it becomes something which is "most well-disposed" toward him (αὐτὸν... εὐνούστατον τῶδ' ἀνδρὶ, 821-822). Despite the deep-seated feelings of animosity felt in the past, the present situation and the significance of the sword within this situation cannot be ignored. Therefore, the kindness "exhibited" by the weapon demonstrates Ajax's recognition of the futility of his "double persona." The comment highlights the fact that it is Ajax and Ajax alone who performs the actions within the space of the *locus*. The sword, an emblem of someone who was once "hateful to [his] sight" (ἐχθίστου θ' ὄραν, 818), is an *object* Ajax himself plants in the ground (ἔπηξα δ' αὐτὸν εὔ περιστεύλας ἐγώ, 821) and something which *he* wants to place explicitly on display. As much as Ajax desires to affect the vision of himself and the sword, his narration must return his audience's sights to the *locus*' current state so that the effects of his death will remain properly situated in the present. For all his efforts to depict a duel between equals (οὔτω μὲν εὐσκευοῦμεν, 823), he must still acknowledge the inanimate nature of the object he is "fighting" against (σιδηροβρῶτι θηγάνη νεηκονής, 820).

Even though Ajax's narrative directs the audience to focus on the actual circumstances of the *locus*, visualization remains the most important aspect of his narration because it enables Ajax to augment the feeling of suspense in the scene as his audience turns its view toward future events:

ἐκ δὲ τῶνδέ μοι  
σὺ πρῶτος, ὦ Ζεῦ, καὶ γὰρ εἰκός, ἄρκεσον.  
αἰτήσομαι δέ σ' οὐ μακρὸν γέρας λαβεῖν. (825)  
πέμψον τιν' ἡμῖν ἄγγελον, κακὴν φάτιν  
Τεύκρω φέροντα, πρῶτος ὧς με βαστάσῃ  
πεπτῶτα τῷδε περὶ νεορράντῳ ξίφει,  
καὶ μὴ πρὸς ἐχθρῶν του κατοπτευθεὶς πάρος  
ρίφθῳ κυσὶν πρόβλητος οἰωνοῖς θ' ἔλωρ. (830)

...first of all these, for it is fitting, O Zeus,  
help me. I will ask you to allot [me] no great honor.  
Send for us a messenger, who would bear the bad  
news to Teucer, so that he might raise me up first  
after I have fallen around this fresh-reeking sword,  
and so that I might not be cast out and thrown forth  
as prey for the dogs and birds of prey if I am  
spotted first by my enemies. (823-830)

As Ajax calls upon Zeus to assist him in his act of violence (823-824), his narration begins to depict details proleptically. From this vantage point, there is no effort to recast the *locus* as a scene of bygone glory and heroism. Instead, Ajax's proleptic narration compels the audience to consider death as something which isolates Ajax and brings him no honor (αἰτήσομαι δέ σ' οὐ μακρὸν γέρας λαβεῖν, 825). This fact is especially evident in Ajax's reference to his brother, Teucer (827). Teucer appears in the scene as someone Ajax *hopes* will arrive (ὧς με βαστάσῃ, 827). There is no guarantee that Teucer will reach Ajax in time to protect his corpse, so his narration proffers an image reminiscent of the opening of the *Iliad*.<sup>23</sup> Just as the proem of the epic caused its audience to expect instances of horrific death and mutilation, Ajax presents his

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<sup>23</sup> Specifically, lines 3-5 of Book 1: πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι ἠρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεύχε κύνεσσιν οἰωνοῖσι τε πᾶσι.

death in terms of what it will offer to the animals who come across his body (ῥιφθῶ κυσὶν πρόβλητος οἰωνοῖς θ' ἔλωρ, 830). In this situation, Ajax illustrates how the sight of him (κατοπτρευθεὶς, 829) can provoke another instance of violence. Depending on the identity of the viewer, Ajax's corpse will either be honored with burial or be cast out as fodder for wild beasts. Thus, Ajax sets up specific expectations which heighten the intensity of his death. He grants his audience greater detail about his body's treatment, but whereas greater detail typically drives an audience toward a better understanding of what has occurred in a *locus*, the graphic details included in Ajax's narrative explicitly lead his viewers toward greater anticipation for what has yet to happen.

Contributing to the suspense of such a potential result is a new imagining of Ajax himself. With the mention of Teucer is the image of a recently-deceased Ajax (με... πεπτῶτα τῶδε περὶ νεορράντῳ ξίφει, 827-828). Suddenly, Ajax projects the sight of his corpse onto his living self. His narration draws the audience toward the *promise* of death, toward the endpoint of the *locus*, and so, it keeps the audience ready and waiting for the moment when Ajax will take his own life. Along these same lines is Ajax's invocation of the god, Hermes:

τοσαῦτά σ', ὦ Ζεῦ, προστρέπω, καλῶ δ' ἅμα  
πομπαῖον Ἑρμῆν χθόνιον εὖ με κοιμίσει,  
ξὺν ἀσφαδάστῳ καὶ ταχεῖ πηδήματι (833)  
πλευρὰν διαρρήξαντα τῶδε φασγάνῳ.

[Only] so much I entreat you, O Zeus, and at the  
same time, I call on Hermes, who escorts under the  
earth, to put me well to sleep, with a swift leap  
without convulsion after I cleave my side upon this  
sword. (831-834)

Because of Hermes' association with the dead, Ajax's narration once again causes the audience to dwell upon the notion of suicide, but the portrayal of the suicide here is dramatically different than the scene depicted earlier with Teucer. Soon after Ajax invokes Hermes, he asks the god to



attend to his body, but he frames their interaction in such a way that death unexpectedly becomes equated with sleep (εὖ με κοιμίσαι, 832). As before, Ajax's narration reconfigures the audience's view of him so that he appears as a corpse, but rather than provide the audience an image of himself as carrion for wild animals, this standpoint re-presents Ajax's suicide as an act of release, a relaxation of tensions which bears no indication of pain or struggle (ξὺν ἀσφαδάστω, 833). Yet, this sentiment is short-lived because Ajax subsequently uses terms which emphasize rapidity (ταχεῖ πηδήματι, 833) and a markedly violent blow (πλευρὰν διαρρήξαντα τῷδε φασγάνῳ, 834). The image of death as a kind of respite is promptly overturned by the sudden emphasis on the *execution* of violence. For the first and only time, his proleptic narration calls on his viewers to concentrate on the image of intense, corporeal destruction.

Up to this point, the visualization of Ajax has steadily increased the audience's comprehension of the act of violence. The "duel" between Ajax and the sword briefly highlighted a vision of Ajax as a hero on the precipice of a heroic death; the entreaty to Zeus called forth the image of Ajax as a corpse which will serve as prey for dogs and birds of prey; and the prayer to Hermes gave the audience the sight of a deceased, somnolent-looking Ajax contrasted with the sight of him impaling himself quickly and brutally. With every imagined version of Ajax, the audience has been gradually prompted to view him as he already sees himself, namely as a lifeless body. Therefore, the remainder of his narration reflects this perspective and moves toward what Ajax envisions the effects of his death to be.

In the "aftermath" of his suicide, Ajax asks his listeners to imagine how others will experience his death (835-853). First of all, Ajax's narrative preserves the notion of prospective brutality by juxtaposing the divine permanence of the Erinyes (τὰς αἰί τε παρθένους, 835) and

Helios (τὸν αἰπὸν οὐρανὸν διφρηλατῶν Ἥλιε, 845-846) with the notion of suffering.<sup>24</sup> Through these pairings, Ajax urges his audience to envision an enduring sense of pain and ruin not only for himself but for others in the future. The Erinyes, for instance, personify the chain of eternal suffering Ajax hopes to create as his destruction becomes the impetus for the downfall of the Atreidae (σεμνάς Ἐρινῶς τανύποδας...καί σφας κακοὺς κάκιστα καὶ πανωλέθρους ξυναρπάσειαν, 837-840) and the Argive army at large (ἴτ'...Ἐρινύες, γεύεσθε, μὴ φείδεσθε πανδήμου στρατοῦ, 843-844). In this way, his suicide ceases to exist in isolation. Rather than be an event whose effects begin and end within the frame of the *locus*, it is an event which promotes more acts of violence to come.

Likewise, Helios becomes another figure through which Ajax asks his viewers to imagine the extent of the *locus*' impact. As he describes it, the sun god will observe Ajax's death, and afterwards, he will go on to convey this news to Ajax's family (Ἥλιε...ἄγγελον ἄτας τὰς ἐμὰς μόρον τ' ἐμὸν γέροντι πατρὶ τῇ τε δυστήνῳ τροφῷ, 846-849). From there, his mother will augment the force of Ajax's loss by exhibiting her suffering throughout her city (ἦσει μέγαν κωκυτὸν ἐν πάσῃ πόλει, 851). She will extend the affective range of his death. Together, then, these images illustrate how the *locus* and its effects are a microcosmic representation of the effects which will emerge after the report of Ajax's suicide reaches those outside of the *locus*' frame. They are cues which grant the audience a prospective glance at the kind of response it can expect to see once those in Ajax's retinue find his body.

Since Ajax's narration is fully set on the idea of him in death, it is understandable that the final moments of Ajax's life are spent invoking the figure of Death himself:

ὦ θάνατε θάνατε, νῦν μ' ἐπίσκεψαι μολών·  
καίτοι σὲ μὲν κάκεϊ προσαυδήσω ξυνών. (855)

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<sup>24</sup> In terms of the Erinyes' relation to suffering, Ajax states on lines 843-844: ἴτ', ὃ ταχεῖαι ποίνιμοί τ' Ἐρινύες, γεύεσθε, μὴ φείδεσθε πανδήμου στρατοῦ. Helios' association with suffering appears on 848-851.

σὲ δ' ὦ φαεινῆς ἡμέρας τὸ νῦν σέλας,  
 καὶ τὸν διφρευτὴν Ἥλιον προσενέπω,  
 πανύστατον δὴ κοῦποτ' αὖθις ὕστερον.  
 ὦ φέγγος, ὦ γῆς ἱερὸν οἰκείας πέδον  
 Σαλαμῖνος, ὦ πατρῶον ἐστίας βάθρον, (860)  
 κλειναί τ' Ἀθηναί, καὶ τὸ σύντροφον γένος,  
 κρηναί τε ποταμοί θ' οἶδε, καὶ τὰ Τρωικὰ  
 πεδία προσαιδῶ, χαίρετ', ὦ τροφῆς ἐμοί·  
 τοῦθ' ὑμῖν Αἴας τοῦπος ὕστατον θροεῖ,  
 τὰ δ' ἄλλ' ἐν Ἅιδου τοῖς κάτω μυθήσομαι. (865)

O Death! Death, look and approach me now; indeed  
 when I am with you, I will speak to you there. And I  
 address you, O present light of radiant day, and  
 Helios, the charioteer, for the last time and never  
 again afterwards. O light! O holy earth of my own  
 land, Salamis! O ancestral base of my hearth, and  
 both the renowned Athenians and my kindred  
 race, and the springs and these rivers, and the Trojan  
 plains, I address you. Farewell, O [you] who have  
 fed me; this final word Ajax cries out to you, but  
 others I will speak to those below in Hades.

(854-865)

Unlike other divine entities who can observe but not participate directly in the *locus*, Death is the only figure who is both invited to observe and be present for Ajax's act of self-destruction. He shares the space with Ajax (ὦ θάνατε θάνατε, νῦν μ' ἐπίσκεψαι μολῶν, 854), and conceived with him, Death brings the audience the final re-envisioning of Ajax within the scene. As Ajax notes, his company with Death will enable him to go on as an entity which will dwell in Hades' realm (τὰ δ' ἄλλ' ἐν Ἅιδου τοῖς κάτω μυθήσομαι, 865). Through Death, Ajax gains a sense of permanence because similar to the Erinyes and Helios, Ajax will become a fixture once he dies. He will become part of the landscape, linked, for the time being, to the earth beneath his sword and, later, to the earth which will envelop him after his burial. Thus, it makes sense that Ajax follows his comments to Death and Helios with an address for Salamis, his hearth, the Athenians and the natural features of the Trojan countryside (859-863). Each of these has enduring

qualities; they are locations and groups whose attributes span the passage of time. In the same way, the *locus* grants Ajax a site in which he can acquire a semblance of constancy.<sup>25</sup> It is a space which enables Ajax to place greatest emphasis on himself as he is now and as he will be after his act of violence.

### **Tecmessa's Narration of the *Locus***

After Ajax's death, Tecmessa enters the scene with the chorus of Salaminian sailors (866), but because she is the first to find Ajax's corpse and quickly ascertain the circumstances surrounding his downfall, only she is able to take on the role of the *locus*' second messenger figure. Her account, however, differs from Ajax's rendition because her main audience does not consist of the audience at large but rather, the chorus of men in front of her. They are the group who does not yet understand the severity of the violence which Ajax has inflicted upon himself, so it is they who seem to benefit most from her narration.

Another aspect of Tecmessa's role which differs from that of Ajax is the usage of ambiguity and suspense. At no point in the tragedy do Tecmessa's words seem to misrepresent her thoughts or intentions, so there is no concern that her language is vague or that it belies her beliefs. Furthermore, the tensions which arose as Ajax forestalled the execution of his suicide are relieved in the fulfillment of his actions. Consequently, there is no need for Tecmessa to delay her report of Ajax's suicide when his corpse is lying directly before her. As such, Tecmessa starts her report with a simple conveyance of violence in its aftermath. Direct, visual access becomes, in the implementation of violence, direct, narrative understanding in the retelling of the *locus*' events:

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<sup>25</sup> Ajax and the concept of permanency is a subject treated extensively by Gasti. For her discussion, see note 13.

{Τεκ.} Αἴας ὄδ' ἡμῖν ἀρτίως νεοσφαγῆς  
 κεῖται, κρυφαίῳ φασγάνῳ περιπτυχῆς.  
 {Χο.} ὦμοι ἐμῶν νόστων· (900)  
 ὦμοι, κατέπεφνες, ἄναξ,  
 τόνδε συνναύταν, τάλας·  
 ὦ ταλαίφρων γυνή.  
 {Τεκ.} ὡς ᾧδε τοῦδ' ἔχοντος αἰάζειν πάρα.  
 {Χο.} τίνας ποτ' ἄρ' ἔπραξε χειρὶ δύσμορος; (905)  
 {Τεκ.} αὐτὸς πρὸς αὐτοῦ, δῆλον· ἐν γάρ οἱ χθονὶ  
 πηκτὸν τόδ' ἔγχος περιπετοῦς κατηγορεῖ.  
 {Χο.} ὦμοι ἐμᾶς ἄτας, οἷος ἄρ' αἰμάχθης, (909)  
 ἄφαρκτος φίλων· (910)  
 ἐγὼ δ' ὁ πάντα κωφός, ὁ πάντ' αἰδρις,  
 κατημέλησα. πᾶ πᾶ  
 κεῖται ὁ δυστράπελος  
 δυσώνυμος Αἴας;

{Tec.} Our Ajax lies newly slaughtered, fallen  
 around his hidden sword.  
 {Cho.} Alas for our homecomings! Alas! You killed  
 this shipmate, my miserable lord! O wretched  
 woman!  
 {Tec.} Yes, so the case stands to weep.  
 {Cho.} By whose hand did the ill-fated man do  
 [this]?  
 {Tec.} By his own hand, it is clear; for this sword,  
 fixed in the earth, around which he has fallen,  
 proves [it].  
 {Cho.} Alas for my destruction! You alone are  
 made bloody, unguarded by friends! I am a  
 dullard in every way! I am ignorant in every way! I  
 paid no heed! Where? Where does the intractable  
 man bearing a name of ill omen, Ajax, lie?  
 (898-914)

Even though Tecmessa's analeptic narration here bears none of the intricacies of Ajax's reporting, it remains a significant aspect of the *locus*' presentation because it restructures the audience's interaction with the site of violence. Whereas Ajax's isolation lent the *locus* an air of intimacy and enabled audience members to retain their roles as spectators, the addition of Tecmessa and the chorus to the scene distances the viewers and causes them to experience the rest of the *locus* as auditors. It may be argued that this shift is insignificant because there is

nothing left for the audience to see or envision and everything that needed to be known has been disclosed. Nevertheless, the audience's new association with the *locus* is notable because its aural engagement compels it to be attuned to the reconstruction of Ajax's suicide. There is now a conscious acknowledgment of the form and function of Tecmessa's narration—the audience is able to see *how* an analeptic narrative is developed from firsthand observation. This new perspective is important not because it necessarily proffers new details about Ajax's act of violence but because it highlights another aspect of the *locus* which cannot be found in Ajax's synchronous and proleptic account, namely how Tecmessa's portrayal of the suicide reflects her mindset and how this mindset affects her narration and her audience in turn.

Well before Ajax's suicide,<sup>26</sup> Tecmessa sets forth a vision of her and her son's future. In this imagined scenario, Ajax's death brings enslavement and abuse from the Argives (ταύτη νόμιζε κάμει τῆ τόθ' ἡμέρα βία ξυναρπασθεῖσαν Ἄργείων ὑπο ζῶν παιδί τῷ σῶ δουλίαν ἔξειν τροφήν, 497-499), and much like the Iliadic Andromache,<sup>27</sup> the vision of Tecmessa's drastic change in circumstances also makes her subject to extreme ridicule (καί τις πικρὸν πρόσφθεγμα δεσποτῶν ἐρεῖ λόγοις ἰάπτων: ἴδετε τὴν ὀμεινέτιν Αἴαντος, 500-502). This detail, that the *sight* of Tecmessa will be the source of her disparagement, is particularly remarkable because it underscores how Tecmessa links her image to the image of a deceased Ajax. From her perspective, others will see her not so much as an individual but as a byproduct of his suicide, and her treatment in life will be wholly dependent on the treatment Ajax receives in death. Therefore, when Tecmessa finds Ajax's body, she is confronting that notion straightaway. She is recognizing that her life is no longer in her own hands, and in essence, she is experiencing a

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<sup>26</sup> Lines 496-505, to be exact.

<sup>27</sup> In noting the similarities between Ajax and Hector, some scholars have commented upon the links between Tecmessa and Andromache. Cf. Farmer, 26-27, Winnington-Ingram (1980), 16, Schein (2015), 429-431, and Sorum (1986), 396-370.

symbolic death. Henceforth, Tecmessa is the living embodiment of Ajax's corpse, and it is with this idea in mind that she begins her analeptic narrative.

The acknowledgment of the affiliation between Ajax and Tecmessa appears in her first exchanges with the chorus. As Tecmessa lays out the fundamental details of the suicide, she quickly establishes the collective effects of Ajax's death. First, she designates the hero as "their Ajax" through the use of the plural pronoun ἡμῖν (898), and she prompts the chorus to recall his earlier promise to "bury" his sword (κρύψω τόδ' ἔγχος τοῦμόν, 658) by using similar terminology (κρυφαίω φασγάνω, 899).<sup>28</sup> As a result of these methods, Tecmessa reaffirms the relationship she and the sailors share with Ajax, but as the sole viewer of Ajax's corpse and the sole conveyor of the narration describing Ajax's suicide, she also sets herself apart as someone deserving of greater consideration. Tecmessa occupies a special status in the *locus* because only she can compel the chorus to envision the details of Ajax's death, and she can direct the focus of that visualization so that she is continuously regarded alongside the image of Ajax. Signs of Tecmessa's success in this endeavor emerge in the chorus' opening response to her narrative.

After Tecmessa tells the sailors that Ajax is dead, they initially bewail their own circumstances (ὄμοι ἐμῶν νόστων· ὄμοι, κατέπεφνες, ἄναξ, τόνδε συνναύταν, τάλας, 900-902), but then they turn to Tecmessa and comment upon her misfortune (ὦ ταλαίφρων γυνή, 903). In this statement, the sailors align Tecmessa with their perception of the slain Ajax, and they invite the audience at large to do the same. They do not merely mourn Ajax but Tecmessa as well.<sup>29</sup>

The chorus immediately creates a cognitive link between Ajax and Tecmessa—any regard for

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<sup>28</sup> Another parallel can be seen in lines 906-907/8. There, Tecmessa uses the phrase ἐν γάρ οἱ χθονὶ πηκτὸν τόδ' ἔγχος περιπετοῦς which calls back to lines 819 and 821 in which Ajax states πέπηγε δ' ἐν γῆ πολεμιά... ἔπηξα δ' αὐτὸν εἰς περιστείλας ἐγώ.

<sup>29</sup> Pearson, 142-143. Pearson's commentary on line 903 notes that the phrase ὦ ταλαίφρων γυνή is not directly about Tecmessa but, rather "her fate." Thus, this statement appears to support the idea that the lament for Tecmessa is a response to the *gravitas* of Ajax's death and not actually a consideration of Tecmessa as an individual.

the hero is regard for his concubine. The sailors look at Tecmessa while she gives her account of the suicide, and as they do so, they can also see her as an emblem of the loss and death of Ajax. Tecmessa continues to reinforce this notion by asking the chorus to lament further (ὥς ὄδε τοῦδ' ἔχοντος αἰάζειν πάρα, 904). She directs the men to dwell on the idea of Ajax, and implicit within this direction is a call to juxtapose her fate with his.

As Tecmessa continues her narration, the chorus of sailors becomes more invested in the details surrounding Ajax's death. The men want to know precisely how Ajax is killed, and so, they ask Tecmessa to disclose more of what she sees (τίνοσ ποτ' ἄρ' ἔπραξε χειρὶ δύσμορος;, 905). On the surface, this question would not seem to change the dynamics of the *locus* since the chorus would still look to Tecmessa to receive information, but the fact that her answer causes the men to realize their shortcomings (ἐγὼ δ' ὁ πάντα κωφός, ὁ πάντ' ἄιδρις, κατημέλησα, 911-912) immediately signals a potential shift away from Tecmessa as the one and only source of the *locus*' details.

In its sorrow, the chorus tries to approach Ajax's corpse (πᾶ πᾶ κεῖται ὁ δυστράπελος δυσώνυμος Αἴας;, 912-914) so that it can mourn the hero along with Tecmessa. This poses a problem, however, because it would eliminate the significance of Tecmessa's narration and of her singular connection to Ajax. Thus, in order to safeguard both, Tecmessa suddenly stops the men from coming near:

οὔτοι θεατός· ἀλλά νιν περιπτυχεῖ (915)  
φάρει καλύψω τῷδε παμπήδην, ἐπεὶ  
οὔδεις ἂν ὅστις καὶ φίλος τλαίη βλέπειν  
φυσῶντ' ἄνω πρὸς ῥῖνας ἔκ τε φοινίας  
πληγῆς μελανθὲν αἶμ' ἀπ' οἰκειίας σφαγῆς.  
οἴμοι, τί δράσω; τίς σε βαστάσει φίλων; (920)  
ποῦ Τεῦκρος; ὡς ἀκμαῖος ἂν βαίη μολῶν  
πεπτῶτ' ἀδελφὸν τόνδε συγκαθαρμόσαι.  
ὦ δύσμορ' Αἴας, οἷος ὦν οἷος ἔχεις,  
ὡς καὶ παρ' ἐχθροῖς ἄξιος θρήνων τυχεῖν.



No, he is not to be seen! But I will cover him entirely with this enfolding shroud, since no one, even one, at least, who is a friend, would endure to see him spurting black blood from his own slaughter up from his nostrils and out of the bloody gash. Alas, what will I do! Which of your friends will raise you up? Where is Teucer? How timely it would be if he arrived and came to prepare the burial for this fallen brother of his. O ill-fated Ajax! How could this happen to you, being as you are, even in the judgment of your enemies [you are] so worthy of laments. (915-924)

By keeping the sailors away from Ajax's corpse (οὔτοι θεατός, 915) and, in fact, covering it with her own shroud (νιν περιπτυχεῖ φάρει καλύψω τῷδε παμπήδην, 915-916), Tecmessa asserts her position in the *locus* and strengthens her bond with Ajax.<sup>30</sup> Similar to the audience's experience during the course of the suicide, Tecmessa creates a sense of intimacy with Ajax via her visual connection to him. As the only person who is able to look at him, she prevents the scene of his death from becoming a spectacle like the scene of his insanity. There is a sharp contrast between her and Athena who gladly invites Odysseus and the audience to gaze upon a crazed Ajax in the midst of his irrational misdeeds. The privacy she preserves allows her and the space to remain narratively significant and affective. Without the possibility of seeing Ajax's body themselves, the sailors stay reliant on Tecmessa's narration and the cognitive glimpses it offers. They are compelled to listen and so visualize the particulars of the *locus* by their need to understand Ajax's actions, and more subtly, they are compelled to view her as the lone sufferer of his death. The chorus may lament Ajax's death, but only Tecmessa can feel the effects of his loss.

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<sup>30</sup> Mills, 132-133. Mills presents the covering of Ajax's body in more practical terms since as he explains on pages 129-131, there are logistical, theatrical concerns to be taken into account when Ajax commits suicide. Nevertheless, he maintains that there is specific importance in Tecmessa's actions because they counter what is expected. As he states, "at the point when a body would normally be revealed—it is at precisely this point that the corpse of Ajax is instead covered up." For another take on the issues of coordination surrounding Ajax's suicide, see Meineck.

The differences between the chorus' and Tecmessa's experiences continue as she goes on to describe the state of Ajax's corpse. She grants the chorus an imaginative glance at Ajax's wound (φοινίας πληγῆς, 918-919), and she enables it to envision the extent of the trauma which his fatal blow causes (φυσῶντ' ἄνω...μελανθὲν αἷμ' ἀπ' οἰκείας σφαγῆς, 918-919). Despite knowing that he was pierced in the torso, the sailors are now able to see that blood flows freely out of Ajax's nose (πρὸς ῥῖνας, 918). In this small detail, Tecmessa once again proclaims the importance of her relation to Ajax. This time, proximity and sight give her the chance to add slight nuance to both the sailors' and the audience's experiences. Previously, the audience had no view of Ajax after he fell on his sword; here, it is able to imagine the results of Ajax's impalement. And as it does so, the audience is momentarily afforded the opportunity to join the chorus; the internal and external audience briefly occupy the same position.

With the chorus and the audience attuned to the same details, Tecmessa is able to grant both groups the chance to see the corpse through her perspective and to gain a modicum of her experience. When the chorus and the audience are explicitly imagining Ajax commit suicide, they are also implicitly viewing the death as it pertains to Tecmessa's particular circumstances. They are effectively using Tecmessa's eyes as she herself sees the destruction of Ajax's body and envisions the destruction of her livelihood. Unlike most other messenger figures who may be emotionally affected by their narration but not personally affected by the details they convey, Tecmessa is wholeheartedly entwined with and affected by the events of the *locus*. Consequently, the chorus and the audience's act of visualization enables them to perceive how Ajax's corpse came to be in its current condition *and* how its condition symbolizes the state of Tecmessa's life. Through their cognitive engagement with Tecmessa's narration, the chorus and the audience are able to understand why she is inextricably bound to Ajax even in death.

Bolstering the link between Tecmessa and Ajax further are the lexical echoes Tecmessa presents as she switches to proleptic narration.

After Tecmessa describes Ajax's corpse, she begins to anticipate what will follow when others find Ajax's body (920-922). She speculates about the details of Ajax's burial, and in particular, she calls to mind Teucer and the friends who may assist Ajax in receiving proper funerary rites. Throughout her musings, she repeatedly directs the chorus to look forward by means of the future tense or optative mood (τί δράσω; τίς σε βαστάσει φίλων; ποῦ Τεῦκρος; ὡς ἀκμαῖος ἄν βαίη μολῶν πεπτῶτ' ἀδελφὸν τόνδε συγκαθαρμόσαι, 920-921), but at the same time, her words hearken back to the words Ajax used when he was in the midst of preparing himself for death as well.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, Tecmessa's mention of the prospective laments which Ajax's enemies would give him (ὡς καὶ παρ' ἐχθροῖς ἄξιος θρήνων τυχεῖν, 924) correlates to Ajax's earlier consideration about his enemies' treatment of his corpse. Thus, Tecmessa's narrative constantly aligns with the words of Ajax—his future interests are her future interests, just as the source of his misfortunes is the same as hers. At each point in her account, these correspondences act as mental cues which motivate the chorus to respond to the presence of Tecmessa and the image of Ajax.

One of the last signs of this connection appears when the chorus retraces the path of Ajax's downfall:

{Χο.} ἔμελλες, τάλας, ἔμελλες χρόνῳ (925)  
στερεόφρων ἄρ' ἐξανύσσειν κακὰν  
μοῖραν ἀπειρεσίῳ πόνων· τοῖά μοι  
πάννυχα καὶ φαέθοντ' (929)  
ἀνεστέναζες ὠμόφρων (930)  
ἐχθοδόπ' Ἀτρείδαις  
οὐλίῳ σὺν πάθει.  
μέγας ἄρ' ἦν ἐκεῖνος ἄρχων χρόνος

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<sup>31</sup> Specifically lines 826-827 in which Ajax says: πέμψον τιν' ἡμῖν ἄγγελον, κακὴν φάτιν, Τεῦκρῳ φέροντα, πρῶτος ὡς με βαστάσει.

πημάτων, ἦμος ἀριστόχειρ (935)  
 ... ὄπλων ἔκειτ' ἀγῶν πέρι.  
 {Τεκ.} ἰὼ μοί μοι.  
 {Χο.} χωρεῖ πρὸς ἦπαρ, οἶδα, γενναία δύη.  
 {Τεκ.} ἰὼ μοί μοι.  
 {Χο.} οὐδέν σ' ἀπιστῶ καὶ δις οἰμῶξαι, γύναι, (940)  
 τοιοῦδ' ἀποβλαφθεῖσαν ἀρτίως φίλου.  
 {Τεκ.} σοὶ μὲν δοκεῖν ταῦτ' ἔστ', ἐμοὶ δ' ἄγαν φρονεῖν.  
 {Χο.} ξυναυδῶ.

{Cho.} You were destined, miserable man, you  
 were destined in time, stubborn-hearted one, to  
 fulfill an evil fate of boundless toils; such hateful  
 things, in my opinion, did you groan forth all day  
 and night against the Atreidae with deadly calamity.  
 That time was potent in beginning your miseries,  
 when the contest for the arms, won by the stoutest  
 hand, was ordained....  
 {Tec.} Woe is me, me!  
 {Cho.} Genuine misery, I know, comes to your  
 heart.  
 {Tec.} Woe is me, me!  
 {Cho.} In no way do I doubt that you lament  
 doubly, woman, rightly so, after having been  
 robbed of such a friend.  
 {Tec.} It is for you to imagine these things, and for  
 me to experience [them] too much.  
 {Cho.} I agree. (925-943)

With Tecmessa's full rendering in mind, the chorus is able to gain a full view of the events leading to Ajax's suicide, but even as it recounts Ajax's woes, the chorus also addresses the things Tecmessa has suffered. Although she had nothing to do with the conflict between Ajax and the Atreidae, she is nevertheless subject to its consequences. Therefore, when the sailors begin to speak about the contest of arms as the culminating event (934-936), they cannot help but have their statements pertain to Ajax and Hecuba equally—the awarding of Achilles' arms is the beginning of misfortunes for Ajax *and* Tecmessa. Since Tecmessa has repeatedly used her narration to juxtapose her experiences with the fate of Ajax, she has effectively eliminated the cognitive distance between herself and Ajax in the eyes of the chorus. Consequently, it makes

sense that the language of the chorus would reflect that pairing and that Tecmessa would bolster this point even more by interspersing exclamations of sorrow (937 and 939) which drive the chorus to preserve the link between her and her fallen master.

The sailors' last exchange (940-943) with Tecmessa especially highlights the twofold nature of Tecmessa's experience. In these lines, her lamentations are "double" in nature (δις οἰμῶξαι, γύναί, 940), and as she reflects on their comments, Tecmessa clearly portrays herself as Ajax's surrogate and underscores her ability to move her listeners to feel for her as they would the hero. She, above all, experiences the events of the *locus*, whereas the chorus can only visualize them (σοὶ μὲν δοκεῖν ταῦτ' ἔστ', ἐμοὶ δ' ἄγαν φρονεῖν, 942).<sup>32</sup> To be sure, this does not mean that the chorus' role as the audience is somehow less significant but rather, that the potency of the *locus*' effects always depends on its ability to convey vividly the impact of the scene before the audience can fully engage with the act of violence taking place within it.

### Conclusion

In the *locus* of Ajax's suicide, the audience finds the least cognitively engaging scene of violence. Unlike most other *loci* in the tragic corpus, this *locus* allows its audience to understand most everything from its inception—the scenic space of the *locus* is immediately observable, the narration offered by Ajax and Tecmessa is unambiguous, and the violence that Ajax inflicts upon himself occurs directly before the eyes of the viewers. Moreover, during the course of Ajax's and Tecmessa's narration the element of suspense centers around the *time* of Ajax's suicide, not the *possibility* of him committing it. There is no doubt that Ajax means to kill himself, so the *locus*

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<sup>32</sup> Pearson, 146. On these lines, Pearson states, "the Chorus [recognised] Tecmessa's unique place in the affectations of Ajax, so by δοκεῖν she implies that they can at least form some estimate of her loss." The chorus' consideration of Tecmessa at this point seems to be further evidence of Tecmessa's ability to place focus on herself. In recognizing Tecmessa's loss, the chorus sees the symbol of that loss as well.

unfolds with its conclusion well in the mind of the spectators. Taken altogether, then, these characteristics pose few cognitive challenges for the audience.

Still, there *is* complexity within this *locus*. Even though the narration of Ajax's suicide is relatively straightforward, the visualization within Ajax's and Tecmessa's accounts prompts the audience to mentally reconfigure the sight of Ajax and Tecmessa themselves. During Ajax's portrayal, the audience is asked to envision Ajax as he was during the height of the Trojan War. From this perspective, Ajax is not someone who has suffered humiliation at the hands of Athena. He is mentally and physically capable, and his heroism is never in doubt. As Ajax moves closer to his death, the audience is also asked to imagine Ajax immediately after his impalement and as an inhabitant of Hades. Through these images, Ajax is able to direct the audience to consider the effects of his death not only on his compatriots in the Argive army but on his family abroad as well. In Tecmessa's narration, the audience is prompted to visualize her as an emblem of Ajax's corpse. Because her fate is inextricably tied to that of Ajax, his death brings her a symbolic death which inevitably affects her portrayal of herself within the *locus*. Hence, this *locus* illustrates a continuum of minimal, yet poignant, imaginative interaction. There is no question that the presentation of Ajax's suicide is significant, but the complexity of its portrayal is largely limited to the envisioning of Ajax and Tecmessa as they approach or respond to Ajax's death.

### ***Hecuba: The Maximal Locus Violentus***

In contrast to the *locus violentus* proffered by Ajax's suicide, the *locus* of Polymestor's mutilation in Euripides' *Hecuba* is the most cognitively engaging form of the concept because it repeatedly asks its audience to assess and re-assess the presentation of the *locus*. At first glance, this is the case for two reasons—the use of extrascenic space and the number of narratives used

to describe this *locus*. Extrascenic space affects the audience's imaginative connection to the *locus* because it immediately prohibits the audience from viewing the scene of violence. As such, there is a constant need for the audience to be cognitively invested in the details of the messengers' narration since this is the only means by which it acquires information about the violence taking place.

Furthermore, this *locus*' narration is filtered through the perspectives of three messenger figures, each of whom develops his or her own rendition of Hecuba's violent deeds. The first messenger figure, the chorus, anticipates Hecuba's actions and so, provides the audience with a speculative, synchronous narration of the scene. It offers the audience metaphorical and explicit images of death as the undertakings of the *locus* are occurring. The second messenger, Hecuba, also offers a synchronous account, but she modifies the audience's understanding of the *locus* by correcting the chorus' assumptions. She tells all who are present that mutilation in addition to murder has taken place. Consequently, the first portion of Hecuba's narration serves to counteract the chorus' doubts, and then the remainder of her account moves to a proleptic view of the *locus* as she prepares for Polymestor's unveiling on stage. The third messenger, Polymestor, presents a thorough analeptic rendering of the scene as he details how he is blinded and his children are killed. Moreover, he uses similes to bolster his description of the women's assault. Thus, throughout the progression of this *locus*, the audience is tasked with visualizing all aspects of violence with the utmost attention. It must be attuned to the constant shifts in each messenger's narration to make the details of Hecuba's revenge clear.

Lastly, the *locus* demands the greatest level of cognitive engagement from its audience because the suspense it produces comes from the measured disclosure of information during the development of the *locus* and from the concealment and calculated manipulation of information

from the beginning of the play. From the moment Hecuba's son, Polydorus, appears as an apparition revealing the circumstances of his death, there is an acknowledgment that some characters have more knowledge than others. This distinction between individuals with information and those without lends itself to the possibility for misdirection. In other words, characters may use the information they have to subvert others' expectations or to mislead others outright. This is apparent to a lesser degree in the recounting of the sacrifice of Hecuba's daughter, Polyxena, but it is readily evident in the figure of Hecuba. After Hecuba learns about the death of Polydorus and Polyxena, she becomes a figure who wholeheartedly means to conceal and mislead. Hence, before fully discussing the characteristics of Polymestor's mutilation, it is helpful to bring attention to earlier moments in the tragedy to explain how the change in Hecuba's demeanor affects the presentation of the *locus* near the end of the play and how this contributes to this *locus* being the most cognitively engaging form of the concept.

### **The Development of Suspense through Misdirection**

As stated in Chapter 2, tragedy's overarching concern with the dissemination of information contributes to the suspense felt during a performance. This feeling arises when an audience well-versed in myth comes into contact with the alterations or innovations which a tragic poet includes in the plot of his play. *Ajax*, for instance, took advantage of this when it shifted the cause of the hero's madness from the contest of arms to the protective efforts of Athena. *Hecuba* capitalizes on this technique by making Thrace its setting and by changing the traits of Hecuba and Polydorus.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, a pervasive feeling of suspense also develops when a

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<sup>33</sup> Zeitlin (1996), 172-178. On these pages, Zeitlin discusses Euripides' decision to make Thrace into a seemingly-amalgamated mythical locale. It is a place which appears to lie between "the world of the past and the world of the future." The area preserves the events of the Trojan war and Homer as much as it attempts to move the Greek forces homeward and into the realm of tragedy. Therefore, an audience may have some knowledge about



tragedy begins with a scene which hints at the fact that information is being withheld.<sup>34</sup> This preliminary scene propels the play forward as it proceeds to uncover what is hidden, and whenever a *locus* introduces another element of suspense, this opening scene bolsters it and adds to its force. In *Hecuba*, this sort of suspense comes forth when the ghost of Polydorus tells of his murder at the hands of Polymestor (1-30).

When Polydorus appears, he tells the audience about his regal status (Ἐκόβης παῖς γεγώς τῆς Κισσέως Πριάμου τε πατρός, 3-4) and how that status placed him in harm's way during the events of the Trojan War (ἐπεὶ Φρυγῶν πόλιν κίνδυνος ἔσχε δορὶ πεσεῖν Ἑλληνικῶ, 4-5). Moreover, he details the fact that he was sent to Thrace in order to find protection with Polymestor, a family friend (μ'...δείσας ὑπεξέπεμψε Τρωικῆς χθονὸς Πολυμήστορος πρὸς δῶμα Θρηκίου ξένου, 4-7). He also states that he was given a large amount of gold in order to secure his livelihood should Troy fall (9-12). Finally, he describes how the deaths of his family members after the fall of Troy drove the greedy Polymestor to kill him and cast his body into the sea (21-27). Overall, his tale does not produce a *locus* because the details about the murder itself lack specificity, but his story *does* allow the audience to be privy to information which most of the other characters and, above all, Hecuba do not possess. Consequently, Polydorus' murder stands as a potent source of suspense which only gains strength with the passage of time, and when violence is committed against Polyxena (518-582), Polydorus' murder implicitly intensifies the audience's response to the Trojan matriarch's suffering.

Besides extending the play's potential for suspense, the presence of Polydorus bolsters the potential for misdirection in the intervening time between the *locus* of Polyxena's sacrifice

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certain aspects at the outset of the play, but it may also be completely unaware of other aspects as the play continues. Cf. Segal (1990b), 111, for another take on the importance of Thrace as the setting of the play. Gregory (1999), 41, points out that Euripides takes liberties with the genealogy of Hecuba and the age of Polydorus, so it is very likely that these sorts of details would quickly eliminate some of the familiarity with the tragic material.

<sup>34</sup> Loraux (1987), x.

and the *locus* of Polymestor's mutilation as well. After Polydorus explains the circumstances of his murder, he goes on to explain that Polyxena will be sacrificed for the sake of the deceased hero, Achilles, and for the sake of the Argive expedition (35-58). As a result of this, Hecuba will see two corpses instead of one since he asserts that his own corpse will be found as well (δουῖν δὲ παίδων δύο νεκρῶ κατόψεται μήτηρ, ἐμοῦ τε τῆς τε δυστήνου κόρης, 45-46). Hence, Polydorus quickly establishes the expectation of not only Polyxena's sacrifice but the appearance of their corpses as well. At the moment, there is no reason to believe that events will unfold in any other manner because Polydorus' supernatural presence assures the audience that his statements are representative of the truth. It can presume to know the outcome and aftermath of Polyxena's death.

When the heraldic messenger, Talthybius, arrives with news of Polyxena's death (518-582), however, things do not proceed simply. Rather than declare the girl's sacrifice straightaway, Talthybius constructs a *locus*.<sup>35</sup> He begins his analeptic narration of the scene by describing the distanced space of the *locus*—Achilles' burial mound—and he defines the space further by noting that the mound is surrounded by the entire Achaean army (παρῆν μὲν ὄχλος πᾶς Ἀχαικοῦ στρατοῦ πλήρης πρὸ τύμβου, 521-522). Next, he offers his audience a step-by-step view of the sacrifice. As he states, Achilles' son, Neoptolemus, leads Polyxena to the burial mound (λαβὼν δ' Ἀχιλλέως παῖς Πολυξένην χερὸς ἔστησ' ἐπ' ἄρκου χώματος, 523-524); he leads prayers to his father (534-541); and then he readies himself to deliver the fatal blow (542-545). With each painstaking detail, Talthybius enables the audience to visualize the actions of the

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<sup>35</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 2, Polyxena's sacrifice is an example of a nuanced, cognitively intricate form of the *locus*, but it is not *the* most cognitively engaging rendition of the *locus* because it does not possess the multilayered narration and visualization of the *locus* of Polymestor's mutilation. As such, its presence here is only meant to bolster the idea of narrative misdirection.

Achaean, and every time Talthybius decides to relay the exact words spoken at the sacrifice,<sup>36</sup> he prolongs the rite and develops a feeling of suspense in the scene.

Yet, at the point when Polyxena's death seems imminent (544-546), Talthybius shifts the focus of his narration to Polyxena, and he details the manner in which Polyxena reaffirms her agency (546-565). Even as Talthybius continues to be the *locus*' narrator, the details he conveys make it appear as if Polyxena has taken over the narrative—it is her words the audience hears as she asserts her royal status (547-552); she is the one who decides to reveal her body before the army (557-560); she instructs Neoptolemus how to strike her down (563-565); and she dictates what others see as she falls dead to the ground (568-570). Altogether, Polyxena controls the development of her death's narration and the imagery that Talthybius asks his audience to envision. Therefore, Polyxena subverts expectations and changes the *locus* from the site of her victimhood to a spectacle of her nobility.<sup>37</sup> Although the *locus* of Polyxena's sacrifice comes to its fated conclusion, Talthybius' extended narration and Polyxena's surprising words and deeds indicate that Polymestor's rendition of the sacrifice at the outset of the play did not convey the entirety of the scene. His statements about the sacrifice may have been straightforward, but the actual progression of the sacrifice is more complex.

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<sup>36</sup> Talthybius directly quotes himself and Neoptolemus at lines 532-541.

<sup>37</sup> Mossman (1999), 156-157, does a good job of describing the typical nature of the ceremony and how at various moments this is contrasted with the unexpectedness of Polyxena's actions. Cf. Thalmann (1993), 138, which emphasizes the connection between the play and the *Iliad* and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. According to him, the comparison between tragedies is particularly important because the events of Polyxena's sacrifice are a direct comment on and reaction to the sacrifice of Iphigeneia. He states, "By replaying both the situation in the *Iliad* and the Aeschylean sacrifice of Iphigeneia together, Euripides teases out the implications that Aeschylus only hinted at. He explores and makes explicit the full brutality to which an uncritical acceptance of the heroic world-view can lead." Thus, the juxtaposition underscores the spectacular nature of Polyxena's actions. The fact that she speaks and demands to be let go is especially notable since Iphigeneia is specifically denied the opportunity to do either of those things. Other scholars have also commented upon Polyxena's uniquely prominent characterization, in particular Segal (1990b), 133-114, Scodel (1996), 122 and 125, and Loraux, 57-58. Michelini (1987), 161, frames Polyxena's preeminence specifically in terms of her disrobing, calling this act the most striking example of "Euripidean sensationalism."

After Talthybius ends his narration, Hecuba mourns the loss of her daughter (585-603), and just as Polydorus proclaimed, Hecuba's thoughts turn to the arrival of Polyxena's corpse. During the sacrifice, Polyxena explicitly told the men around her not to touch her (μή τις ἄψηται χροὸς τοῦμοῦ, 548-549), and now as Talthybius is about to go back to the army, Hecuba echoes her statement. Hecuba tells Talthybius to keep the men away from Polyxena's corpse out of fear of what they could do to her body (μή θιγγάνειν μοι μηδέν', ἀλλ' εἶργειν ὄχλον, τῆς παιδός, 604-606), and afterwards, she asks one of her handmaids to help her prepare for the cleansing of Polyxena's body (609-613). In these statements, the misfortunes of Hecuba are clear, and the repetition of Polyxena's entreaty makes the presentation of Polyxena's corpse seem imminent. Yet, when the handmaid returns with a corpse in tow (658), it is the body of Polydorus that appears on stage (681-687). Once again, the play overturns expectations. Rather than see the corpses of two of her children, as Polydorus stated, Hecuba sees only one and, moreover, one she did not believe she would see. Hereafter, Polyxena's corpse is never brought back to the stage, so if Polydorus' declaration is to remain valid, it must be so from a certain point of view—Hecuba “sees” the corpse of Polyxena in the sense that she visualizes her body after the sacrifice, and now she is able to see her death in conjunction with the body of Polydorus. In all, the specter of Polydorus at the beginning of the tragedy served to create an underlying feeling of suspense as long as Hecuba remained unaware of his murder, but more so, his appearance enabled suspense to emerge as a result of misdirection as well.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Heath (2003), 239-247. Ironically, scholars in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries saw very little unity in the play's events. For them, there was an apparent disconnect between the events dealing with Polyxena's sacrifice and the mutilation of Polymestor. Misdirection and the overthrowing of expectations, however, seem to be prevailing elements which persist in the course of the play. Moreover, this “divide” also seems to be the result of the violence taking place. Violence, as I argued in the previous chapter, is inherently destabilizing, and as a result of this, the events occurring after Polyxena's sacrifice deal with the process of restoring the play's balance through the mutilation of Polymestor and the death of his children. For an extended treatment of this idea, see Zeitlin (1996), 191-194. Cf. Gregory, 126, for another argument in favor of narrative continuity.

## The Sustainment of Suspense through Discursive Manipulation

Misdirection continues to play a part in the creation of suspense even after the revelation of Polydorus' corpse through the words of Hecuba. From the moment she discovers the particulars of Polydorus' death (702-720), Hecuba's demeanor and motivations undergo a dramatic change. Like Polyxena before her, Hecuba casts off the comportment of a victim in order to become a more proactive figure.<sup>39</sup> Now that she fully understands the extent of Polymestor's treachery, Hecuba begins to look for a way to enact some form of punishment on him. Fortunately for her, the arrival of her master, Agamemnon (726), offers her the opportunity to plan such retribution.

As she explains how the body of Polydorus came into her possession (736-797), Hecuba begins to make several asides expressing two different trains of thought, namely her overt comments to Agamemnon and the more subtle statements she makes to herself. When Agamemnon asks her to identify the body lying before them (τίν' ἄνδρα τόνδ' ἐπὶ σκηναῖς ὀρῶ θανόντα Τρώων;, 733-734), Hecuba notes that her words are essentially doubled—she speaks to herself even while she appears to be speaking to Agamemnon (ἐμαυτὴν γὰρ λέγω λέγουσα σέ, 736).<sup>40</sup> She deliberates and wonders if Agamemnon will be willing to help her (741-742 and 745-746), and as her ruminations continue, she shows that there is more to what she is saying. Although Agamemnon seems like the most likely person to punish Polymestor because of his status among the army, Hecuba starts to indicate more clearly that she sees herself as the person

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<sup>39</sup> Mossman, 179-180. Mossman points out the importance of Polydorus' role in the transformation of Hecuba's motivations writing, "[Polydorus' omission of revenge on Polymestor] is necessary, and not only for the sake of suspense: the power of the prologue to create emotion would be greatly lessened if Polydorus, like Hamlet's father, or Andrea in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, or the ghost of Clytemnestra in *Eumenides*, were 'ranging for revenge'; he must inspire Hecuba's revenge, not partake of it... That the ghost's integrity is preserved in this way is I think another instance of Euripides' care to prejudice the audience in favour of Hecuba's cause."

<sup>40</sup> Gregory, 132. Gregory notes the narrative potency of Hecuba's asides saying "This passage is the most sustained and striking use of aside in Greek tragedy."

who will enact her revenge (749-750).<sup>41</sup> From the perspective of Agamemnon, however, this intent is not yet obvious.<sup>42</sup> Thus, there are communicative layers within Hecuba's statements. Similar to the "double personality" of Ajax which causes him to see one thing but do another, Hecuba's double-speak enables her to say one thing and not another to Agamemnon. And similar to Ajax in the *Trugrede*, Hecuba's ability to disclose her intentions without explicitly making them known to others around her makes her another source of suspense.<sup>43</sup> Still, comparisons to Ajax notwithstanding, Hecuba is ultimately more menacing because her motivations are not due to any sort of divine madness and because Polymestor has no way of knowing that he is the target of her violent efforts. Overall, Hecuba is someone with whom the audience must especially engage because she is someone with the capacity to manipulate what others know.

The danger and suspense embedded within Hecuba's discourse become slightly more conspicuous once Hecuba reveals the details surrounding Polydorus' death (760-785). After she describes Polymestor's role in Polydorus' death (771-782), she asks Agamemnon for his support and notably requests that Polymestor pay some penalty for his crimes ([Νόμος] ἔς σ' ἀνελθὼν εἰ διαφθαρήσεται, καὶ μὴ δίκην δώσουσιν οἴτινες ξένους κτείνουσιν...οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἴσον, 802-805). Moreover, Hecuba calls upon Agamemnon to regard her as a painter would his artwork (οἴκτιρον ἡμάς, ὡς γραφεύς τ' ἀποσταθεῖς ἰδοῦ με κἀνάθηρσον οἷ' ἔχω κακά, 807-808). From Hecuba's standpoint, this would allow Agamemnon to see the extent of her

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<sup>41</sup> Gregory, 133. Gregory singles out Hecuba's statements at 749-750 as the first overt sign of Hecuba's intent to take vengeance on Polymestor. In her commentary, Gregory cites Tetstall (1954), who believed that because Hecuba's revenge was not part of Polydorus' statements in the prologue, it would appear "as a complete surprise to the audience." Gregory, however, explains that "returning evil for evil was...integral to the Greek concept of justice," and so, "the project of retribution would occur to the audience, as well as to Hecuba, as a natural result of her discovery of Polymestor's crime."

<sup>42</sup> When Agamemnon asks Hecuba if she is supplicating him in order to gain her freedom, she replies: οὐ δῆτα· τοὺς κακοὺς δὲ τιμωρουμένη αἰῶνα τὸν σύμπαντα δουλεύειν θέλω, 756-757. She does not overtly discuss her need for revenge but merely alludes to it.

<sup>43</sup> Mossman, 180. As Mossman states, "The indirect, almost casual way in which [Hecuba's intention to be revenged] is slipped in, without any great Medea-like agonies and avowals, is striking: we might have expected more focus on the decision to be revenged rather than a decision about how to achieve revenge."

suffering.<sup>44</sup> It would grant him the perspective necessary to visualize and understand the extreme contrasts between who she was and who she is.<sup>45</sup> Just as Ajax and Tecmessa urge their listeners to visualize them in more than one way in order to enhance the effects of their narrative, Hecuba prompts Agamemnon to imagine her past self in place of her in her present circumstances in order to gain sympathy and approval for her (heretofore unstated) cause. But implicit within this particular view of Hecuba is the prospective vision of Hecuba as an avenger as well. The undercurrent of revenge within Hecuba's conversation with Agamemnon inevitably leads to the acknowledgement of Hecuba as the enactor of that revenge.<sup>46</sup> Hence, the feelings of suspense surrounding Hecuba grow as she becomes more overt about her plans for Polymestor.

This point is especially apparent when Hecuba emphasizes the importance of Persuasion<sup>47</sup> and stories of women overcoming men through violence (οὐ γυναικες εἶλον Αἰγύπτου τέκνα καὶ Λῆμιον ἄρδην ἀρσένων ἐξώκισαν;, 886-887). Together, this grouping finally reveals to Agamemnon what Hecuba intends, and they seem to indicate what the audience

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<sup>44</sup> Gregory, 140.

<sup>45</sup> The contrasts Hecuba highlights specifically relate to her status and her role as a mother (τύραννος ἦ ποτ', ἀλλὰ νῦν δούλη σέθεν, εὐπαις ποτ' οὖσα, νῦν δὲ γραῦς ἄπαις θ' ἅμα, 809-810) which seem to foreshadow the traits she emphasizes as she takes her vengeance on Polymestor. Cf. Zeitlin (1994), 142, "The emotive power of the image, the formal perspective of distance, and the reference to the painter's technique as he works to perfect his art are projected on to the other as spectator. But the comparison depends on the prior objectivisation of a self, who must first imagine herself in the picture in order to elicit the empathetic response to her psychological distress that she so intensely desires."

<sup>46</sup> Zeitlin (1994), 152. While discussing ecphrasis, Zeitlin states, "the act of viewing, especially when the object represented depicts an event of the past, elicits a narrative impulse to tell a story and, in so doing, it also inevitably hints at a potential return of that past into present, especially theatrical, time. A sense of overlapping between then and now is irresistible—even more, between then and what is to come." Considering the fact that Hecuba objectifies herself and asks Agamemnon to look at her as a painter looks at his work, it could be argued that her request for herself to be re-viewed takes on the same effect—in her efforts to be seen in the totality of her experience, she is also implicitly asking her audience to begin looking forward to who she will be in the future.

<sup>47</sup> Gregory, 141. Gregory's commentary on line 816 appears to support the idea that there is a furtive undercurrent in Hecuba's discourse. In terms of the figure of Πειθῶ, Gregory states, "Hecuba's salute to persuasion does not signal any change in her attitude or methods. She has previously evinced an appreciation of the power of persuasive speech, as well as a sophisticated command of rhetorical techniques (133-137n)." Although Hecuba's opinion of persuasion may not change during the course of the play, there *does* seem to be a difference in Hecuba's approach in the sense that Hecuba is more careful with her argument when she speaks with Agamemnon than when she speaks with Odysseus. The conversation with Odysseus had no ulterior motive—the hope to spare Polyxena's life is clear at all times—the conversation with Agamemnon, however, has the surreptitious aim of convincing Agamemnon to allow Hecuba her revenge on Polymestor.

can expect as soon as Hecuba is able to get a hold of Polymestor, namely death at the hands of Hecuba and her group of women (σὺν ταῖσδε τὸν ἐμὸν φονέα τιμωρήσομαι, 882). As Hecuba has gradually disclosed the details of her plot against Polymestor, she has also manipulated her audience's view of her and the women. With each bit of information, Hecuba increasingly draws a link between women and violence—Hecuba is a queen and mother turned schemer and slave bereaved of her children, and women are presented precisely in terms of their ability to persuade and use deceit to overthrow their male oppressors. They are no longer captives or concubines like her daughter, Cassandra. Instead, they are a cadre fully capable of inflicting a great deal of violence. Even if Agamemnon is unwilling to entertain the idea of women's potential for violent retribution,<sup>48</sup> the implementation of this notion in Hecuba's speech signals, to the chorus and the audience at least, that a multitude of women should not inspire a sense of comfort or security (δεινὸν τὸ πλῆθος σὺν δόλῳ τε δύσμαχον, 884).<sup>49</sup> Women, and particularly women in the company of Hecuba, are now sources of suspense because violence is something they, too, have the potential to commit.

### **The Extrascenic Space of the *Locus***

The instances of misdirection up to this point—the unexpected reclamation of Polyxena's nobility and the misidentification of Polydorus' corpse—and Hecuba's ability to manipulate information set a multilayered precedent of suspenseful duplicity which culminates in the image of Agamemnon's tent reconfigured as the site of Hecuba's *locus*.<sup>50</sup> In the course of the dialogue above and for the entirety of the play, Agamemnon's tent has provided the backdrop for the

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<sup>48</sup> Gregory, 149.

<sup>49</sup> Segal (1990b), 119.

<sup>50</sup> The first hints of the tent's treacherous capability appears in line 880 when Hecuba states στέγαι κεκεύθασ' αἴδε Τρωάδων ὄχλον.



events of the plot. It has remained the play's relatively unknown quantity, an undeterminable space which provided refuge for Hecuba after Polyxena's death.<sup>51</sup> Yet, as the background of her conversation with Polymestor, the extrascenic space of the tent gains extreme significance and takes on an ominous presence because it suddenly shifts into the location of Polymestor's demise. Here, the walls of Agamemnon's tent cease to represent Hecuba's haven and begin to construct the perimeter of Polymestor's entrapment:

{Πο.} χωρεῖτ'· ἐν ἀσφαλεῖ γὰρ ἦδ' ἐρημία.  
 φίλη μὲν εἶ σύ, προσφιλὲς δέ μοι τόδε  
 στράτευμ' Ἀχαιῶν. ἀλλὰ σημαίνειν σε χρῆ·  
 τί χρῆ τὸν εὖ πράσσοντα μὴ πράσσουσιν εὖ  
 φίλοις ἐπαρκεῖν; ὡς ἔτοιμός εἰμ' ἐγώ. (985)  
 {Εκ.} πρῶτον μὲν εἰπὲ παῖδ' ὄν ἐξ ἐμῆς χερὸς  
 Πολύδωρον ἔκ τε πατρὸς ἐν δόμοις ἔχεις,  
 εἰ ζῆι· τὰ δ' ἄλλα δευτέρον σ' ἐρήσομαι.  
 {Πο.} μάλιστα· τοῦκείνου μὲν εὐτυχεῖς μέρος.  
 {Εκ.} ὦ φίλταθ', ὡς εὖ καξίως λέγεις σέθεν. (990)

{Pol.} (to his bodyguard.) Begone! For this wilderness is in a safe place. (to Hecuba.) You are my friend, and this expedition of the Achaeans is kindly disposed to me. But you must tell [me]: why must one faring well help friends who are not? Seeing that, I am ready.  
 {Hec.} First, speak of my son, Polydorus, whom you have in your halls from my hand and that of his father, [tell me] if he lives. Then I will ask you other things.  
 {Pol.} Of course! As far as his lot is concerned.  
 {Hec.} Dearest friend, how well you speak! How worthy of yourself! (981-990)<sup>52</sup>

Adding to the tension of this extrascenic space is the spectators' understanding that Hecuba's words belie her true intentions. With each exchange between Hecuba and Polymestor, she draws out the truth of his guilt. With every disingenuous statement they make to one another (982, 989-

<sup>51</sup> After Hecuba tells her handmaid to prepare for the arrival of Polyxena's body, she retreats into the tent (628) and does not return to the stage until the handmaid comes to her with the corpse of Polydorus (667).

<sup>52</sup> All text from the *Hecuba* comes from Gregory's 1999 edition of the text. All translations are my own.

990), Hecuba leads Polymestor closer to the tent and the area of the *locus*. At the same time, every word between Hecuba and Polymestor leads spectators closer to the limits of their understanding. Even though the viewers believe they know Hecuba's intent, their insights stop there. What happens as soon as Hecuba and Polymestor leave the stage is immediately unknowable because it is immediately unseen; the innocuously absent and formerly succoring interior of the tent instantly transforms into an all too conspicuous reminder of what the viewers lack. They are relegated to the role of auditors, and the more Hecuba revels in the face of her listeners' ignorance, the more they are left to experience tension and suspense. In these moments, what Hecuba knows and plans collides violently with what Polymestor, the chorus and the audience do not know and cannot necessarily foresee. And ironically, Polymestor amplifies the suspense of the scene further by facilitating the execution of Hecuba's plan. He isolates himself, he dismisses his bodyguards, and to make matters worse, he assures them of his safety ( $\chi\omega\rho\epsilon\iota\tau'$ ·  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\sigma\phi\alpha\lambda\epsilon\iota\ \gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho\ \eta\delta'$   $\acute{\epsilon}\rho\eta\mu\acute{\iota}\alpha$ , 981). In all, his ignorance leads him and the audience directly to the threshold of the *locus*.

### **The Chorus' Preliminary Narration of the *Locus***

Once Hecuba and Polymestor enter the space of the *locus*, the chorus of captive women becomes the first messenger "figure" who describes what is likely occurring within the walls of the tent. Because the chorus has been present throughout Hecuba's conversation with Agamemnon and has been supportive of Hecuba's efforts for the entirety of the play, it can claim to have some insight into Hecuba's intentions. Therefore, as Hecuba leaves the stage, the chorus takes it upon itself to describe the actions occurring within the space. Just as the audience, however, the chorus has no actual knowledge about the violence taking place, so it must

speculate and use Hecuba’s earlier statements to Agamemnon to construct its narrative. With this in mind, it is not surprising that the chorus’ thoughts immediately turn to death. Previously, Hecuba mentioned the murders committed by the Danaids, and she noted the Lemnian women’s massacre of their husbands (οὐ γυναῖκες εἶλον Αἰγύπτου τέκνα καὶ Λῆμνον ἄρδην ἀρσένων ἐξόκισαν;, 886-887). As stated, these events demonstrate women’s capacity for collective violence, and juxtaposed with the current circumstances of the scene, these stories are paradigmatic for the actions Hecuba would be likely to commit.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the chorus convinces itself of what Hecuba and the other women inside the tent will do,<sup>54</sup> but since it has no definitive details, it begins its narration with a metaphor:

οὐπω δέδωκας, ἀλλ’ ἴσως δώσεις δίκην·  
ἀλίμενόν τις ὡς ἐς ἄντλον πεσῶν (1025)  
λέχτριος ἐκπεσῆ φίλας καρδίας,  
ἀμέρσας βίον. τὸ γὰρ ὑπέγγυον  
Δίκῃ καὶ θεοῖσιν οὗ ζυμπίτνει, (1030)  
ὀλέθριον ὀλέθριον κακόν.  
ψεύσει σ’ ὁδοῦ τῆσδ’ ἐλπὶς ἢ σ’ ἐπήγαγεν  
θανάσιμον πρὸς Αἶδαν, ὧ τάλας,  
ἀπολέμωι δὲ χειρὶ λείψεις βίον.

You have not yet paid the penalty, but you likely will; just as someone without harbor after having fallen into the bilge-water, you will be deflected from what is [most] dear to you, destroying your life. For where what is owing to Justice and the gods comes together, [there] deadly, deadly is evil. Your anticipation of this journey will beguile you, [anticipation] which led you, oh wretched man, to deadly Hades, you will lose your life by a woman’s

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<sup>53</sup> Many scholars have taken Hecuba’s turn to violence as a sign of her lost humanity. For discussions of this sort, see Abrahamson (1952), 128-129, Reckford (1991), 30-31, and Luschnig (1976), 232. Contrary to those arguments, Hecuba’s actions are consistent with the Greek conception of justice, as Gregory argues (cf. note 38), and also with the her portrayal in the *Iliad*. In Book 24, Hecuba specifically tells Priam that if she were to come into contact with Achilles, she would “wish to devour” (ἐχοίμι ἐσθέμεναι, ll. 24.212-213) his “middling liver” (μέσον ἦπαρ, ll. 24.212). This statement, in itself, demonstrates that, regardless of her gender, Hecuba has in her mind the capacity for committing violence. She, just as the epic heroes before her, is willing to take action against one who has wronged her. For another argument against Hecuba’s degradation, see Mossman, 164-203.

<sup>54</sup> Gregory, 168. Gregory’s comments on the chorus’ song and notes that there are several references to Polymestor’s impending death (specifically, lines 1004, 1027 and 1028).

hand.

(1024-1034)

While Hecuba executes her plan inside of the tent, the chorus endeavors to narrate the dealings of the *locus* synchronously.<sup>55</sup> It addresses Polymestor directly and presents him as someone who is beset by danger on all sides (ἀλίμενόν τις ὡς ἐς ἄντλον πεσῶν, 1025).<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the chorus reframes Hecuba and the women's role in the *locus* by re-presenting them, respectively, in the form of Justice and the gods. Hecuba and her group of women are the figures who are owed a form of recompense (Δίκη καὶ θεοῖσιν οὗ̃ ξυμπίτνει, ὀλέθριον ὀλέθριον κακόν, 1030-1031). As such, their actions against Polymestor are visualized as acts of divine retribution. If Polymestor is without any hope of salvation, it is because Hecuba and the women have ordained it to be so; if he is doomed to die, it is because they demand it. Anticipation (ἐλπίς, 1032),<sup>57</sup> despite being used to describe Polymestor, also becomes a fitting descriptor for the chorus and the listeners. Each group would not be hard-pressed to think Hecuba has committed murder, and they could easily expect to see the body of Polymestor brought out for all to see. Nothing in the chorus' narration so far has indicated that they should imagine or envision an outcome which is different from the Danaids' and Lemnians' aforementioned stories. Appropriately, then, the chorus' ode presumes to describe the main action within the *locus*; its words appear to transition the perspective away from the suspense of conscious ignorance to the anticipation of cautious certainty.

When Polymestor begins crying out from within the tent (ὄμοι, τυφλοῦμαι φέγγος ὀμμάτων τάλας, 1035), however, the depth of the chorus' ignorance comes to the fore as it

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<sup>55</sup> Even though the chorus' ode makes extensive use of the future tense and so, would seem to be narrating things proleptically, the fact that things are happening as the chorus is making its statements keeps the temporal framework of its narrative synchronous. From this standpoint, the use of the future tense seems to be more the result of the chorus' speculation than anything else.

<sup>56</sup> Gregory, 168. As Gregory notes, "falling into the ἄντλος, the bilge-water of a ship, is metaphorical for getting into difficulties. In a mixed image, the ἄντλος is described as 'without harbor,' i.e., 'offering no chance of safety.' "

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 169. Gregory translates ἐλπίς as "anticipation" rather than the more common "hope."

quickly realizes that everything it described up to this point is wrong. Certainly, Polymestor's cries for his children signify that there is, indeed, death (ὄμοι μάλ' αἴθις, τέκνα, δυστήνου σφαγῆς, 1037), but his own screams indicate he is still very much alive (ἀλλ' οὔτι μὴ φύγητε λαιψηρῶ· βάλλων γὰρ οἴκων τῶνδ' ἀναρρήξω μυχούς, 1039-1040). In retrospect, the decision to mutilate and not kill Polymestor is significant because it highlights another instance of misdirection. It shows how the statements Hecuba made to Agamemnon have created expectations which have led the chorus to present the audience a somewhat inaccurate rendering of the *locus*. The larger details of its narration and its metaphor are true—Hecuba and the women *do* take vengeance upon Polymestor—but the outcome the chorus offers is not what it envisioned.

With this in mind, it becomes apparent that the chorus' remark about the *results* of anticipation pertained not only to Polymestor but to itself and the tragic spectators as well—anticipation brings expectation, but it also beguiles (ψεύσει, 1032). And in the chorus' eagerness to provide the audience with an imagined view of Polymestor's death, it has unwittingly misled everyone. Regardless of the fact that the women of the chorus are complicit in the execution of Hecuba's plan, they truly know nothing about Hecuba's actions once she cannot be seen; there can be no certainty about violence without visual confirmation of it. Strictly speaking, proximity may enable the chorus and the viewers to focus more precisely on the façade from which the *locus*' sounds emanate, but nevertheless, it does not give either group an accurate assessment of what has occurred. All stay outside of the *locus* even though the chorus attempts to bridge the cognitive gap by preemptively describing it. There is a disconnect between the chorus' narration

and the aural components of the *locus*, and as a result of this disconnect, the chorus and the audience are shocked when Hecuba returns and appears to revel in Polymestor's mutilation.<sup>58</sup>

### **Hecuba as Messenger: Synchronous and Proleptic Narration of the *Locus***

Since the chorus and the audience are now aware of the errors in the first depiction, they turn to Hecuba to get another assessment of the *locus*' proceedings. As someone who was present within the space of the *locus*, Hecuba immediately takes on the role of the second messenger figure. She can convey all of the details directly, and she is able to confirm or deny the assumptions made earlier by the chorus. Furthermore, there is no need for her to rely on metaphor or similes to form the core of her imagery. Anything she asks her listeners to visualize comes from things she herself has seen. In this way, she is like Talthybius during the sacrifice of Polyxena. Her presence in the scene enables her to offer her narration as something emblematic of the truth. But unlike Talthybius, the level of participation she ascribes to herself is vastly different. Rather than narrate the *locus* from the perspective of an observer with a limited role, she relates the details of the *locus* as the prime perpetrator of its violence. She is fully involved throughout the development of the *locus*. Therefore, her narration is not only a description of her deeds but also a reflection of her transformation from helpless slave into capable perpetrator of violence. Signs of Hecuba's change appear immediately after she returns to the stage:

{Εκ.} ἄρασσε, φείδου μηδέν, ἐκβάλλων πύλας·  
οὐ γάρ ποτ' ὄμμα λαμπρὸν ἐνθήσεις κόραις, (1045)  
οὐ παῖδας ὄψηι ζῶντας οὐς ἔκτειν' ἐγώ.  
{Χο.} ἦ γὰρ καθεῖλες Θρηῖκα καὶ κρατεῖς ξένον,  
δέσποινα, καὶ δέδρακας οἷάπερ λέγεις;

{Hec.} (in Polymestor's direction.) Strike out! Don't  
hold back beating the doors! You will never place  
the brightness of sight in your eyes, nor will you

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<sup>58</sup> Tetstall (1954), 341. Cf. Reckford, 34.

[ever] see the children, whom I have killed, alive!  
{Cho.} Did you really take down our Thracian guest  
and do you rule over [him], mistress? Have you even  
done the sort of things which you spoke about?  
(1044-1048)

When Hecuba first emerges from the tent, she speaks with no addressee in mind.<sup>59</sup> Even though her words are seemingly directed at Polymestor, they are more akin to the ruminations she had when she spoke with Agamemnon. Then, her comments allowed her to reveal her plans against Polymestor in asides whose meaning was clear only to her, and the incremental nature of her disclosures enabled her to enhance the suspense in the scene; now, Hecuba's statements give her listeners an unequivocal view of what she has done. They understand what Hecuba means when she goads Polymestor and tells him to strike out (ἄρασσε, φείδου μηδέν, ἐκβάλλων πύλας, 1044), and they recognize what Hecuba claims is the result of her actions (οὐ γάρ ποτ' ὄμμα λαμπρὸν ἐνθήσεις κόραις, οὐ παῖδας ὄψησι ζῶντας οὐς ἔκτειν' ἐγώ, 1045-1046). Hecuba's synchronous description of the stirrings within the tent would seem to form a comprehensible cognitive image, but ironically, the thorough dominance she displays causes the women of the chorus some skepticism (ἦ γὰρ καθεῖλες Θρηῖκα καὶ κρατεῖς ξένον, δέσποινα, καὶ δέδρακας οἷάπερ λέγεις;, 1047-1048). Instead of certainty, there is doubt and suspense surrounding Hecuba's role and her rendition of the scene.

Straightaway, it is all too apparent that Hecuba is not officially a heraldic messenger like Talthybius and that more is needed to make her a reliable narrator. There are very tangible and very audible aspects to Hecuba's narrative which are not fully addressed in her synchronous narration of the scene. For one, Polymestor still lingers within the space of the *locus*, and as stated, the details Hecuba provides only address the results of the *locus* and not its progression

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<sup>59</sup> Gregory, 171. Gregory notes that Hecuba's opening remarks after she comes out of the tent are directed toward Polymestor but are not actually intended to be heard by him.

toward violence. Moreover, the chorus and the audience's ability to hear Polymestor's screams increases their level of participation. As such, their investment hinges upon the consideration of this magnified degree of engagement. Since their experience of the scene so far has involved visualization and auditory cues, Hecuba's narration must facilitate *both* their cognitive understanding *and* their sensory perception of its effects. Physical confirmation of Hecuba's story is necessary to heighten the audience's understanding of violence. As of now, Hecuba's words to Polymestor do not suffice.

The problems concerning Hecuba's narration are alleviated slightly when she finally recognizes and responds to the chorus' inquiries:

{Εκ.} ὄψῃ νιν αὐτίκ' ὄντα δωμάτων πάρος  
 τυφλὸν τυφλῷ στείχοντα παραφύρωι ποδί, (1050)  
 παίδων τε δισσοῶν σώμαθ', οὓς ἔκτειν' ἐγὼ  
 σὺν ταῖσδ' ἀρίσταις Τρωιάσιν· δίκην δέ μοι  
 δέδωκε. χωρεῖ δ', ὡς ὄρῃς, ὄδ' ἐκ δόμων.  
 ἀλλ' ἐκποδῶν ἄπειμι κάποστήσομαι  
 θυμῷ ζέοντι Θρηκί δυσμαχωτάτῳ. (1055)  
 {Hec.} Soon you will see him before the tents,  
 blind, walking with a blind, staggering foot, and the  
 bodies of the two children whom I have killed with  
 [the help of] the heroic Trojan women. He has paid  
 me the penalty. This man, as you see, is coming  
 from the tent. But I will step aside and stand out of  
 the way of his boiling, most intractable Thracian  
 anger. (1049-1055)

As Hecuba switches to a proleptic description of the *locus*, she gradually includes aspects which start to cast aside the chorus and listeners' doubts. She gives specific details describing Polymestor's gait (τυφλὸν τυφλῷ στείχοντα παραφύρωι ποδί, 1050), and she notes the Trojan women's role in the death of his children (ἔκτειν' ἐγὼ σὺν ταῖσδ' ἀρίσταις Τρωιάσιν, 1051-1052). According to her, he will emerge from the tent staggering, without a clear idea of what will befall him next (τυφλῷ...παραφύρωι ποδί, 1050). In this way, he is not unlike the chorus



and the audience—as they envision Polymestor stumbling out of the tent his physical blindness comes to mirror their inability to foresee the trajectory of the *locus*. Both are completely at the mercy of Hecuba, and she herself acknowledges this fact in her choice of narrative mode.

By electing to portray Polymestor proleptically, Hecuba continues to prevent her audience from envisioning the *process* of violence. The specific details relating to the manner in which she traps and blinds Polymestor in addition to the spatial layout of the *locus* remain hidden. She may give more details about her adversary, but once again, these details lack their full impact because they have no corporeal corroboration. Overall, as much as Hecuba’s speech can lead the chorus and the auditors toward the space of the *locus*, it also teases them and impedes their progress. Instead of fully unveiling details, Hecuba merely re-establishes and enhances the feelings of suspense in the scene.

When Hecuba hears Polymestor coming closer to the entrance of the tent (χωρεῖ δ’, ὡς ὄρᾳς, ὅδ’ ἐκ δόμων, 1053), she urges her listeners to prepare to see Polymestor’s gruesome appearance. At once, the chorus and the audience are forced to confront an image of Polymestor which before they could only cautiously entertain, and what is more, Hecuba prompts them to expect Polymestor in a furious rage (ἀλλ’ ἐκποδὼν ἄπειμι κάποστήσομαι θυμῷ ζέοντι Θρηκί δυσμαχωτάτῳ, 1054-1055). Suddenly, Polymestor, the man whom Hecuba had praised (albeit insincerely) as a friend (ὃ φίλταθ’, ὡς εὔ καξίως λέγεις σέθεν, 990) is someone who cannot help but succumb to his baser impulses.<sup>60</sup> Polymestor is re-presented as a figure who becomes less civil and so, less human because of the violence inflicted upon him.

Likewise, the chorus and the audience must come to terms with the changing image of Hecuba. The idea of a vengefully violent Hecuba which arose in the conversation she had with Agamemnon (σὺν ταῖσδε τὸν ἐμὸν φονέα τιμωρήσομαι, 882) is now on full display as she stands

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<sup>60</sup> Mossman, 185-186.

before the entrance of the tent and taunts Polymestor. Under these circumstances, fear and trepidation are no longer emotions to be associated with the Trojan queen<sup>61</sup> but rather, with the listeners who must contend with the dueling images of Hecuba and Polymestor as royalty and family friends and Hecuba and Polymestor as mutilator and debased victim. In the moment that Hecuba steps aside and Polymestor appears in the tent's entryway, the scene becomes a matter of the chorus and the audience not only understanding the extent to which the violence in the *locus* has transformed everyone involved but also feeling the impact of Hecuba's actions as they crash headlong onto the stage.

### **Polymestor's Analeptic Narration of the *Locus***

With the reappearance of Polymestor and the presentation of the corpses of his children (1055), Hecuba acquires the physically substantiating figures which were formerly lacking in her account. At last, there is no doubt that she told the chorus and the audience the truth, and at last, there is no doubt that Polymestor is completely broken by the thought that he has been overtaken by women.<sup>62</sup> More than this, the presence of Polymestor on stage brings the chorus and the audience their final opportunity to learn the details of the *locus*. The group of women who

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<sup>61</sup> Gregory, 172. According to Gregory, Hecuba's desire to step out of the entryway of the tent does not "[reflect] the speaker's fear [but] a prudent response to Polymestor's frenzied state." Instances in which Hecuba *has* shown fear and trepidation largely occur before the sacrifice of Polyxena. For example, Hecuba's conversation with Odysseus (251-331 and 383-401) and her conversation with Polyxena (415-443) exhibit Hecuba in a state of utter dread and sorrow as she considers her life without her daughter.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 173-174. Her commentary on the opening moments of Polymestor's monody state that the language he uses conveys clearly his state of mind. He employs "polymetric rhythms, mainly dochmiacs interspersed with lyric anapests." Furthermore, the fact that he calls Hecuba and the Trojan women *ἀνδροφόνους*, an epic epithet for Hector and Achilles, does not associate the women with those heroes but rather, indicates his astonishment at who his mutilators are. In addition, it seems Hecuba herself is somewhat surprised at her own success. Earlier on line 1052, Hecuba calls the women who helped her *ἀπίσταις*. This appears to create the same effect as the epithet which Polymestor uses—it does not necessarily relate the acts of tragic women to the deeds of Iliadic men, but it uses heroic terms to emphasize the fantastic nature of the women's assault. On the other hand, there are those who see a direct correlation between Hecuba and epic heroes. For example, Segal (1990a), 309-310, and Zeitlin (1996), 195-196, make a comparison between Hecuba and Odysseus in the sense that they both use guile and deceit to blind their opponents (Polymestor and Polyphemus, respectively).

assisted Hecuba remain silent after they emerge with Hecuba, and Hecuba herself seems to be content with allowing Polymestor to speak for himself. Therefore, Polymestor is the last figure with the ability to describe precisely what occurred within the space of the *locus*. He can relate all the details before, during and after his mutilation, so he effectively becomes the *locus*' third messenger figure.

Furthermore, because he is able to portray the *locus* from the perspective of the victim, he offers listeners the chance to cognitively experience the manner in which he comes to realize that he has been led into a trap. Up until now, the chorus and the audience have only been able to engage with the aftermath of violence, but with Polymestor, they can go through each step of the women's plot and while doing so, gain insight into Polymestor's thoughts. Thus, the suspense in his narration does not come from the calculated divulgence of information but rather, from a constant awareness of the impending violence he is doomed to suffer. All this said, however, the chorus and the audience have to deal with the fact that, in his enraged state, Polymestor is not focused on revealing what happened to him. Instead, he is occupied with his own need for revenge which brings another element of suspense to the scene since the chorus and the audience have to wait for Polymestor to come to his senses.

When the chorus and the audience first see Polymestor, he is struggling to retain his sense of agency. His blindness causes him to lose all sense of his surroundings. As such, he is metaphorically isolated, literally helpless, and on the whole, his words and actions are characterized by great uncertainty. Polymestor speaks in deliberative statements ( $\pi\tilde{\alpha}$  βῶ,  $\pi\tilde{\alpha}$  στῶ,  $\pi\tilde{\alpha}$  κέλω...ποίαν ἢ ταύταν ἢ τάνδ' ἐξαλλάξω[;], 1057 and 1059-1060, respectively), and he repeatedly compares his movements to those of an animal.<sup>63</sup> He crawls forward and says that his gait is akin to that of a wild mountain beast (τετράποδος βάσιν θηρὸς ὄρεστέρου τιθέμενος ἐπὶ

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<sup>63</sup> Gregory, 173-174.

χεῖρα καὶ ἵχνος, 1058-1059). Then he portrays his hypothetical capture of the women in the form of a wild beast glutting itself on the remains of its prey (πᾶ πόδ’ ἐπάξας σαρκῶν ὀστέων τ’ ἐμπλησθῶ, θοίαν ἀργίων τιθέμενος θηρῶν[;], 1070-1072). In such a state, Polymestor appears to be communicatively ostracized from the *locus*—he cannot adequately narrate or describe anything since he cannot perceive anything. Consequently, Polymestor’s desperate ruminations augment the suspense of the scene because they raise the possibility that Polymestor may be incapable of elucidating the remaining details of the *locus*.

The reappearance of Agamemnon (1109), then, becomes the catalyst which alleviates this element of suspense as he grants Polymestor the ability to be reintegrated into the *locus*’ narrative structure. Agamemnon explicitly sets Polymestor back on the path of narrative cohesion by implicitly appealing to his sight; he redirects Polymestor’s focus so that his ensuing speech is not a matter of rage and uncertainty, but an account based off of things which he can corroborate through mental sight.<sup>64</sup> In other words, he prompts Polymestor to take up the mantle of the messenger and to provide his audience with the specific, analeptic details which will enable them to have a more thorough version of the *locus*. Thus, with his attention reset, Polymestor begins his narration by ironically enabling Agamemnon, the chorus and members of the audience to visualize his misfortunes:

...μόνον δὲ σὺν τέκνοισί μ’ εἰσάγει  
 δόμους, ἴν’ ἄλλος μὴ τις εἰδεῖη τάδε.  
 ἴζω δὲ κλίνης ἐν μέσῳ κάμπυας γόνυ· (1150)  
 πολλαὶ δέ, χειρὸς αἱ μὲν ἐξ ἀριστερᾶς,  
 αἱ δ’ ἔνθεν, ὡς δὴ παρὰ φίλῳ Τρώων κόραι  
 θάκουσ’ ἔχουσαι κερκίδ’ Ἥδωνῆς χερὸς  
 ἦνουν, ὑπ’ ἀγῆσ’ αὐτῶν λεύσσομαι πέπλους·

...she led me unguarded with my children into her

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<sup>64</sup> Agamemnon tells Polymestor: ἴσχ’ ἐκβαλὼν δὲ καρδίας τὸ βάρβαρον λέγ’, ὡς ἀκούσας σοῦ τε τῆσδέ τ’ ἐν μέρει κρίνω δικάϊως ἀνθ’ ὅτου πάσχεις τάδε (1129-1131). As Gregory, 179, notes, this statement “lends plausibility” to Polymestor’s shift in tone.

tents, so that no one might perceive these things. I sat in the center of the couch taking my ease; there the women of Troy took their seats—some on the right [of me], others on the left, as if beside a friend—they were praising the weaving of our Edonian handiwork, holding these robes up to the light and looking at them. (1148-1154)

At the outset of Polymestor’s account, he lays out the details of the extrascenic space. Previously, the space was generally defined by its transformation from Hecuba’s place of refuge into the site of violence. The particular features of the interior, however, were never explicitly delineated. Hence, Polymestor’s report offers his listeners their first chance to visualize the spatial framework of the *locus*.

As he and his sons step within the tent, Polymestor emphasizes their vulnerability (μόνον δὲ σὺν τέκνοισί μ’ εἰσάγει, 1148)<sup>65</sup> and his exact position as he sits among Hecuba’s group of women (ἴζω δὲ κλίνης ἐν μέσῳ κάμψας γόνυ· πολλὰ δέ, χειρὸς αἱ μὲν ἐξ ἀριστερᾶς, αἱ δ’ ἔνθεν, 1150-1152). He also calls attention to his casual demeanor by employing a brief simile comparing their arrangement to that of one among friends (ὥς δὴ παρὰ φίλῳ, 1152). Polymestor has no indication that he is in any danger, and while he sits in the center, the women appear similarly untroubled. They surround him, and the suspense of the scene rises because all on stage and all in the audience recognize the deceit in the women’s behavior.

For the moment, the women are friendly toward him, and as “befits” their womanly inclinations, they concern themselves with Polymestor’s robes and compliment him on their craftsmanship (θάκουσ ἔχουσαι κερκίδ’ Ἡδωνῆς χερὸς ἦνουν, ὑπ’ αὐγὰς τούσδε λεύσσουσαι πέπλους, 1153-1154). Through their actions, they assure that he has no misgivings about their

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<sup>65</sup> Gregory, 181. Gregory notes that *μόνον* is indicative of Polymestor being “without the bodyguards who would normally accompany him.”

proximity to him.<sup>66</sup> Yet, in the time that the women are tending to Polymestor, the chorus and the audience are forced to deal with the conflicting ideas of comfort and apprehension.<sup>67</sup> The women may be encouraging Polymestor to relax, but the more the *locus*' narration moves closer to the image of Polymestor on the stage, the more it counteracts that notion—the cognitive image of Polymestor within the space of the *locus* cannot help but be affected by the sight of Polymestor standing on stage. What he describes and how he actually appears come together to create an unsettling and arresting scenario—a blinded Polymestor asks his audience to imagine him physically able to see but mentally unable to perceive the women's plot against him.

Moving forward with his narration, Polymestor describes how Hecuba and the women lull Polymestor into a false sense of security by continuing to play on the feelings of comfort in the scene:

ἄλλαι δὲ κάμακε Θρηκίῳ θεώμεναι (1155)  
 γυμνὸν μ' ἔθηκαν διπτύχου στολίσματος,  
 ὄσαι δὲ τοκάδες ἦσαν, ἐκπαγλούμεναι  
 τέκν' ἐν χεροῖν ἐπαλλον, ὡς πρόσω πατρὸς  
 γένοιτο, διαδοχαῖς' ἀμείβουσαι χερῶν.  
 καίτ' ἐκ γαληνῶν πῶς δοκεῖς προσφθεγμάτων (1160)  
 εὐθύς λαβοῦσαι φάσγαν' ἐκ πέπλων ποθὲν  
 κεντοῦσι παῖδας, αἱ δὲ πολεμίων δίκην  
 ξυναρπάσασαι τὰς ἐμὰς εἶχον χέρας  
 καὶ κῶλα· παισὶ δ' ἀρκέσαι χρήζων ἐμοῖς,  
 εἰ μὲν πρόσωπον ἐξανισταίην ἐμὸν (1165)  
 κόμης κατεῖχον, εἰ δὲ κινοίην χέρας  
 πλήθει γυναικῶν οὐδὲν ἦνυτον τάλας.

Others, gazing at my Thracian spears, made me bare  
 of my two-fold protection. Those who were just  
 now mothers swayed my children in their arms,  
 marveling at them and passing them from one hand

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<sup>66</sup> Gregory, 181.

<sup>67</sup> Segal (1990a), 314-315. Here, Segal comments on the women's robes and the manner in which they evoke two, opposing sentiments as Hecuba turns to violence. He states, "The motif of 'concealment in robes' thus undergoes a massive reversal that mirrors the structure of the play... the *peplos*, the sign of women's domesticity, modesty, and obedience to male authority, reveals this hidden other side of the female in tragedy, the sudden, terrible release of murderous, vengeful power."

to another so that they were far from their father.  
And then from their serene words—imagine that!—  
immediately taking daggers from somewhere in  
their robes, they stabbed my children, while others,  
snatching me in the manner of enemies, were  
holding my hands and legs; if I raised my head,  
longing to defend my children, they held on to my  
hair; and if I moved my hands, I, poor wretch, was  
able to do nothing for the multitude of women.

(1155-1167)

With Hecuba and the women still seated in proximity to Polymestor, they find another way to make him more vulnerable. They take away his weapons, again under the pretense of complimenting their construction (ἄλλαι δὲ κάμακε Θρηκίῳ θεώμεναι γυμνόν μ' ἔθηκαν διπτύχου στολίσματος, 1155-1156), and in doing so, they immediately keep the most explicit tools of violence out of Polymestor's reach. Even though in most circumstances the removal of Polymestor's weapons would seem to heighten the feelings of ease within the area of the *locus*, the image of a defenseless Polymestor invariably augments the feelings of suspense among Polymestor's listeners outside of the *locus* because they understand that this is merely the next stage of the women's plan. Adding to this is the presence of another group of women who are specifically tasked with separating Polymestor from his children.

These women are “new mothers” (ὄσαι δὲ τοκάδες ἦσαν, 1157), a designation which would normally raise no alarm, but within this space, the title attains a twofold distinction. The first, and more common association, puts forth the idea that these women will be caring and gentle toward Polymestor's children, and it maintains the earlier innocuousness of the meeting between Hecuba and Polymestor. The second, and more accurate assessment, links the notion of motherhood to Hecuba and the revenge she will soon take for the misfortunes she has experienced. With this in mind, the swaying of the children (τέκν' ἐν χεροῖν ἔπαλλον, 1158)

ceases to express the women's delight and instead begins to reveal their move toward violence.<sup>68</sup> Because of this, apprehension—in every sense of the word—takes hold. The serenity in the women's words (ἐκ γαληνῶν...προσφθεγμάτων, 1160) and the platitudes they bestow upon Polymestor's sons (ἐκπαλούμεναι τέκν[α], 1157-1158) cannot supplant the looming presence of violence in the scene.

The explicit calm and the isolation of both sets of victims adds to the feeling of suspense in the scene because there is nothing to delay Hecuba and the women from striking. As Polymestor states and his auditors understand, the women's plan sets everything in place, but in spite of that, Polymestor stops his narration and speaks directly to his listeners. When he tells those around him to imagine (πῶς δοκεῖς, 1160) the next stage of the women's trap, he temporarily breaks the continuity of the *locus*. Even as Polymestor is renewing his call for visualization and reestablishing the connection between the *locus* and its recipients, his interjection is also subtly calling attention to what is lying before his viewers' eyes, namely himself and the corpses of his two children. Once the time comes to imagine the Trojan women's assault, Polymestor will immediately ask his audience to focus and acknowledge not only what will come next narratologically but the very prevailing results of those acts as well. He is prompting his auditors to start mentally recreating the *process* of violence. Unlike Hecuba during her narration, Polymestor asks Agamemnon, the chorus and the audience at large to concentrate intently on the beginning, middle *and* the end of the violent act in order to punctuate the effects of the *locus*. In this way, the mental recreation of his children's death becomes doubly affecting because it rapidly leads to the sight of their bodies on stage.

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<sup>68</sup> Interestingly, the more common meaning for verb *πάλλω* is "swaying" or "poising" a weapon. In the passage above, the swaying motion the women use with Polymestor's children can also be seen in this sense. The children represent not only additional targets for Hecuba's revenge but they can similarly be considered "tools" to hurt Polymestor further. In other words, the children become weapons to use against Polymestor. They are being poised by the women to inflict greater pain against their father.



Bolstering the effectiveness of this juxtaposition is the accelerated pace of Polymestor's narration. Once the women draw their daggers to murder the children, there is no incremental, painstaking detail regarding his children's deaths or the ferocity of the women's acts of violence. In lieu of that sort of narration, there are succinct descriptions which provide the most important aspects of the scene—the visualization of daggers moves to the image of the children being stabbed (λαβοῦσαι φάσγαν' ἐκ πέπλων ποθὲν κεντοῦσι παῖδας, 1161-1162) and then to the imagined sight of the women restraining Polymestor's movements (αἱ δὲ πολεμίων δίκην ξυναρπάσασαι τὰς ἐμὰς εἶχον χέρας καὶ κῶλα, 1162-1164) at an intense speed (εὐθὺς, 1161). As he says, any attempt to escape is quickly countered and met with even more resistance than before.<sup>69</sup> In contrast to the interaction Polymestor had with the women when he first entered the *locus*, which was purposefully slow and meant to encourage feelings of comfort and friendliness, the interplay between him and his captors is currently defined by a calculated haste which means to reinforce Hecuba and the Trojan women's power over him. Whereas Polymestor could easily consider the women friends in an earlier simile (ὡς δὴ παρὰ φίλοι, 1152), he can now recast them with a different simile and portray them as enemies (αἱ δὲ πολεμίων δίκην, 1162). Whatever feelings of ambiguity and superficial comfort there were in Hecuba and the women's actions are inexorably obliterated by the women's instant strike against the children.

While Hecuba and the women are ensnaring Polymestor physically, it becomes apparent that they are also ensnaring the viewers cognitively in the retelling. Polymestor's language, in particular, has stressed the haptic quality of the *locus*. From the start of his account and

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<sup>69</sup> Gregory, 182. When discussing the women's hold of Polymestor, Gregory singles out the phrase πολεμίων δίκην and notes that others have taken πολεμίων as πολυπόδων. This comparison, according to Gregory, is "bizarre in itself and inconsistent" because it does not fit with the tone of Polymestor's account. On the other hand, this possibility would seem to enhance the tone of his narration since he already compared himself to an animal immediately after came back on stage and will do so again shortly. Moreover, this image contributes to the idea that the women are currently smothering Polymestor to prevent him from helping his children. Alternatively, the phrase πολεμίων δίκην has useful, comparative potential which is discussed shortly.

continuing up to the moment of his mutilation, Polymestor employs various forms of the word χεῖρ (1153, 1158, 1159, 1163, and 1166). In each of these uses, the women steadily take hold of objects of increasing importance. They move from Polymestor’s woven robe and his spears (τούσδε λεύσσουμεν πέπλους... κάμακε Θρηκίω θεώμεναι γυμνόν μ’ ἔθηκαν, 1154-1156) to his children (τέκν’ ἐν χεροῖν ἔπαλλον, 1158), and finally, they possess Polymestor himself (τάς ἐμάς εἶχον χέρας καὶ κῶλα, 1163-1164). At every point, Polymestor and his children are in the women’s grasp. There is no hope of escape, and from the perspective of Polymestor’s listeners, there is no chance for them to turn away from the prospect of violence—they are cognitively bound to envision the fulfillment of Hecuba’s retribution.

Taking this into account, the last stage of Polymestor’s narration returns to a greater level of detail and gradually forces Agamemnon, the chorus and the audience to experience Hecuba’s blinding of Polymestor:

τὸ λοίσθιον δέ, πῆμα πῆματος πλέον,  
 ἐξεργάσαντο δεῖν’· ἐμῶν γὰρ ὀμμάτων  
 πόρπας λαβοῦσαι τὰς τάλαιπώρους κόρας (1170)  
 κεντοῦσιν αἰμάσσουσιν· εἶτ’ ἀνὰ στέγας  
 φυγάδες ἔβησαν. ἐκ δὲ πηδήσας ἐγὼ  
 θῆρ ὡς διώκω τὰς μαιφόνους κύνας,  
 ἅπαντ’ ἐρευνῶν τοῖχον, ὡς κυνηγέτης  
 βάλλων ἀράσσω. τοιάδε σπεύδων χάριν (1175)  
 πέπονθα τὴν σὴν, πολέμιόν γε σὸν κτανών,  
 Ἀγάμεμνον.

Then they committed a final horror, a calamity full of misery: for taking their brooches, they stabbed and made bloody the miserable pupils of my eyes; then they departed, fleeing through their rooms. I, springing up like a wild beast, pursued the murderous bitches, searching along every wall, striking and smashing, just like a huntsman. Such things I have suffered for the sake of promoting your interest and killing your enemy, Agamemnon.  
 (1168-1177)

For the first time in Polymestor's narration, the *locus* is explicitly aggressive toward the act of sight. Before, the imagery was, perhaps, terrible—something which was difficult to envision and likely difficult to relate as well—but there was no “fault” against the act of cognitive recreation itself. Here, the audience, through the perspective of Polymestor, is compelled to visualize the women plunging their brooches into his eyes.

Polymestor specifically mentions the pupils of his eyes (τὰς ταλαιπώρους κόρας, 1170) as the precise targets of their actions. His narration goes from his eyes (ἐμῶν γὰρ ὀμμάτων, 1169) to his pupils and lastly, to the verbs denoting the violence committed against these parts (κεντοῦσιν αἰμάσσουσιν, 1171). Each movement narrows the focus of the spectators' visualization until they are prompted to imagine their vision destroyed by the women's act of mutilation. As they do, they come to embody Polymestor's experience in the waning moments of the *locus*; the “benefit,” so to speak, for their engagement with the narrative's details is a vividly visceral understanding of the violence Hecuba and her band of women inflict. Exactly when imaginative sight is under attack, when the audience cognitively experiences blindness, it possesses the greatest comprehension of the deeds within the *locus*. Additionally, with the women's successful offensive against Polymestor comes the release of suspense. All is finally revealed to Agamemnon, the chorus and the audience, and so, all that is left is for Polymestor to describe the aftermath of violence.

Without sight, Polymestor's account becomes solely dependent on his other senses. As such, the details in his story focus on relaying to the audience what he is able to hear and feel after Hecuba and the other women abandon him. Whereas the previous details were corroborated with his ability to see them, he can only listen to the sounds of the women and imagine them hastening back into separate areas of the tent (εἶτ' ἀνὰ στέγας φυγάδες ἔβησαν, 1171-1172). Just

like the chorus during its synchronous narration, Polymestor employs other narrative techniques to compensate for the things he cannot see. He can describe his own actions, but the image of his actions is depicted with other referents to create its desired effect. Polymestor cognitively recreates a vision of himself so that his audience may be able to imaginatively reconstruct his experience. For this reason, Polymestor comes full circle and describes himself as a beast in one instance (ἐγὼ θῆρ ὧς, 1172-1173) and as a huntsman in the other (ὧς κυνηγέτης, 1174). The women, too, are re-presented as a pack of dogs (τὰς μαιφόνους κύνας, 1173). He returns to animal similes to express the severity of his anger.<sup>70</sup> Unfortunately for him, his effort merely seems to evoke a feeling of frustrated aggression. Hecuba and her band of women have vanquished him completely, and he is left lashing out in vain and unable to hit any of his intended targets.

Although Polymestor endeavors to use these similes to illustrate the depth of his victimization, his audience's awareness of the circumstances leading to his mutilation forestall any feelings of pity or sympathy which they may have had for him. If Polymestor's narration of his children's murder enabled his listeners to begin to perceive and understand the process of violence through their ability to imagine and then see the children's fate, his description of his final moments within the space of the *locus* facilitates the auditors' comprehension of Hecuba's revenge as they visualize the assault and subsequently see him blinded and standing next to the corpse of Polydorus.

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<sup>70</sup> Luschnig, 232-233. Luschnig considers the two entrances of Polymestor—his first introduction into the scene and his reintroduction after his mutilation—as the key points at which an audience realizes the “inhumanity” of Hecuba's deeds. For him, Polymestor's reduction to a bestial figure does not preclude him from receiving pity, as I argue, but rather, seems to be a comment on Hecuba's degradation and the downfall of society in the play. As stated above (cf. note 50), there are several problems with this sort of social commentary, especially as it relates to Hecuba's character, but nevertheless, Luschnig seems to be correct in using Polymestor's wrath as a means to emphasize the shocking nature of the women's acts.

Rather than communicate his wrath, Polymestor's similes unwittingly relate the extent of the *women's* fury—in the form of a pack of dogs, the women overturn all expectations to vanquish the huntsman. They defy the “natural order” of things because of the intensity of their outrage. Despite the fact that Polymestor gives his narration in an attempt to justify his killing of Polydorus (τοιιάδε σπεύδων χάριν πέπονθα τὴν σὴν, πολέμιόν γε σὸν κτανών, Ἀγάμεμνον, 1175-1177), he cannot mislead Agamemnon or any of his listeners because he has no information to conceal; at this point, the *locus* has no more cognitive gaps. Thus, in the course of narrating the *locus*, the impact of Polymestor's shocking mutilation transforms into the force of a blow well-struck. The violence of this *locus* does not condemn the women to some form of moral degradation but instead, reveals the horrifying satisfaction of a well-executed plan.<sup>71</sup>

### Conclusion

Contrary to the scene of Ajax's suicide, the scene of Polymestor's mutilation offers the most complex usage of the tragic *locus violentus* because it is a scene which makes full use of the essential and supplementary characteristics of the concept. At the outset, the synchronous narration of the chorus presents the scene as a murder which can be envisioned metaphorically as a moment of divine vengeance. The synchronous and proleptic versions of the *locus* related by Hecuba, however, change the audience's understanding of the scene by reconfiguring the image of murder as murder *and* mutilation. Yet, even with this new information, the audience is still left to wonder about the particulars of the scene because Hecuba purposefully refrains from giving her audience a full picture of the violence she inflicts. Lastly, the analeptic rendition of the *locus* from Polymestor fills the narrative gaps left by Hecuba and augments the audience's

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<sup>71</sup> Michelini, 155. As Michelini notes, Polymestor's account of his suffering “is couched in a tone of naïve pathos.” His motivations for murdering Polydorus are, as everyone knows at this point, disingenuous so the audience will be lead “to expect his rejection, and they will not be confused by any strong sympathies” for him.

visualization of the Trojan women's violent acts through extreme detail and the use of similes. In all, the recounting of Polymestor's mutilation either misdirects, conceals and/or reveals. It creates varying levels of comprehension which imbue the *locus* with a feeling of suspense and compel the audience to stay closely attuned to the narrative progression of violence—it is not a matter of merely listening to details but listening with the specific aim of uncovering the intricacies of the *locus*' gruesome deeds in order to understand their potency.

Moreover, the spatial proximity of Polymestor's mutilation, the aurality that comes with such immediacy and the presence of Polymestor himself prompt viewers to confront violence cognitively *and* directly. There are explicit, sensory cues and tangible figures which must be addressed alongside other features. As such, the need for the audience to visualize is more elaborate here than in other tragic *loci* because every aspect of the violence occurring against Polymestor and his children has to be imaginatively recreated and simultaneously understood through firsthand observation of the violence's results. With such a level of interaction in play, the *locus* has an unshakable hold upon audience members because it maintains them entrenched in the visceral effects of violence's horrors. When audience members can hear about violence and then find themselves face-to-face with murderers, mutilators, victims, and the like, a *locus* cannot help but be a fully immersive experience.

## Conclusion

*“I have always felt that you should do the minimum on screen to get the maximum audience effect. I believe the audience should work. Sometimes it is necessary to go into some element of violence, but I only do it if I have a strong reason. For example, in Psycho there was this very violent impressionistic murder in a bathroom, you see, and it was montaged by little pieces of film giving the impression of a knife stabbing a victim, and so on and so forth.... Once I had given the audience that one—shall we say, sample?—I allowed them to imagine the violence, you see. I did not have to show it.”*

-- Alfred Hitchcock<sup>1</sup>

Over the course of this dissertation, I have endeavored to demonstrate that the narration of violence in tragedy is a continuation and refinement of the narrative presentation of violence in epic and that the depiction of violence is enhanced in both of these genres because of the use of the *locus violentus*. Chapter 1, therefore, aimed to establish the presence of the *locus* in the *Iliad* and to highlight its effectiveness through an analysis of its battle scenes. I began by examining how the general features of epic enabled audience members to engage “visually” with the details in Homeric epic. I noted Homeric epic’s tendency to refine and delimit imagined spaces and considered the presence of “stock imagery” within the narrative. Also, I commented on the increased investment which visualization demands. Next, I discussed how the idea of compartmentalized, cognitive spaces was especially prevalent in Iliadic battle scenes. As such, I briefly described the manner in which a larger skirmish is narrowed down to the area composed of the battle between two heroes through an analysis of a battle scene from Book 15 of the *Iliad*.

Following this analysis, I explained that the tendency to present battle scenes with a high level of detail within an imaginatively limited space led me to the concept of the *locus violentus*. The *locus violentus* was the means by which the epic audience “participated” and engaged with

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<sup>1</sup> Hitchcock and Wertham (1997), 146.

acts of violence; it offered a sense of “grotesque intimacy” and heightened the effects of violent deeds. With the concept generally laid out, I moved to a discussion about the types of passages I would use to determine the effectiveness of the *locus*. There, I defined the *locus* as “a visualized, narrative space consisting of duel between at least two warriors which remains safe from encroachment until some form of violence is inflicted or there is a call to end the duel by external or often divine intervention.” Moreover, I noted the importance of other characteristics—namely, scale, suspense and aggression toward the audience as primary attributes of the *locus* and similes and anecdotes as the *locus*’ supplementary attributes—and of internal spectators who could provide the emotive cues for the audience during scenes of violence.

After laying out all the characteristics of the epic *locus*, I analyzed the formal duel between Menelaus and Paris in Book 3. This duel provided a case of formalized violence, and as such, offered a base form for the *locus* which I could use to make comparisons with other Iliadic *loci*. From here, I turned to Agamemnon’s *aristeia* in Book 11 and to the battle between Hector and Achilles in Book 22 to highlight the form and function of the *locus*. The analysis of the battle between Hector and Achilles then lead to a discussion of Priam, Hecuba and Andromache. As the observers of the *locus*, these characters acted as the figures to whom the audience would look in order to gain greater insight into the effects of violence. Additionally, I emphasized the importance of Athena and Ares as observers of Diomedes’ *aristeia* in Book 5. With all these viewers in mind, I drew a connection between internal spectators in epic and the tragic messenger. I noted these figures’ tendency to be present and to have a clear view of violence and then used these similarities to transition into the discussion of the tragic *locus*.

Chapter 2 took the foundation set by the epic *locus* and applied the concept to tragedy. As a narrative feature of this genre, the *locus* underwent several changes in order to account for the



presence of the theater and the company of actors and chorus members. For instance, the configuration of space was more focused than that of epic because the layout of the stage lent itself to more precise areas of demarcation. The element of narration was expanded so that characters who explicitly bore the title of messenger or herald could be considered alongside the chorus and others as viable sources of information. I was also able to analyze the effects of analepsis, prolepsis and synchronous narrative techniques on the portrayal of violence. Visualization became a matter of perceiving *and* imagining. Audience members were tasked with cognitively shifting the setting of a play, if necessary, and with perceiving actors as they performed on stage, imaginatively projecting emotions and mental states onto them through the tragic mask, and finally using that information to aid in the envisioning of violent deeds. And suspense was not only the result of narrative techniques but also the tragedians' willingness to modify longstanding features of myths. In all, these modifications and advancements, plus the inclusion of the *locus*' supplementary characteristics—similes, metaphors and the presentation of the victim—demonstrated that the audience's cognitive interaction with the tragic *locus* would be more complex since listeners would be given the chance to hear about violence and then see the results and effects of that violence firsthand.

From here, Chapter 3 offered two case studies for the tragic *locus*. Having explained in Chapter 2 why it was useful to maintain my focus on characters from the *Iliad*, I selected two tragedies with scenes which would represent the least and most cognitively engaging instances of the *locus*. Minimal and maximal cognitive engagement were determined by the number of ways in which the essential characteristics of the *locus* were employed. The supplementary characteristics could enhance the intricacy of the scenes, but they were not determinants for minimality and maximality. With this in mind, the suicide in Sophocles' *Ajax* represented the

scene with minimal cognitive interaction, whereas the mutilation near the end Euripides' *Hecuba* was the scene which required maximal cognitive involvement.

*Ajax*'s suicide scene emerged as the minimal example of the *locus* because the audience's imaginative interaction with the scene was centered on visualization. The other essential characteristics of the *locus* were not factors in the audience's mental engagement because they were relatively uncomplicated. The plan of action for Ajax's suicide was straightforward. The use of the stage as the site of the suicide meant the audience did not need to envision any sort of space or any of the actions being performed. Furthermore, the narration provided by Ajax and Tecmessa did not complicate the portrayal of the *locus*, and the suspense in the scene was largely eliminated since it did not speak to the prospect of Ajax's suicide but rather, the time of its execution. Visualization, specifically that of the image of Ajax and Tecmessa, was the characteristic which the audience needed to engage. Ajax prompted the audience to use visualization to imagine him as a warrior and corpse, and Tecmessa emphasized the visualization of her symbolic death since her fate was wholly dependent on Ajax's survival.

Alternatively, the mutilation scene in *Hecuba* was the maximal case for the *locus* because it represented a scene whose essential characteristics were developed from the outset of the play *and* in the multiple portrayals of violence. An overarching feeling of suspense emerged at the start of the tragedy because the death of Hecuba's son, Polydorus, was undisclosed to all except the audience. Moreover, the ghost of Polydorus told the audience to expect the sacrifice of Polyxena and the appearance of two bodies immediately after the event. Once the messenger, Talthybius, related the details of the sacrifice, however, it became clear that Polydorus' proclamations only revealed a portion of what would actually occur. Polyxena unexpectedly reasserted her regal status during the sacrifice and died a death akin to that of a hero, and only

one body was brought out to Hecuba. Even more surprisingly, it was the body of Polydorus, and not Polyxena, which appeared. In all this, the repeated subversion of expectations imbued the tragedy with suspense and caused other forms of misdirection—namely, misdirection employed by Hecuba to conceal the details of her revenge—to take hold. During the mutilation of Polymestor, the portrayal of the *locus*' space also changed. Previously, Agamemnon's tent was Hecuba's refuge after Polyxena's death, but as the site of the *locus*, the tent took on a foreboding presence.

Once Hecuba and Polymestor entered the tent, there were several shifts in narration, visualization and even the form of violence. First, the chorus attempted to narrate the *locus*' proceedings by drawing upon the details in Hecuba's earlier statements to Agamemnon. It envisioned a scene of death and presented the *locus*' violence as acts of divine retribution. Yet, upon hearing Polymestor's screams, the chorus realized its narration was flawed. Because of this, Hecuba's account of the *locus* became important because it was assumed that she would correct and clarify the details which the chorus had missed. Her rendition *did* revise the image of the *locus* from a scene of murder to a scene of murder *and* mutilation, but it also omitted the act of violence itself. The chorus and audience were kept in suspense because they were only given the results of Hecuba's revenge. At last, Polymestor's narration of the *locus* filled all the cognitive gaps and offered similes to bolster the imagery being depicted. His report finally alleviated the feeling of suspense in the scene because it provided the audience with a full understanding of the violence which took place. Taken altogether, the three narrative depictions of the *locus* demanded the utmost attention from the audience. Listeners were continually engaged with this *locus* because every change of perspective and every portrayal of violence would lead them to have a greater understanding of Hecuba's acts of vengeance. Thus, when considered the along

with the suicide scene in *Ajax*, the mutilation scene in *Hecuba* presented the maximal end of the *locus*' affective range. The two scenes represented the least and the most of what the *locus* could do with a tragic scene of violence.

Thus, throughout this dissertation, the concept of the *locus violentus* has allowed me to formulate a poetics of violence; it has shown that the combination of narration, visualization and space in Iliadic battle scenes establishes an epic precedent for narrated scenes of violence in tragedy. The lack of onstage tragic violence may be due to the miraculous nature of act, as in the sacrifice of Iphigeneia in *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, or because of the untenable logistics of the scene, as in the battle between Eteocles and Polynices in *Seven Against Thebes*, but it may also be the result of a tragedian choosing to portray violence narratively in order to grant the audience deeper insight into the act of violence.

Narrative enables tragic characters to delve into the motives or thoughts surrounding violence. For example, listeners know the hesitation Neoptolemus feels when he sacrifices Polyxena (566) in *Hecuba* because the messenger, Talthybius, is able to take on Neoptolemus' perspective during the delivery of his account. Narrative also allows the audience to "see" the trauma—physical and otherwise—wrought through violent deeds; in *Medea*, it can visualize the poisoned crown and robe eating away at the flesh of Glauce (1186-1189) and the helplessness of Creon (1218-1219) because of the specific details given by the messenger in his speech. And narrative brings listeners into close imaginative contact with the perpetrators and victims of violence. In *Agamemnon*, for instance, it causes them to envision themselves standing close enough to see Clytemnestra wrapping her robe around Agamemnon's body and striking him down (1382-1384) because Cassandra's earlier report precisely designates the bath as the site of the murder (1109, 1128-1129). In all, I hope to have shown that narration, and the visualized and

spatial characteristics which arise from narration, bring a greater level of engagement with violence.

Moreover, I hope to have shown that this enhanced sense of engagement comes from the feeling of participating and enacting the scene of violence. When the audience receives a narrative, it effectively envisions itself being present in the scene which the narrative portrays—it is cognitively in the space of the *locus*. This notion of inhabiting the space of a violent scene begins with the *Iliad* as listeners are prompted to focus and “move” around the area of combat between two heroes and continues as the tragic audience is asked to imagine characters’ movements and deeds within specific, delimited areas in and around the theater. In addition, while audiences inhabit the space of a violent scene, the narrative they are receiving has a high level of detail, but not an *exhaustive* amount of detail. When the Homeric narrator presents the battle between Agamemnon and Iphidamas in Book 11 (232-240), for example, he does not detail every step or movement the warriors make. Instead, the narrator sets up their charge against one another (232), Iphidamas’ strike (234-235) and Iphidamas’ death (240). Other details enhance this basic outline of events, but nevertheless, the Homeric narrator does not tell his listeners how Agamemnon poises his spear or why his volley misses, only that it does so (233). Consequently, there are parts of the *locus* which the audience mentally fills in to advance the scene and complete the acts of violence.

Therefore, the level of engagement with the *locus* depends on the audience’s ability to reconstruct mentally the details of a scene and, in particular, the *actions* taking place within a scene. This is why I consider the suicide scene in *Ajax* the least cognitively engaging example of the *locus*. Visualization is limited and does not wholly enable the mental recreation of Ajax’s actions. This changes when Ajax briefly describes how he will impale himself and when

Tecmessa relays the events of Ajax's suicide to the chorus, but by that point, the audience's focus has changed so that visualization is centered on the idea of Tecmessa as a corpse. The same process is at play in the mutilation scene in *Hecuba* though there it is far more complex. The audience needs to visualize all aspects of the *locus*, but the details of the scene and Hecuba's actions come only at a gradual pace. The audience envisions the results of violence but has no cognitive glimpses of the actions it must enact until Polymestor offers his rendition of the *locus*. For this reason, this *locus* is the most cognitively engaging form of the concept—the scene, the actions within the scene, and the physical presence of the characters involved in the scene are all things with which the audience must contend. On the whole, then, the *locus violentus* establishes a conceptual framework for analysis of violent scenes in epic and tragedy. It creates a conceptual template through which one can study the structure and determine the effects of violent depictions. Yet, my concept of the *locus* is only the starting point. Since violence is such a pervasive theme in ancient Greek literature, there are other avenues of investigation which could be taken to expand the application of the *locus*.

### **Further Areas of Study**

One of the first areas of expansion for the *locus violentus* is the group of non-Iliadic tragedies. As noted in Chapter 2, there are several tragedies with scenes which exhibit all the qualities necessary for the construction of a *locus*. As such, one could go on to do a more thorough survey of the *locus* within tragedy. Furthermore, one may expand the literary scope of the dissertation and consider other genres which contain scenes of violence. For instance, the forensic speech of *Lysias* 1 which deals with the murder of the adulterer, Eratosthenes, constructs a highly detailed scene to illustrate the motivating factors of the murder, and a historical account

of violence, such as the killing of the Lydian king, Candaules, in Book 1 (Chapter 12.1-2) of Herodotus' *Histories* similarly provides readers with a vivid account of murder. Do these constitute, respectively, the presence of a rhetorical and historical *locus violentus*? Is there a similar use of visualization, narration and space, and do these scenes produce the same level of engagement as those of epic and tragedy? Moving beyond Greek sources, one could examine Roman gladiatorial games. These, too, present fictionalized depictions of violence within a defined spatial setting, albeit with very real results. In such an instance, scholars may examine the effects of real, observable violence in place of fictional, imagined violence and decide whether this crucial difference makes the *locus* applicable to this context.

Something else to consider is the depiction of violence which causes a different sort of physical harm or does no physical harm at all. Throughout this dissertation, ideas such as psychological violence, political violence, or sexual violence have not been explored. Doing so could help bring nuance to the concept of the *locus* (assuming, of course, that there *is* a *locus*). Greater analysis of such scenes would have to be done in order to see whether visualization, narration and the like are still in play, whether these characteristics require modification, or whether a whole different set of characteristics needs to be established. Gendered conceptions of violence could lead to other questions as well—do female perpetrators of violence affect the depiction of violence in ways which male perpetrators do not?

Finally, the *locus* may find an outlet outside of the classical sphere, namely in post-classical theater and modern cinema. The tragedies of Shakespeare or Webster, for example, could conceivably be considered further instances of the evolution of the *locus* since their performative setting is analogous to that of the ancient theater. Furthermore, their willingness to portray violence on stage could provide the basis for a comparative analysis. In similar vein,

violence in modern cinema may represent the next stage of the *locus*' development after post-classical theater. In fact, it is precisely this idea that prompted the decision to open the conclusion with a quote from Hitchcock.

Since its opening in 1960, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* has established its place in cinematic and cultural history. One of the reasons, if not *the* reason, the film has been able to do so is the memorability and visceral impact of the shower scene referenced above. In the scene, Marion Crane, a beautiful young woman, enters her bathroom to take a shower. As she stands under the steady stream of water, she begins to lather her body. Marion turns toward the shower head at which point the audience sees the bathroom door open and a figure in silhouette appear on the other side of the shower curtain. Quickly, the figure draws back the curtain and holds up a large butcher knife. Marion turns and screams, and the killer stabs her multiple times. The killer leaves, she falls lifelessly to the ground, and the audience watches as her blood slowly swirls down the shower drain.

*Psycho* elicited many responses from viewers when it opened. As J. Hoberman of the *Village Voice* writes in his retrospective on the film, "Audiences responded...with a convulsive mixture of screams and laughter. People bolted for the doors and fainted in their seats. The mayhem caused one New York theater to call the cops and others to call for censorship."<sup>2</sup> Overall, there is no doubt that the film had, and continues to have, an effect. Some could argue that this is because of the renowned fame and beauty of Janet Leigh, the actress playing Marion Crane; others may point to the trademark violin screeches in the soundtrack; still others may say it is the combination of these features and/or others. Yet, the simplest, and likely most accurate, reason can be found in the words of Hitchcock himself.

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<sup>2</sup> Hoberman, " 'Psycho' is 50: Remembering its Impact, and the Andrew Sarris Review."



As he states, the shower scene in *Psycho* is “impressionistic.” It does not show outright violence and gore, but it can be interpreted as such because it gives viewers the “impression of a knife stabbing a victim.” At no point during the scene does the audience see a knife enter Marion’s body, but the quick sequence of shots between Marion and the killer’s knife allows the audience to visualize the murder taking place. The editing of the shower scene compels viewers to engage cognitively with the images it receives so that it can fill in the gaps and enact the act of violence. As such, this process is comparable to the visualization ancient audiences employ to envision scenes of violence in tragedy.

Indeed, taking the other characteristics in the scene into account, it is possible to see this as a modern example of the *locus violentus*. Aside from narration, which is not present due to the nature of the cinematic medium, *Psycho*’s shower scene bears all the essential characteristics used to define the tragic *locus*—the bathroom setting effectively isolates Marion and sets the area of focus for the viewers; a feeling of suspense pervades the scene as the audience is made privy to the fact that Marion is being watched and is allowed to see the murderer moments before Marion is killed; there is a clear act of physical violence, and as noted above, visualization is used to enhance the spectators’ understanding of the scene. In all, the scene offers a glimpse of the far-reaching applicability of the *locus*. Thus, the concept of the *locus violentus* as it currently stands can be seen as a template which offers the foundational characteristics by which further studies of narrative violence can be made.

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