CONSTELLATIONS OF SUFFERING:
HISTORICAL TRAUMA IN THE THEATRICAL ADAPTATION OF GREEK TRAGEDY

BY

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ABSTRACT

Grounded in the historiography of the field of trauma studies and a theoretical understanding of the role of adaptation within contemporary culture, this dissertation examines how the process of adapting the familiar narratives of ancient Greek tragedy creates opportunities for modern playwrights seeking to represent the horrific realities of historical, community-based traumas that are typically understood as unrepresentable within our culture. An in-depth analysis of three late twentieth and early twenty-first century adaptations of ancient Greek tragedy—Rita Dove's *The Darker Face of the Earth* (1996), Yael Farber's *Molora* (2008), and Keith Reddin and Meg Gibson's *Too Much Memory* (2009)—reveals how the adapting authors engage with and adapt their source texts' structural and aesthetic elements and utilize the basic framework of these ancient tales (*Oedipus*, *The Oresteia*, and *Antigone*) to represent three specific instances of historical trauma: the United States' history of slavery, South Africa's experience of apartheid, and the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the resulting War on Terror.

While each of the three adaptations examined in this study engages with a specific moment of trauma, my analysis of these plays includes a discussion of how its source text has inspired various other adaptations that each respond to their historical moment in unique and significant ways. I argue that authors seeking to adapt these narratives are influenced not only by the "original" source material but also by these various other versions of the text and suggest that these works therefore belong within a large *constellation of adaptations*, an idea inspired by Adorno's concept of the constellation image. As new adaptations immerge over time, they expand the scope and significance of the constellation and the narrative on which they are based, thereby creating new dramatic possibilities and relationships between the source text and the time in which it is adapted.

To the brave artists and playwrights whose work engages with traumatic themes

and to the audiences who provide the need.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

> The stars we are given. The constellations we make. That is to say, stars exist in the cosmos, but constellations are the imaginary lines we draw between them, the readings we give the sky, the stories we tell. We come to see the stars arranged as constellations, and as constellations they orient us, they give us something to navigate by, both for travelling across the earth and for telling stories, these bears and scorpions and centaurs and seated queens with their appointed places and seasons. Imagine the lines drawn between stars as roads themselves, as routes for the imagination to travel.
> —Rebecca Solnit, *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes for Politics* (165)

The twentieth century marks a period in our collective history where the boundaries that separate the local from the national and the global bleed together, our awareness of our place in this world is heightened, and our understanding of that place—our very faith—is shaken. The combined effects of two world wars, of the mass genocide of several cultures, of the ongoing tensions between economic stability and uncertainty, science and faith, the unyielding desire for progress despite the need for constancy, and the pervasive threat of terrorism—both foreign and domestic—all have created a crisis of identity on a global level. In *Trauma and Media: Theories, Histories, and Images* (2010), Allen Meek discusses this crisis of identity as the result of *historical trauma*; according to Meek, such a crisis results from events which "become signifiers of collective identity—for example: war, revolution, conquest, colonization, genocide, slavery and natural disaster" and which involve "unresolved ethical, philosophical or political issues" (32).

Clearly, Meek's concept is gravely influenced by the tragic events of the twentieth century—its wars, revolutions, and disasters—so much so that we might refer to this period as the *traumatic* twentieth century. In fact, trauma studies as a field formed, in part, in reaction to these large-scale, often global events, whose consequences could not be accounted for under the nineteenth century conception of trauma as defined by Freud and his colleagues which were only concerned with the individual response to traumatic events. As a result, scholars and mental health professionals developed a collective model of trauma which could account for the seemingly endless string of widespread tragedies plaguing this

era: including but not limited to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Chernobyl disaster, the first Gulf War, the genocide in Rwanda, and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

As would be expected, artists witnessing these catastrophic events began to reflect their concerns in their artistic products, flooding the culture with images which spoke to the social and political circumstances of the trauma they experienced. Trauma studies responded by developing notions about the significance of this work, resulting in an abundance of new scholarly theories that discuss the images produced by trauma in the media and in various modes of entertainment; many of these theories claimed that trauma could not accurately be represented due to the extremity of the circumstances which define traumatic events. Nevertheless, artists throughout the twentieth century have used their art as a means of representing trauma and have often turned to highly stylized, aesthetic means for depicting these events. In the theatre, this has resulted in a number of plays that take up trauma as a theme and explore the significance of psychological trauma through their structural and narrative components.

The kinship between trauma and the theatre is unsurprising given the latter's relationship to storytelling and trauma's emphasis on the act of witnessing and testimony, particularly in regards to the expression of the traumatic moment by the victim. Primarily understood as a memory disorder, the treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder continues to rely on the concept of "remembering to forget" (Rubin 63), a *working-through* of the traumatic experience where victims are encouraged to recover and integrate traumatic memories through personal testimony in order to obtain a sense of catharsis. This notion is hardly a novel concept in Western theatre: theatre theorists have been debating the idea of catharsis and its relationship to the audience for nearly 3,000 years. Further strengthening the relationship between trauma and the theatre, Ruth Leys discusses the *mimetic* nature of trauma in her book *Trauma: A Genealogy*, indicating it is understood "as a situation of dissociation or 'absence' from the self in which the victim unconsciously imitated, or identified with, the aggressor or traumatic

scene in a condition that was likened to a state of heightened suggestibility or hypnotic trance" (8). Leys illustrates how the trauma victim is so immersed in their experience that it "precluded the kind of specular distance necessary for cognitive knowledge of what happened" (9), a concept which feels almost Brechtian in its expression and which should resonate with scholars of theatre history and theory who study his dramaturgy.

Developing along an almost parallel timeframe to trauma studies, adaptation studies is a field emerging in the second half of the twentieth century, in the wake of a number of theoretical formulations that questioned the originality and authenticity of the written word. Built on a foundation first laid by Roland Barthes's and Michel Foucault's attack on the author and developing as a result of Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction and later by Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality,[1] adaptation studies is, to a large extent, a product of postmodernism; it seeks to deal with the way texts—in the broadest sense of the word—are revised and reinterpreted by new audiences seeking to rethink the modern world and call into question the grand narratives of the past. Postmodernism is rooted in the culture's attempt to reconsider our relationship to the world following the great traumas of the twentieth century, most notably the first two world wars. Through the structural debates of the nineteenth century, the discussions of form and content that shaped the early twentieth century, and the ubiquitous debates about the "death" of both God and authorship, post-modernism attempts to make sense of a world where individual subjectivity replaces previously unquestioned structures of thought.

In effect, the postmodernists mentioned above released the written text from the grip of the author and imbued the audience with subjectivity and the ability to control and manipulate a text's meaning. This newfound subjectivity gave rise to a number of studies which sought to theorize the work

[1] See Foucault, "What is an Author?"; Barthes, "Death of the Author"; Derrida, *Of Grammatology*; Kristeva and Moi, *The Kristeva Reader*.

being done in transforming texts into new forms and new media. In the theatre, modernist theatre theorists and artists were already busy reworking and reshaping materials and dismantling "authorship" in various ways: Antoine Artaud sought to dismiss masterpieces altogether while Bertolt Brecht sought to dismantle accepted theatrical forms and develop a new dramaturgy that challenged traditional norms. Adaptation studies arose as a literary movement out of this impetus. George Bluestone's seminal work, *Novels into Film* (1957) illustrates the first extended attempt to theorize the work of adapters and established a model to evaluate such work. This charge was ultimately taken up by a number of scholars primarily investigating the relationship between literary text and film adaptation, including such scholars as Brian McFarlane, Deborah Cartmell, Imelda Whelehan, James Naremore, and Sarah Cardwell, all of whom have made a significant contribution to the field as it pertains to cinematic adaptation by addressing certain fundamental questions:

- *What is an author?*
- *Can authorship be defined when dealing with a text in adaptation?*
- *What motivates a person to engage in the process of adaptation?*
- *How can we recognize an adaptation or differentiate it from an original work?*
- *Can originality truly be defined in the postmodern world?*
- *Is a particular mode of engagement more suitable for a given adaptation?*
- *If so, why?*

More recently, however, adaptation studies has begun to expand its scope and theorists have begun to explore its relationship to other fields besides film. Scholars such as Thomas Leitch and especially Linda Hutcheon and Julie Sanders have begun to shift the dialogue from a primarily product-oriented conversation, where cinematic adaptations have been the norm, to one that is not only receptive to other artistic and commercial media—such as theme parks, video games, consumer products, and of course theatre and film—but also focuses on a process-oriented discussion.

While the work being done on adaptation has developed significantly over the last fifty years, its evolutionary process has resulted in a recognizable academic field, one that is concerned with both the product and process of adapting a text—in the broadest possible sense—into new iterations across a wide range of media. What began at mid-century as an interest in the form adaptions have taken has

grown into a complex discussion about the motivations of the authors, the cultural make-up of the audience, and the mode of engagement adapters utilize in crafting their art. Modern scholars of adaptation are particularly concerned with how the process reveals or is colored by such cultural associations.

Playwrights have long recognized the nature of the relationship between adaptation and the cultural climate in which they write and have responded by creating dramatic texts in adaptation which capitalize on the cultural associations made between a particular narrative from the past and their present cultural moment. Such work repurposes texts from the past by revising them in order to suit modern concerns and these texts enjoy a lifespan outside of their time for a number of reasons: they stand as an example of superb playwriting of the period, they present profoundly intriguing characters or plots, or perhaps their thematic resonance remains applicable long after other texts from the period have fallen out of favor. These texts, for whatever reason, continue to be read, performed, and studied and have remained part of the Western canon. As they are read by an ever-expanding audience, their meaning and the significance attached to them is interpreted in certain ways that get passed down from audience to audience throughout time. While their meaning may change slightly, the essences of these narratives remain primarily fixed. However, an adaptation of these texts unfixes the meaning and audiences are asked to rethink their relevance in light of contemporary concerns.

In terms of a theme which maintains its resonance throughout time and has therefore inspired a number of adaptations, trauma has long been a part of Western theatre history; it can be traced as far back as the ancient Greeks. In fact, the Greeks present what is arguably the best example in Western dramatic literature of trauma as a theme, particularly in regards to the interest in the collective experience of trauma which arose in the late twentieth century. Given the communal, democratic nature of Greek society, the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides often focus on the effects of trauma on the state as is evidenced by the inclusion of the chorus as both representative of the

community and as a kind of ideal spectator reacting to the events. While individual tragedy pervades these plays, it is often its effect on the society at large which is central to the play's meaning: for example, while Oedipus kills his father and marries his mother, it is the plague on the city that results from these actions that frames the tragedy of Sophocles's great play. At their core, the tragedies of ancient Greece examine the social relevance of the traumatic moment, whether it is war, plague, regicide, etc. Given the rise in interest in adaptation, and the focus on the traumatic nature of the late twentieth century, it should come as no surprise that the Greeks prove to be a rich field of source material for dramatists seeking to discuss modern trauma.

This study bridges the gaps between trauma, adaptation studies, and the theatre by exploring the following question: why have twentieth century playwrights adapted ancient Greek tragedy to discuss and represent moments of historical trauma and how do the aesthetic, stylistic, and thematic alterations to their source texts shape their adaptations into suitable vehicles of addressing specific moments of historical trauma. Through analyzing three case studies, each an adaptation of a different classic Greek tragedy that has been repurposed to implicitly or explicitly examine and represent a specific moment of historical trauma, I will attempt to locate the nature of the relationship between theatrical adaptation and trauma by answering the following questions: 1) what affordances do these texts provide; 2) how are authors engaging with these texts in the construction of their contemporary plots, characters and structural elements; and 3) why are playwrights turning to these texts for inspiration? While this study focuses on three specific adaptations and how they treat moments of historical trauma, this dissertation provides a model for the study and analysis of theatrical adaptation in a broader sense, exposing 1) the work adaptation as a process does, 2) the affordances theatrical adaptation provides, 3) the relationship between theatre and trauma, and 4) the nature of adaptation as a valuable tool in dealing with trauma.

For the purposes of this study, it is important at this juncture to define two key terms that greatly influence this work: *trauma* and *adaptation*. While these terms leave little doubt as to their general meaning, I believe it is crucial to develop a more specific sense of how they will be used in order to clarify how my specific case studies have been selected.

Given the evolution of its meaning in response to the developing fields of medicine and psychology throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, *trauma* remains a rather slippery term. While this evolution forms the basis of my first chapter, I believe it is important here to specify the sort of trauma that defines the studies presented in this dissertation. As I mentioned earlier, I am specifically interested in those community-based traumas I will hereafter refer to as *historical trauma* following Meek's definition in *Trauma and Media*. I am drawn to Meek's concept as it aligns physical and psychological pain—thereby acknowledging the development of thought surrounding trauma over the last 200 years—and reads this effect on the community at large rather than the individual. As my study explores trauma through the lens of the theatrical medium—itself a community-based art form whose authors tend to draw their content from the experiences of its audiences—this concept allows for a more versatile approach to the traumatic subject matter.

As for a definition of *adaptation*, a general understanding implies an artistic work in the second degree: a work that is based on an earlier object that displays similar characteristics to it. However, scholars in the field of adaptation studies have struggled with the flexibility of this definition for the last half-century citing translations, parodies, homages, and other similar artistic products as falling within such a broad definition. Within this debate, I tend to favor an evolutionary view of adaptation that suggests authors reinvent a given text in relation to the surroundings in which they write; however, the product of their work continues to bare a resemblance to its predecessor. For my purposes, an adaptation is a work that shares much of the same genetic makeup as its source text (its general plot and characters) but whose outward appearance (its aesthetic style and its structure) reveal significant

alterations that make it more suited to its current circumstances, be they a shift in time, place, or in the most extreme cases, both. I say *significant alterations* in order to rule out those texts which I believe are not adaptations—such as translations—even though I agree they rely on some of the same processes that signify an adaptation. While such work is *adaptive* in its behavior (it exhibits behavior capable of or suited to adaptation), the results themselves are not *adaptations*. This definition also rules out parodies and homages as such works do not attempt to reveal the same story as a source text; rather, they supply commentary on that text as it relates to a completely unrelated work. Such forms are often more concerned with stylistic exactitude rather than narrative resemblance.

While my own understanding of adaptation is still quite broad and leaves significant room for interpretation, I also believe that the term can and *should* reflect a range of meanings due to the endless possibilities inherent in the process of adaptation. While some adaptations make only minor tweaks to an original source text—perhaps adjusting the temporal or spacial given circumstances of a text—others reinvent so much of the story and its minutiae that it becomes barely recognizable to a person familiar with the original narrative. In both cases, though, the resulting adaptation is sensitive toward the old and the new; the stylistic and aesthetic layers imagined by the adapting author are laid over the familiar structure and thematic resonance of the source text, creating a palimpsestic entity that can be studied both for its artistic merit and the historical relationship between the text's many layers of meaning.

By placing adaptation in the foreground, this dissertation attempts to illustrate it as a highly creative process of dramatic creation worthy of academic study and suggests the need in theatre scholarship to embrace adaptation as a valid dramaturgical tool; one that recognizes adapted work as its own entity, related to but not superseded by its source text. While certain individual adaptations have garnered praise—such as Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* and Jean Racine's *Phaedra*—and certain authors, most notably Brecht, have been celebrated for their work as adapters, the process and product of adaptation remains largely understudied in the field. Presumably, this stems from the fact

that adaptations, as products, are less highly valued, often ignored, or even scorned as derivative in both academic criticism and journalistic reviewing. In his chapter entitled "Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation," appearing in James Naremore's *Film Adaptation* (2000), Robert Stam compiles a list of words used to attack cinematic adaptations, a list which includes "betrayal, deformation, violation, vulgarization, and desecration" (54). Such words derive from the fact that adaptations are typically seen in comparison to their source texts and are often judged for their ability to remain faithful to a revered original.

Scholars agree that such fidelity discourse has hampered the study of adaptation as such work has not been treated as its own object; one that is influenced by an original but not possessed by it. In fact, the issue of fidelity and the push against such discourse has become a cornerstone to contemporary work in the field. In her treatise, *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), Hutcheon raises the issue of contempt for adaptation and the discourse of fidelity in her preface, labeling such a sentiment as "one of the provocations of [her] study" (xii). In the theatre, the contempt for adaptation is never more strongly felt than in regards to the work of major figures of the theatrical canon. In a chapter entitled "Constructing Alternative Points of View" appearing in her *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006), Julie Sanders discusses how adaptations "operate within the parameters of an established canon, serving indeed at times to reinforce that canon by ensuring a continued interest in the original or source text, albeit in revised circumstances of understanding" but is careful to acknowledge "the capacity of [these texts] to highlight troubling gaps, absences, and silences within the canonical texts to which they refer" (97-98). While a rejection of the canon as a concept is commonplace in contemporary criticism, these texts remain popular in both academic criticism and theatrical performance. Sanders's point addresses the power of adaptations to force a rethinking of these texts and to see them not as classics that deserve to be unapologetically revered but as works that captured audiences' attention and goodwill

despite their flaws. The process of adaptation celebrates the essence of these texts while at the same time revising and reworking those "troubling gaps, absences, and silences" that plague them.

In two essays appearing in *Roar of the Canon* (2002), Charles Marowitz breaks down the stigma regarding adapting Shakespeare, arguably the most notable figure of the dramatic canon. In "Harlotry in Bardolatry" and "How to Rape Shakespeare," Marowitz attacks the unflinching worship that surrounds Shakespeare and supports an approach to the bard that makes his work accessible to all audiences by reimagining them and reworking their themes and content to suit modern tastes. Picking up on this thread, this dissertation values a rethinking of the antiquated dramatic canon. By focusing on the way that canonical texts can be respun into new dramatic creations and exploring how authors imbue accepted narratives with new and complicated forms of subjectivity, this dissertation privileges a view of the canon not as a locked, inaccessible, entity but as something fluid and open to revision. My aim is to show that while the source texts themselves remain firmly rooted inside a very traditional understanding of the dramatic canon, these works have spawned their own version of a counter-canon in a series of adaptations that expand and revise the limitations of the original texts. One goal of this dissertation is to examine the ways in which these authors open these texts up to more complex meanings.

Despite the historical lack of studies that privilege adaptation, recent work in the theatre has begun to address this lack and several scholars, myself included, have begun to explore adaptation and the affordances it provides and celebrate playwrights—like Charles Mee and Ellen McLaughlin—who engage in the process. In 2009, Michelle MacArthur, Lydia Wilkinson and Keren Zaiontz published a collection of essays entitled *Performing Adaptations: Essays and Conversations on the Theory and Practice of Adaptation*. Essentially, the book explores the relationship between adaptation and performance in a larger context than the historically typical page-to-screen mode. This book, along with several other similar recent works, including the upcoming *Adaptation in Theatre and Performance*

series published by Palgrave Macmillan, begins to explore performance based adaptation in terms of the affordance they provide both their authors and their audiences. This dissertation joins this conversation; it attempts to locate and suggest reasons why authors continue to return to earlier established texts for inspiration.

In addition, several recent works provide foundational reading for my project in terms of the nature of the theatrical adaptation of Greek tragedy. Of particular interest are two dissertations: *Rewriting "Antigone": The Cultural Politics of Adaptation* (1997) by Annette Wannamaker and *The Postmodern Remaking of Greek Tragedy* (2003) by Peter Andrew Campbell. Wannamaker's study explores several adaptations of *Antigone* within specific cultural, political, and historical moments and addresses the creation of new meaning as the text is appropriated by different playwrights seeking to reveal the social and political circumstances of their particular historical moment. Similarly, Campbell explores the effect of postmodernism on the form and content of several twentieth century adaptations of classic Greek tragedy and grounds his study in a discussion of the notable tendencies of postmodern remaking, focusing primarily on structural and linguistic aspects inherent to the plays he studies. In a chapter entitled "Pacifist Antigones" appearing in *Performing Adaptations: Essays and Conversations on the Theory and Practice of Adaptation*, Alison Forsyth argues that such work serves as "a mediation on our compulsion to return to the canon as a lens through which to view and understand contemporary social and political issues" (xxi). Forsyth proposes that several modern adaptations of Sophocles's *Antigone* depart from a singular focus on Antigone's personal struggle and instead ask us to "rethink our present situations" from a number of cultural and political perspectives (36). The implication of Forsyth's work suggests that there are "potentially infinite conversation(s)" to be had with tradition as it applies to this canonical work (37), giving credence to the belief that these texts contain resonance for modern audiences interested in adapting their narratives to suit modern social concerns.

While the relationship between adaptation and the theatre remains my primary focus, the content of the plays I will be addressing demands a critical deftness with trauma and cultural studies as each of these works focuses on a specific moment of historical trauma. A major current concern in the field of trauma studies deals with the limitations of traumatic representation: the crisis of representation that arises from the *inability of art* to truly capture traumatic suffering but the *need of the artist* to represent this trauma. As mental health professionals have continued to debate the benefits and potential pitfalls of such representation—either for the author, their audience, or the larger community from which that audience is drawn—scholars have focused their attention on the authorial impulse that lies at the heart of this question and have theorized the various aesthetic considerations that define traumatic representations. These concerns form the foundation of many current works seeking to explicate the nature of trauma and its complicated relationship to representation.

As the Holocaust played a central role in the formation of trauma studies in the twentieth century it makes sense that much of this scholarship originates in collections of essays on representations of this horrific event. In Joshua Francis Hirsch's *Afterimage: Film, Trauma, and the Holocaust* (2004), the author examines how film—both documentary and narrative film—aids in the formation of contemporary consciousness toward the Holocaust and functions "as both a transmitter of historical trauma and a form of posttraumatic historical memory" (3). Hirsch's study aligns nicely with Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz's *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust* (2003), which "began as a commemorative endeavor based on the belief that a collection of critical writing can itself be a form of memorialization" (1). As an anthology of arts criticism, the authors have compiled a series of thematically related essays that explore the aesthetic practices visual artists have used in treating this complicated material. While not its main focus, the book wisely challenges the aforementioned crisis of representation by demonstrating how realism is an aesthetic style that "too often is reduced to simplistic perceptual verisimilitude" and thereby assumes "the audience cannot

make the distinction between reality and represented reality" (3). In essence, the collection of essays presents and unpacks the complex ethical, political, and aesthetic implications of representation of trauma.

In similar fashion, examinations of the representations of other historical traumas have become commonplace within the field. For example, Deborah Jenson's *Trauma and Its Representations: The Social Life of Mimesis in Post-Revolutionary France* (2001) examines several works of post-Revolutionary Romanticism in an attempt to develop a theory of traumatic mimesis. Jenson suggests that while such works attempted to capture the utopian aspirations of the French Revolution, in reality the mimesis they created functions more as a form of symbolic wounding, a "historical residue of the violent Revolutionary conflict between the ethos of social likeness and the free play of liberty" (253). While less theoretically-minded, Sarah Brophy's *Witnessing AIDS: Writing, Testimony and the Work of Mourning* (2004) also focuses on the legacy created in response to historical trauma in examining the testimonial literature produced in response to the AIDS pandemic. Brophy's book chronicles several literary figures' responses to the AIDS crisis, thereby challenging the audience to "think again, and to think differently, about the social and institutional frameworks that shape the lived and felt experience of HIV infection and AIDS" (212). Finally, Véronique Bragard, Christophe Dony, and Warren Rosenberg's *Portraying 9/11: Essays on Representations in Comics, Literature, Film and Theatre* (2011) explores how various modes of discourse shape the memory of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Their study offers a compelling glimpse into the ways that American culture attempted to process the historical and political implications of the attacks and how various genres shape the cultural memory of the events.

More recent scholarship takes a broader view of trauma and is often organized into a collection of essays, each examining how a specific piece of art treats a different historical moment. Two related works, Patrick Anderson and Jisha Menon's *Violence Performed: Local Roots and Global Routes of Conflict* (2009) and Aparna Rao, Michael Bollig, and Monika Böck's *The Practice of War: Production,*

Reproduction and Communication of Armed Violence (2007), each explore how war and violence are performed through various forms of representation. Both books take a performance studies approach to their subject and interrogate how these performances and their themes are disseminated and experienced across the globalized modern world. Similarly, Lisa Saltzman and Eric M. Rosenberg's *Trauma and Visuality in Modernity* (2006) explores the complicated expression of trauma in the visual realm, arguing that an understanding of modernity depends in large part on trauma's visualization. In relation to the questions of representation that keep manifesting, Saltzman and Rosenberg's text suggests that modern visual culture has abandoned concrete narrative forms which claim to present truth and therefore the works under review in their study do not seek to represent trauma; rather, they explore how "the simultaneous presence and absence of trauma [functions] as a structuring subject of representation"(x). Finally, E. Ann Kaplan's *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (2005) uses an anthological case studies approach to explore the relationship between the individual's experience of trauma and its effect on and relationship to collective culture.

Like Kaplan's text, much of the scholarship done in trauma studies privileges this kind of anthological case studies approach to dealing with issues of representation; this dissertation is, in part, modeled after these works. However, my aim is to bridge this approach with one that seeks to theorize trauma's effect on modern culture. In this way, several recent texts serve as important models. Chief among these works is Christina Wald's *Hysteria, Trauma and Melancholia* (2007) which considers "the Drama of Hysteria, Trauma Drama, and the Drama of Melancholia as dramatic genres in their own right" and "argue[s] that hysteria, trauma, and melancholia…can be regarded as 'performative maladies', as tropes for the performative constitution and maintenance of gender" (215). While Wald's text focuses on a gendered reading of trauma in the theatre, her chapter dealing with "Trauma Drama" unpacks many of the aesthetic choices playwrights make in representing trauma on stage and relates these choices to the psychological or psychopathological experience of trauma. She deals directly with

trauma's localization on the body, its effect on narrative patterns, and its relationship to memory, all of which become extremely important in understanding the adaptations under review in this study and the work that adaptation does in the theatre. Following Wald's analytic methodology, this study explores how theatrical adaptation can be used to treat representations of trauma and place these traumatic events in a historical context that illustrates their connection to the past. By adapting the familiar narratives of ancient tragedy, authors place these traumatic events in a continuum of history, creating the constellation image that will be discussed in a later chapter, and use the accepted narratives to draw connections between these events in the minds of the audience. This study illustrates one method of representing trauma in an aesthetic medium, one that crosses the boundaries that separate people and treats trauma as an entity that can be communicated between people from vastly different experiences using the aesthetic shorthand of adaptation.

Next, Allen Meek's aforementioned *Trauma and Media* proves particularly insightful for its reading of the literary and philosophical theories of Benjamin, Adorno, Barthes, Derrida and Agamben and the perspective each provides on contemporary trauma studies. Meek's text demands a rethinking of these theories which he claims "suggest an understanding of historical trauma that more fully acknowledges the role of both technological mediation and unconscious fantasy in shaping collective experience and identity in modern Western societies" (19). Meek's text proves invaluable to this study as it is he who briefly introduces the concept of the constellation image in regards to moments of historical trauma; this dissertation functions as an extension of his impulse to address the concept, drawing adaptation into the fold and suggesting it as a particularly apt way of thinking about Adorno's nascent idea.

Finally, Adam Lowenstein's *Shocking Representation: Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and the Modern Horror Film* (2005) uses the genre of horror films to theorize an allegorical relationship to contemporary trauma. Lowenstein suggests that certain filmmakers in this genre have crafted complex

narratives that interrogate national identity in the aftermath of historical trauma like World War II, Hiroshima, and the Vietnam War. Such work capitalizes on the cinematic conventions of the horror genre, in combination with elements of art cinema, to construct their allegories. Lowenstein suggests that "the modern horror film may well be the genre of our time that registers most brutally the legacies of historical trauma" (10). While I find Lowenstein's argument imaginative and compelling, this study suggests what I believe to be a more immediate and recognizable allegory based in the adaptation of classic Greek tragedy.

It seems prudent here to mention one final work, Anthony Kubiak's *Stages of Terror: Terrorism, Ideology, and Coercion as Theatre History* (1991). While terror, and not trauma, is his central concern, Kubiak's argument nevertheless has deep implications in regards to the theatre's response to trauma. In the book, Kubiak interrogates the means by which terror is conceived through the perception of physical representation. Kubiak suggests that the performative nature of theatre serves as "the site in which cultural consciousness and identity come into being through fear; it is the proleptic locus of terror's transformation from thought into culture and its terrorisms, staging the very birth of that which gives it birth—namely Tragedy" (5). In essence, Kubiak challenges the crisis of representation that claims representation cannot account for the complicated metaphysical feeling of emotions like terror or trauma. Focusing on the perception of pain and violence, Kubiak's book traces theatre's historical fascination with painful images, from *Medea* and other Greek tragedies through the appearance of the medieval theatre's *Quem Quaeritis,* the Renaissance's plays of Shakespeare and Thomas Kyd, and even through the comedies of the Restoration and well into the modern age. In discussing this preoccupation with pain, Kubiak suggests that history is little more than the "residual pain of the collective scar tissue" that forms in response to physical trauma; it serves as "an endless re-enactment of the perception of pain, and the pain of perception" (22). While Kubiak's focus remains fixed in the moment of physical

pain, his understanding of history reveals an awareness of the nature of trauma as a prolonged psychic re-experiencing of this pain.

Three primary research methodologies form the foundation of my study. In my first chapter, I engage in a historiographic analysis of trauma studies in order to interrogate several lines of inquiry that have been shaped by trauma's development over the last 200 years, thereby emphasizing the ways early nineteenth century conceptions of trauma by Sigmund Freud and his colleagues have given way to more complex ideas originating in response to the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, and several later twentieth century traumas (such as the events of 9/11). This chapter lays the groundwork for exploring the historical traumas that form the basis of my case studies and presents a complex system of thinking about how trauma's effects extend beyond the limitations of the physical and emotional toll on the individual. In addition to exploring traditional conceptions of trauma which emphasize 1) its relationship to the mind/body divide, 2) its elusive existence outside of the traditional processes of memory, and 3) the resulting rupture it causes in the individual's subjectivity, I examine trauma's development as a communal experience of suffering—a globalized sense of trauma—that can potentially be transmitted across time and space. As this transmission relies on both formal and informal means of representation, I end this chapter with a discussion of how scholars and mental health professionals have conceived of the relationship between trauma and representation, with a particular emphasis on issues of witnessing and testimony and their role in the recovery process.

In chapter two, I will draw on aspects of established adaptation theory in conjunction with the work of literary theorists and philosophers such as Brecht, Walter Benjamin, Sergei Eisenstein, and Theodor Adorno to construct a working theory of adaptation that suggests how the texts under review in this study—and others like them—provide authors with a methodology for working through the accepted crisis of representation that plagues trauma studies. In particular, I explore how the process of adaptation serves as an answer to several of the ethical considerations that arise from a discussion of

representing traumatic events and I suggest why the adaptation of Greek tragedy proves particularly valuable to contemporary authors and the historical traumas about which they write. Finally, I suggest an understanding of adaptation that reads a source text and its various adaptations together as a set of interconnected objects that continue to influence the development of future adaptations and that redraw the scope and meaning of their shared narrative. Borrowing from Adorno's concept of the constellation image, I suggest a model of theorizing adaptation as an ever-expanding framework of meanings that continue to influence each other and that explicitly or implicitly shape an audience's understanding of each individual component (adaptation) of the larger framework.

In chapters three through six, I model this theory as it applies to specific case studies using close reading and dramatic analysis as primary methods of study. The plays under review in this dissertation are *The Darker Face of the Earth* (1996) by Rita Dove, *Molora* (2008) by Yael Farber, and *Too Much Memory* (2009) by Keith Reddin and Meg Gibson. In each chapter, my analysis privileges three areas: 1) a structural reading of the adaptation in comparison to its source text, 2) a thematic analysis of both the adaptation and the constellation of adaptations to which it belongs, and 3) a character-driven analysis of the adaptation which explores the traumatic circumstances of the play. Under these banners, I evaluate each play based on the implications of its revised settings, the plot and structural changes made to the original narrative, the development and construction of its primary characters, and the author's aesthetic choices in regards to the play's language and imagery. In addition, each chapter includes a section on the sociocultural climate in which the play is set as well as a section that examines the traumatic resonance of the work under review.

I begin this work in chapter three with Rita Dove's *The Darker Face of the Earth*, a poetic adaptation of *Oedipus Tyrannos* set against the antebellum South. Dove's play reimagines the Sophoclean tale of fate as a slavery narrative, imbuing her version of Oedipus with a tragic history that compels him to seek out the identity which he was forcibly stripped of as a slave. Premiering in 1996 at

the Oregon Shakespeare festival, the play represents the traumatic legacy of American slavery and explores the physical and emotional scars that marred the American character for over two centuries and that continue to shape it well into the twenty-first century.

Chapter four addresses Yael Farber's *Molora*, an adaptation of Aeschylus's *The Oresteia* set against the background of post-apartheid South Africa during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings. Premiering in 2003 at the National Arts Festival of South Africa, Farber's play presents a compelling new take on the story of Clytemnestra and her children, Orestes and Electra. As each character struggles to deal with the remnants of their anger born out of their tragic and traumatic circumstances, the play mirrors the central concerns of the TRC hearings as it questions the morality of vengeance and advocates for the healing power of forgiveness.

In chapter five, I present Keith Reddin and Meg Gibson's adaptation of Sophocles's *Antigone* entitled *Too Much Memory.* Written between 2003 and 2008 and first performed at the New York City Fringe Festival in the months leading up to the end of George W. Bush's presidency, *Too Much Memory* contextualizes the story within the digital age and its twenty-four hour news cycle and interrogates the role of active citizenship in shaping the accountability and responsibility of the nation-state during times of conflict. Responding to the lack of transparency and the undemocratic decision making of the Bush administration, the play re-imagines the ways those in positions of power manipulate media outlets and craft narratives in times of conflict about who is an enemy of the state, the legality of state actions, and what defines a disloyal citizen.

These texts were selected for inclusion in this study for four primary reasons: first, I evaluated plays based on their ability to fit within the definition of adaptation I outline above. While there are thousands of translations and versions of these classic tragedies, many do not make *significant alterations* to the aesthetic style and structure of the plays' narratives and therefore do not lend themselves to the kind of in-depth comparative analysis necessary to my study. Second, and perhaps

most importantly, I felt it crucial to limit my cases to plays that dealt with a specific and definable historical trauma, one whose time and place were discernible within the world of the play. While I evaluated many adaptations that undertook a more generalized look at trauma—such as Cherrie Moraga's *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea* (2001), which examines the traumatic implications of immigration in an imagined apocalyptic version of the United States, and Charles Mee's *Trojan Woman: A Love Story*, which explores the remnants of an unspecified third-world sweatshop and the women who continue to toil away under its horrific conditions—I felt it important that the trauma being represented and discussed needed to have a concrete historical basis so that the structural and aesthetic elements of the play remain grounded in the real world. Third, as trauma is inextricably tied to memory—which changes over time—and its bearing on the psyche is rarely immediate and tends only to manifest itself after the passing of some time, I felt it important to select plays with varying temporal relationships to the traumas they represent in order to examine how the variable of distance from the trauma influenced the resulting adaptation. Finally, I hypothesized that each source text offered different affordances to their adapting authors and that the inclusion of several different narratives within the dissertation would yield a more complete picture of this kind of adaptation. As *Oedipus Tyrannos, The Oresteia,* and *Antigone* represent three of the most often adapted of the Greek tragedies, I felt these three plays were most suited to my study.

CHAPTER TWO
CONCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

> We live in a world torn and scarred by violence. Globalization has increased the speed and scale of conflicts and catastrophes, but violence has been integral to the human condition from our earliest origins. We should expect, therefore, to find its traces in the design of our brains and bodies no less than in the weave of our communities.
> --Laurence J. Kirmayer, Robert Lemelson, and Mark Barad in *Understanding Trauma* (1)

INTRODUCTION

While I begin this study with a brief overview of the concept of trauma and its historical development, I do not intend for what follows to stand as a comprehensive discussion of trauma as a concept nor as a complete history of trauma's development over its complicated history. Such a study is beyond the scope of this work and several fine texts already exist that clearly and concisely outline trauma's historical development.[2] Instead, what I introduce in this chapter is a broad overview of how trauma as a concept has been broken down into specific areas of inquiry; these include:

1) Trauma as Physical or Psychological Scarring
2) Trauma as a Reliving of Memory and a Rupturing of the Self
3) The Role of Witnessing and Testimony in Healing Trauma
4) The Virality of Trauma
5) Trauma and Representation.

In each of these sections, I have provided indications of how the concept of trauma has evolved in light of its component lines of inquiry and I have introduced significant historical developments and theories that define these major concepts. Taken together, these areas explore the central questions, definitions, areas of study, and research raised by trauma specialists and theorists which are crucially important for understanding the ways in which theatrical performance, in particular the adaptation of classical Greek tragedy, have presented and represented trauma.

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[2] See Leys *Trauma: A Genealogy*, Van der Kolk *Psychological Trauma*; Antze and Lambek *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*; and Kirmayer, Lemelson, Barad *Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives*.

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA AND ITS HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Deriving from the Greek word *trōma* meaning "wound, damage, or defeat" *trauma* has connoted, since its inception, both the act of experiencing or inflicting pain and the distressing effects of such an event. In this regard, the word itself remains useful today as thousands of trauma centers all over the globe tend to the physical wounds of individuals who have experienced acts of violence. Yet the word has greatly expanded its meaning and reflects much wider implications in the modern world; to understand trauma as a concept is to understand the broad meanings it has grown to encompass. What began as a term that stood for the physical result of an act of violence on an individual has expanded to include first the symbolic wound to the individual psyche and later to stand for the experience of whole cultures subjected to natural disasters and armed conflict. In a modern context, "trauma can be seen at once as a sociopolitical event, a psychophysiological process, a physical and emotional experience, and a narrative theme in explanations of individual and social suffering" (Kirmayer et al. 1). While some scholars feel "the employment of trauma as a cultural trope has…risked its generalization to the point of meaninglessness" (Wald 3), the concept nevertheless remains a rigorous site for inquiry in modern society.

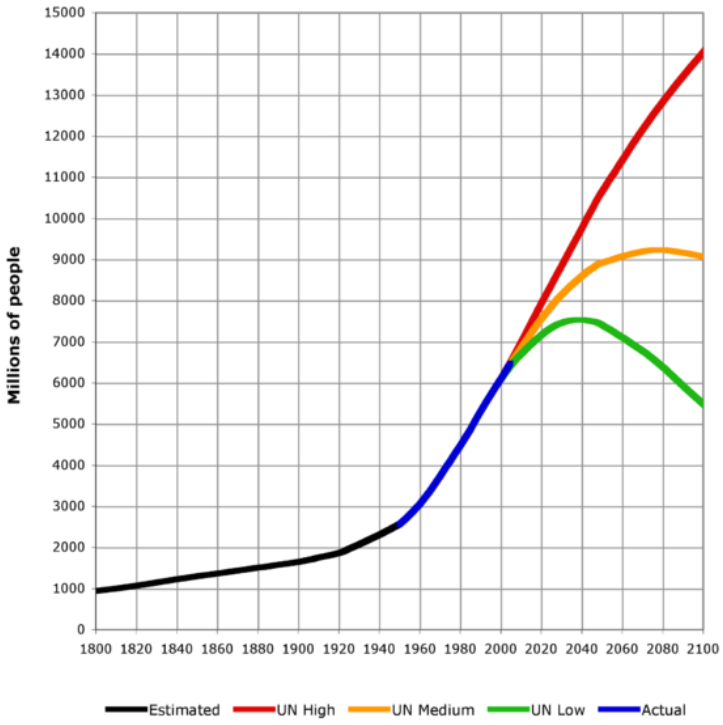
In *Trauma and Media: Theories, Histories, and Images,* Allen Meek explores the way trauma has been employed as a trope throughout mediatized culture, distinguishing between three primary ways of understanding the concept of trauma. His first, *the traumatic image*, depicts "something physically or psychically traumatic: someone is being, or has been, threatened, attacked, abused, starved, imprisoned, enslaved, tortured, murdered or executed, or is shown responding to the reality or consequences of some catastrophe" (31). Meek's first conception deals with the physical and personal effect on the victim and aligns itself with the historical understanding of trauma as a physical wound, defined by its imprint on the body and the physical pain experienced by the victim.

Meek distinguishes this from his second concept, *structural trauma*, which he defines as the psychological processing of a past moment of trauma that has present and future implications. This concept aligns experiences with fantasies and memories of earlier events and produces traumatic results because of its personal psychological resonance rather than the physical pain experienced by the victim in the moment of trauma. In this second concept, the long-term psychological implications of trauma are placed in focus but the effects are still personal to the victim and can be mapped on their subconscious as an extension of their physical body. Meek's second concept aligns with the evolution of our understanding of trauma in the late nineteenth century, when the term expanded its meaning to encompass injuries—both physical and psychological—that were the product of industrialization and the accelerated pace of modernity (Kirmayer et al. 5). The structures of the old world began to crumble faster and faster as new technology and innovation drastically altered the individual experience of daily life and new dangers were introduced to a world ill-prepared to deal with the consequences of such rapid progress. As individuals were confronted by the new pressures of modern life, scientific thought sought to account for the emotional reaction to these pressures, expanding the understanding of trauma from its narrow meaning as a *physical* wound to encompass the *symbolic* wound experienced by the individual psyche.

The emphasis on the individual's psychological wellbeing eventually came into conflict with the large-scale, often global events of the twentieth century that placed whole societies under an immense amount of strain. Global conflict reached unprecedented heights in the twentieth century: extreme famine, genocide, and many other crimes against humanity increased exponentially with the dramatic rise in world population between 1920 and the end of the century (Fig. 1). At the same time, advances in technology and media coverage allowed such atrocities not only to be known but also actually seen by millions if not billions of people across the globe. Freud and others working in the field in the nineteenth century thought of trauma as an individual experience; such conceptions were therefore inadequate to

account for these large-scale traumas that developed in the twentieth century; as a result, the term grew to encompass these "collective and sociocultural phenomena" as well as the effect they had on society (Wald 1).

Figure 1. A graph showing the world population increase from 1800, based on the United Nations' 2004 projections and U.S. Census Bureau historical estimates.



The final concept Meek discusses, *historical trauma*, emphasizes the collective experience of trauma. Meek describes historical trauma as "a form of identity crisis involving unresolved ethical, philosophical or political issues" as a result of events that "become signifiers of collective identity—for example: war, revolution, conquest, colonization, genocide, slavery and natural disaster" (32). In this third approach, trauma is no longer experienced by a singular person but is felt by a larger community. The predominance of historical trauma as a cultural formation has led some critics to describe Western society as a "wound culture" (Seltzer), or "traumaculture" (Luckhurst) suggesting that traumatic events have left indelible scars and that these scars have begun to define Western identity, perhaps even global identity. In a century marked by catastrophic accidents (the nuclear disasters in Chernobyl and Japan,

the Great Flood in China, Hurricane Katrina, and the earthquake in Haiti) and armed violence (two world wars, the wars in Kosovo, Korea, Vietnam, and the ongoing Israeli–Palestinian conflict) the concept of a traumaculture seems apt. Such traumatic events—perhaps most recognizably the Holocaust and the events of September 11, 2001—transform the society that they affect, altering their very identity and creating a new culture, a wound culture, defined by its scars and left to cope with their aftermath.

TRAUMA AS PHYSICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL SCARRING

While the word trauma continues to reflect the physical pain to which it has always been attached, modern definitions of trauma reflect the broad connotations inherent in the word's meaning, suggesting both "a serious bodily injury or shock, as from violence or an accident" and "a severely disturbing experience that leads to lasting psychological or emotional impairment" (The American Heritage Medical Dictionary). The question of whether trauma is something inscribed on the body or imprinted on the mind lies at the heart of the evolution of trauma as a modern concept, one that formalized in the nineteenth century but which has much older roots.

Describing an incident during the Battle of Marathon in 490 B.C.E., Herodotus asserts that:

> The following prodigy occurred there: an Athenian, Epizelus, son of Cuphagoras, while fighting in the medley, and behaving valiantly, was deprived of his sight, though wounded in no part of his body, nor struck from a distance; and continued to be blind from that time for the remainder of his life. (Cary 398)

The symptom Herodotus identifies is one fairly common to the diagnosis of *war neurosis*, now referred to as *combat stress reaction*, a psychophysiological malady affecting soldiers unable to deal with the significant stress placed on them in battle and one of many stress-related responses to traumatic events. Symptoms of war neurosis include: insomnia, headache, indigestion and loss of appetite, depression, irritability, hypervigilance, fatigue, urinary incontinence, and a host of other disabling reactions. While war neurosis predates modern conceptions of trauma, particularly as a psychological reaction, the academic and scientific study of war neurosis dates back to the seventeenth century when physicians referred to it as *nostalgia* and attributed its effects to the extreme sadness a soldier feels when

separated from their native land (Rosen 340). While this understanding persisted throughout the nineteenth century where cases of nostalgia plagued members of Napoleon's army, previously unrecognized symptoms led to the introduction of a similar classification, referred to as *irritable heart* or more commonly *soldier's heart,* by the time of the American Civil War. Symptoms of the latter included fatigue, shortness of breath, palpitations, and chest pain and were commonly considered a reaction to an anxiety disorder brought on by extreme stress.

The lack of physical causes for these symptoms perplexed physicians for hundreds of years and they became a major concern of all nations at war as the numbers of victims grew exponentially. Some figures suggest that as many as 51,000 union troops suffered from nostalgia during the course of the American Civil War (Babington 15) while others suggest this number would reach upwards of 80,000 cases of *shell-shock*, a related malady, by the end of the First World War in the British Army alone (MacPherson et al. 7). Several attempts to explain the genesis of these mysterious maladies were made; however, while concepts of nostalgia and irritable heart could explain away many of the symptoms plaguing soldiers in times of war, physicians were unable to explain the sudden-onset paralysis that was often found in victims who experienced no physical wounds during battle.

During the American Civil War, a new idea was proposed that could explain this paralysis: physicians theorized that the wind of an oncoming shell could paralyze a soldier if it passed close enough to their spine. This concept of *windage* is directly related to the later concept of shell-shock, first introduced by Charles Myers in 1915. Myers's term describes the experience of a soldier he had treated the previous year who was trapped in the midst of extreme German shelling ("A Contribution to the Study of Shell-shock" 316). While the soldier was not physically wounded, the wind force of the exploding shells exerted a great deal of pressure on him and, though he felt no lingering pain, he suffered from a restricted field of vision and the loss of both taste and smell after the assault (Myers, *Shell Shock in France* 11-12). Myers theorized that the concussive power of the blast traumatized the

soldier in unseen physical ways, a concept that recalls Sir John Eric Erichsen's earlier theories regarding *railway spine*.

In 1867, Erichsen, a British surgeon, published a series of lectures originally given to his students at University College hospital which outlined several cases of individuals who suffered from a condition which affected those involved in railway car collisions. A common occurrence in the nineteenth century due to increased rail traffic, such accidents typically threw passengers violently around on the affected train, leaving them afflicted with a type of what is now called *whiplash*. In such cases, many of the resulting injuries were internal and did not leave external evidence making these injuries difficult to assess and contributing to an air of mystery that surrounds the victims' symptoms.

Erichsen devoted his fourth lecture to cases where "the patient has received no blow or injury upon the head or spine, but in which the whole system has received a severe shake or shock, in consequence of which disease is developed in the spinal cord, perhaps eventually extending to the membranes of the brain" (55). In this lecture, Erichsen outlines the symptoms that began to appear shortly after such accidents including severe numbness in various parts of the body (usually beginning on one side of the body and gradually progressing throughout), weight loss, and an inability to control motor function—all rather severe physiological effects. Most of the symptoms Erichsen discussed are quite similar to the symptoms experienced by soldiers in times of war, suggesting a stress-induced psychological component. In addition, Erichsen mentions several other symptoms that suggest psychological or perhaps physiopsychological manifestations of trauma—such as a severe sensitivity to light and sound, an inability to maintain average concentration and daily function, and intensely disturbing dreams—though he associates them with the physical trauma affecting the spine and brain. In each of the cases Erichsen described, such psychological or physiopsychological symptoms did not become manifest until sometime after the traumatic experience, a key factor in the ensuing debate.

Given the late onset of their symptoms, early psychologists, like Jean-Martin Charcot, Herbert Page, and Sigmund Freud—all contemporaries of Erichsen—argued that many of the effects Erichsen's patients experienced were better explained through a symbolic wound to their psyche rather than the physical wound Erichsen proposed. Charcot and his colleagues suggested that the victim's consciousness was overwhelmed by the experience, leaving indelible scars on their subconscious mind. Charcot and others theorized that over time repressed memories were triggered by stimuli associated with the experience of the train accident—bright lights, loud noises, feelings of intense fear—and the individual would begin to uncover repressed memories of the accident. The latency period—the time in which these subconscious memories would begin to manifest themselves in the days and weeks after the accident—lies at the heart of the psychological understanding of such cases.

While Charcot was not the first to propose a relationship between traumatic events and psychiatric illness—Paul Briquet first published on this in 1859 in *Traité Clinique et Thérapeutique de l'Hystérie*—he was the first to produce systemic explorations of this relationship and his work restored a sense of credibility to the victims (Freud and Gay 53). He suggested that traumatically induced *choc nerveux*—or nervous shocks—created a mental state in his patients similar in many respects to hypnosis, leaving the patient in a highly suggestible state that he deemed *hystero-traumatic autosuggestion* (Charcot and Magloire). In response, Charcot developed the theory that a similar mental state could be induced in these patients through hypnosis, allowing him to send the patient into hysterical fits and better study the mental processes they experienced their hysteria.

Charcot's work with these patients involved inducing a hypnotic state in order to encourage a recollection of the traumatic event that affected them. His work at the Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital eventually led to the development of a new diagnostic understanding of hysteria, which up until this point in history had been considered "the most enigmatic of all nervous diseases" and understood as a medical condition caused by physical disturbances in the uterus (Freud and Gay 53). Charcot's new

concept, which he called *Grande Hystérie* and defined as "a neurological hereditary degeneration triggered by physical shock," manifested itself in four phases of symptoms: *période épileptoide* (fits and convulsions)*, période des grands mouvements* (illogical movements and contortions)*, attitudes passionelles* (hallucinatory remembrances)*, and délire terminal* (a slow return to consciousness) (Wald 29-30). His findings at the Salpêtrière illustrate the underpinnings of the debate surrounding locating trauma on the body or in the mind: by inducing a hypnotic trance in his patients, Charcot triggered a hysteric episode that manifested itself in both physical and psychological ways. From this, he "succeeded in proving, by an unbroken chain of argument, that these paralyses were the result of ideas which had dominated the patient's brain at moments of a special disposition," indicating that hysteria was the result of a psychological process triggered by a physical experience (Freud and Gay 54).

While traumatic symptoms were recognized long before the nineteenth century, typically in regards to the effect armed conflicts had on soldiers, trauma remains a concept of modernity: it developed out of a growing interest in science, psychology, and the rationalization of society. Its history throughout the nineteenth century reflects a debate between those, like Erichsen, who felt trauma owed its origins to a physiological scar and those, like Charcot, who saw it more as a psychological wound. By the end of the nineteenth century, it seemed as though Charcot had won this debate: his notion of trauma as rooted in the mind greatly influenced Pierre Janet, a seminal figure in trauma studies, whose work cemented early twentieth century thought about both trauma and psychology in general. Janet's contribution to the field centers on his realization that patients suffering from traumatic symptoms shared a common trait: they were plagued by recollections of traumatic events and that their symptoms suggested that these memories was so affecting that the victims were, in fact, reliving the event.

TRAUMA AS A RELIVING OF MEMORY AND A RUPTURING OF THE SELF

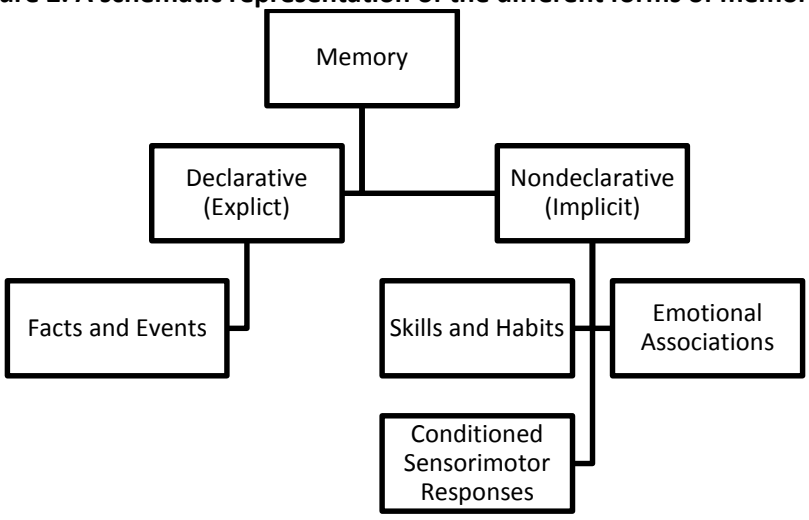
While the nineteenth century privileged a discussion of trauma's origins on the body or in the mind, this debate was basically resolved by the turn of the century, making way for new conceptions about trauma to emerge. Pierre Janet, a student of Charcot's at the Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital, was among the first to theorize the connection between an individual's past experiences and their present traumatic reactions. This idea would form the basis of traumatic understanding in the twentieth century and would serve as the foundation for the treatments that were developed to combat traumatic symptoms.

Janet's theories were based on the idea that traumatic events cause intense emotional reactions that interfere "with the integration of the experience into existing memory schemes" (Horowitz 301). Janet believed that such memories were *dissociated* from consciousness and were "stored, instead, as visceral sensations (anxiety and panic) or visual images (nightmares and flashbacks)" (301). Whereas Charcot interpreted the traumatic response as a kind of self-induced hypnotic state that mimics the original response to traumatic stimuli, Janet theorized that such stimuli reminded traumatized patients of the initial trauma and triggered emotionally charged emergency responses suitable to the moment of trauma but that had little relation to the current experience that triggered the reaction. In essence, Janet theorized that the presence of these memories was causing patients suffering from traumatic reactions to relive their traumatizing experiences.

The physical reaction associated with reliving traumatic events, Janet noted, is akin to the unconscious reaction associated with *nondeclarative* or *implicit* memory, where we store our instinctive behavior: our skills, habits, conditioned sensorimotor responses, and our emotional reactions. Such memory is stored differently than *declarative* or *explicit* memory where we store information pertaining to facts and events (Fig. 2). While individuals have a degree of control over declarative memory, in that

they can recall stored information at will, nondeclarative memory functions at the instinctual level and acts independently of our conscious minds.

Figure 2. A schematic representation of the different forms of memory.



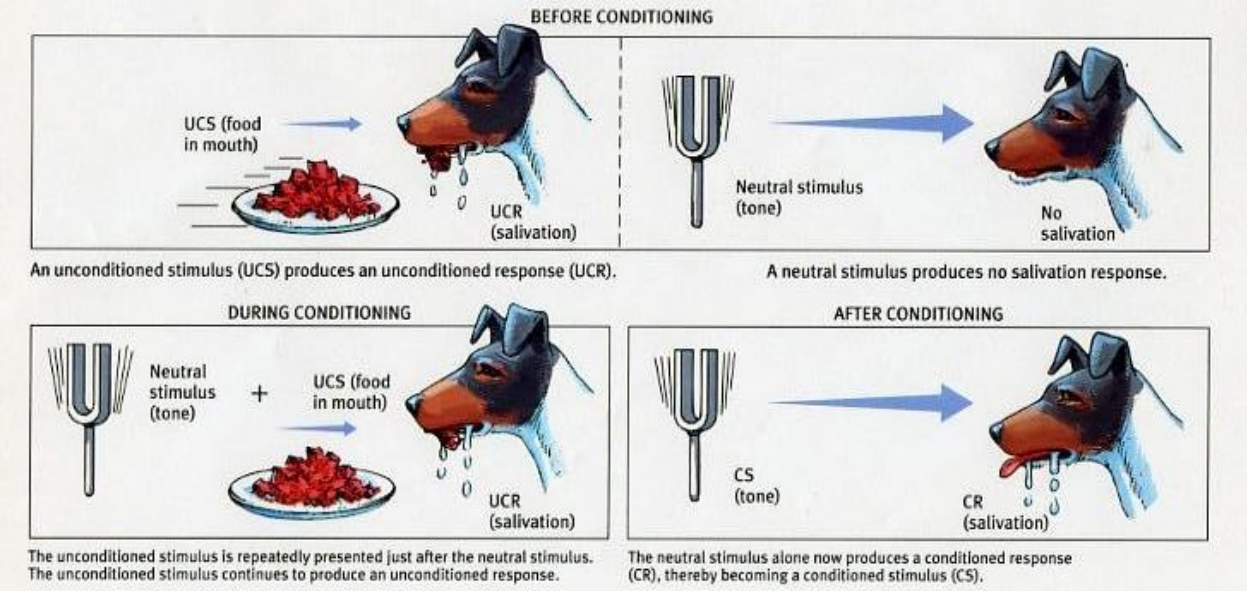
Janet's theories indicate why patients suffering from traumatic memories often have no conscious recollection of what happened to them. The traumatic experience overwhelms the victim and "preclude[s] the kind of specular distance necessary for cognitive knowledge of what had happened" (Leys 9). The victim is left unable to process and recall the events in a narrative fashion; all traces of the events surrounding the original trauma are encoded below the level of consciousness and are therefore inaccessible to conscious retrieval the way declarative memories are. As we shall see in a later section, his theories also account for why such individuals often encounter difficulty giving voice to their experience, a kind of "speechless terror" as these memories are conceivably stored (Horowitz 312), according to Janet's student Jean Piaget, on the somatosensory or iconic level.[3]

Janet's model is connected to Ivan Pavlov's theory of classical conditioning where a *conditioned stimulus* (a trigger, for example loud noises, bright lights, feelings of fear or helplessness, etc.) becomes associated with an *unconditioned response* (for example terror) and over time produces a *conditioned*

[3] See Piaget *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood*.

response based on the *unconditioned response* to the original unconditioned stimuli (the traumatic event) (Fig. 3). Individuals suffering from traumatic memories relive the events when triggered by such conditioned stimuli. “After repeated aversive stimulation, intrinsically nonthreatening cues associated with the trauma (conditional stimuli) can elicit the defensive reaction by themselves (conditional response)” (Horowitz 302).

Figure 3. A graphic representation of classical condition [rhsmpsychology.com].



Janet’s theories suggest that the extreme emotional reactions associated with traumatic events encode these events in the memory as a set of emotional associations and conditioned sensorimotor responses in the subconscious area of the mind. These events “leave indelible and distressing memories—memories to which the sufferer continually returns, and by which he is tormented by day and by night” (Janet 81). These memories flood the conscious mind of the individual when triggered by conditioned stimuli, bringing them back to a similar state of arousal they experienced at the time of the initial trauma. It is for this reason that many individuals suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder experience *state-dependent memory*, where the traumatized individual is only capable of recalling their trauma when in this aroused, altered state (Horowitz 313).

While Janet's theories are more than a century old, modern conceptions of traumatic memory echo his understanding of the way such memories are encoded, though much recent attention has been placed on the relationship between such memories and their neurochemical or neurobiological effect on the brain or its components.[4] Such reasoning implies a new understanding of trauma as something encoded in the mind, though clearly through physical—and therefore body-oriented—processes.

Developing his theories at the same time as Janet was another of Charcot's former students, Sigmund Freud. Freud studied with Charcot from October 1885 to March 1886 and was witness to a number of Charcot's famous public lectures demonstrating and diagnosing cases of his *Grande Hystérie*. Emboldened by his time at the Salpêtrière, Freud returned to Vienna and set out to recreate what he witnessed under Charcot. In his work with colleague Josef Breuer, Freud found that many of his patients shared a common symptom: they each suffered from distressing memories and that it was these memories that seemed to create the strong emotional reactions of hysteria.

Freud and Breuer published their findings in *Studien Über Hysterie* (*Studies on Hysteria,* 1895*)* and *Zur Aetiologie Der Hysterie* (*The Aetiology of Hysteria,* 1896) where they cemented a psychic rather than physical trigger to hysteria. In the work, they suggest "that no hysterical symptom can arise from a real experience alone, but that in every case the *memory* [emphasis added] of earlier experiences awakened in association to it plays a part in causing the symptom" (Freud and Gay 100). Their hypotheses derived primarily from "the role of a post-traumatic 'incubation,' or latency period of psychic elaboration," the presence of which suggested that the reaction to a traumatic event was not wholly determined by the event itself (Leys 19). Freud referred to this latency period as a *Nachträglichkeit*, or deferred action, and suggested that trauma was then "constituted by a dialectic between two events, neither of which was intrinsically traumatic, and a temporal delay or latency

[4] See Van Der Kolk "The Body Keeps the Score: Memory & the Evolving Psychobiology of Post Traumatic Stress" *Harvard Review of Psychiatry* 1.5; Van der Kolk, McFarlane, Weisæth *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*; Brewin *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: Malady or Myth?*

through which the past was available only by a deferred act of understanding and interpretation" (Leys 20).

Initially, Freud's theories were tied to childhood sexual development: he theorized that the initial traumatic event "came too early in the child's development to be understood and assimilated" (Leys 20). In *The Aeteology of Hysteria*, Freud proposed "that at the bottom of every case of hysteria there are *one or more occurrences of premature sexual experience*" (Freud and Gay 103). Freud's *seduction theory* essentially states that children who encountered sexual abuse at the hands of their caretakers were plagued with unconscious memories and distressing thoughts and affects that they were not able to integrate into their normal awareness. Over time, however, Freud abandoned this line of thought in part because he felt it improbable, given the number of cases of hysteria he was seeing, that there were an equal number of cases involving the sexual abuse of children. In an 1897 letter, Freud explained his reasoning for abandoning his seduction theory to his good friend and colleague Wilhelm Fleiss, describing the "continual disappointments" he experienced in his attempt to bring the line of thought to a "real conclusion" (Freud and Gay 112).

While Freud moved away from such an understanding, many of his colleagues came to the same conclusion and broke with Freud over this point. Hungarian psychoanalyst Sándor Ferenczi rejected the concept that individuals suffering from hysteria resulting from childhood abuse were merely exhibiting a kind of "hysterical lying" and embraced the idea that such assaults were common even in upper class families (Ferenczi 227). Ferenczi believed that such "seductions" took place as a result of childhood role-playing: the child embraced a fantasy where they imagined themselves as mother to the adult. As a result of such play, the adult mistakes the play for sexual desire and they "allow themselves—irrespective of any consequences—to be carried away" (227).

Ferenczi's understanding of childhood abuse-induced trauma suggests that such children "feel physically and morally helpless, their personalities are not sufficiently consolidated in order to be able to

protest, even if only in thought, for the overpowering force and authority of the adult makes them dumb and can rob them of their senses" (228). Incapable of standing up to the adult, they "subordinate themselves like automata to the will of the aggressor, to divine each one of his desires and to gratify these; completely oblivious of themselves they identify themselves with the aggressor" (228). Freud's daughter, Anna Freud, elaborates on this concept in her monograph *The Ego and the Mechanism of Defense* (1936) in which she includes a chapter on just such an identification as a means of protecting the ego.

Despite his wavering interest in childhood sexual trauma, Sigmund Freud remained committed to the idea that traumatic events were not the direct cause and "problematized the originary status of the traumatic event by arguing that it was not the experience itself that acted traumatically, but its delayed revival as a memory after the individual had entered sexual maturity and could grasp its sexual meaning" (Leys 20). By rejecting the notion of a direct cause of hysteria, Freud's concept suggests that the "external trauma derived its force and efficacity [sic] entirely from internal psychical processes of elaboration" (21), processes which blur the line between fiction and reality. As Freud understood hysteria as developing in the unconscious mind, he eventually had to reconcile the existence of hysteria—which is triggered by a psychic event—with the fact that "there are no markers for reality (R*ealitätszeichen*) in the unconscious and consequently…one cannot distinguish between truth and fiction" (Wald 36). Freud came to see hysteria as "act[ing] primarily on the *stage* of psychic reality," what the patient experiences is not a representation of the actual events but the way those events have been "reformulated in phantasy" (Bronfen et al. 255). Freud's concept that traumatic neuroses derive from an internal ego conflict inevitably leads to a discussion of Morton Prince's *The Dissociation of a Personality* (1906), in which the author theorizes the response to a traumatic event as a catalyst for a rupture in an individual's cohesive identity, suggesting that the psychological effect of trauma causes a

fragmentation whereby consciousness is split into coexisting parts, each with a separate consciousness and each typically unaware of the other.[5]

Drawing attention to the mimetic quality associated with Freud's concept of hysteria, as well as the implications of Ferenczi and Prince's work, Ruth Leys describes the libidinal unconscious "as a stage on which the subject in its traumatic dreams or fantasies observes himself or herself performing the scene" (300); in these terms, the experience of trauma exists as an unconscious imitation or identification with the traumatic scene, one "that is unrepresentable to the patient in the form of a narration of that event as past" (300). Instead, the trauma forces the victim into a kind of trance where they continually act out the experience (300).

As these theories attest, inherent in the concept of trauma is a break with both narrative memory (declarative memory) and with the complete self, the self that consciously recalls the traumatic experience. The overwhelming nature of such experiences fractures the integrated whole of the individual into composite pieces, leaving the conscious mind unable to fully process the traumatic memories and comprehend the extent of the trauma suffered. Speaking about her experience as a Holocaust survivor, Charlotte Delbo describes her experience in the camps in dissociative terms, relying on the metaphor of a snake shedding its skin; she discusses how difficult it was to shake off her old camp self in order to relearn a sense of who she was prior to her life in Auschwitz: "No—I live beside it. Auschwitz is there, fixed and unchangeable, but wrapped in the impervious skin of memory that segregates itself from the present 'me.' Unlike the snake's skin, the skin of memory doesn't renew itself" (qtd. in Langer 5).

This understanding of trauma as a disorder of the consciousness led early twentieth century psychologists to develop treatments that sought to facilitate the reintegration of traumatic memories and the reorganization of the self. These treatments emphasized the need of the individual to

[5] William James writes of such a rift in his essay "The Hidden Self," *Essays in Psychology* (261).

remember their traumatic circumstances and work through the emotional responses these memories triggered. In this way, trauma concretized its relationship to witnessing and testimony, two tenets of contemporary trauma theory which serve as the basis of the next section.

THE ROLE OF WITNESSING AND TESTIMONY IN HEALING TRAUMA

In their famous case study of Anna O. (Bertha Pappenheim), Freud and Breuer lay the foundation for the "talking cure" or *psychoanalysis*. Anna suffered from states of absence characterized by a loss of formal control of her native language. Unlike Charcot, who disregarded the verbalizations of his patients, Breuer saw such utterances "as keys to unlock the patient's repressed psychic processes" and decided they were worthy of further examination (Wald 34). After placing the patient under hypnosis, Breuer told Anna what she had said and encouraged her to use the speech as a starting point in her self-analysis. Following these treatments, Breuer noticed Anna's condition would be significantly improved; over time, he concluded that as Anna became more aware of the occasion that had incited her condition, her painful symptoms disappeared. What Breuer observed, and what he and Freud eventually published, was that Anna's treatment depended on the recollection of memory through testifying to her experience; as the patient recalled the incident, she began to integrate the occurrence into her conscious mind. In other words:

> When the past becomes accessible to recall in memory, and when language functions to provide some measure of conscious control, critical distance, and perspective, one has begun the arduous process of working over and through the trauma in a fashion that may never bring full transcendence of acting out (or being haunted by revenants and reliving the past in its shattering intensity) but which may enable processes of judgment and at least limited liability and ethically responsible agency. (LaCapra 90)

Psychoanalysis depends on the individual working through their past experience through testifying to them with a sympathetic observer, thereby weakening "the damaging impact of unconscious memories by affectively remembering and verbalizing the trauma in the context of a therapeutic relationship" (Wald 35). In other words, unconscious memories are made accessible to conscious recall, eliminating the dissociation experienced by trauma survivors and reintegrating the

fractured parts of the self. As Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub indicate in their study of *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1991), severe traumatic experiences—like the Holocaust in their example—leave no witnesses because "no observer could remain untainted, that is, maintain an integrity—a wholeness and a separateness—that could keep itself uncompromised, unharmed, by his or her very witnessing" (80-81). Such events divide the self by separating the conscious and unconscious sides of our being; it is only through reintegrating these sides, "reconstitute[ing] the internal 'thou,' and thus the possibility of a witness or a listener inside himself" that victims of trauma can overcome their traumatic response (85).

As has been discussed earlier, trauma reactions primarily affect an individual's memory, and the restoration of this memory is one of the major goals of trauma therapy. In Elizabeth Rubin's 1998 article, "Our Children Are Killing Us," appearing in *The New Yorker*, the author sums up the "modest" goals of therapy for victims of traumatic circumstances as a process of "remembering to forget" (63). Rubin's skillful rhetoric points toward the prevailing method of treatment of trauma disorders: in order to move past the trauma (to forget), individuals suffering from traumatic experiences must fully remember the occurrence and these memories and the emotions they produce must be fully integrated into their consciousness. Inherent in this is the central dilemma facing trauma victims: as traumatic memories become latent, victims are forced to relive the experience afresh; as such, traumatic disorders are particularly difficult to treat since avoidance of stimuli that aid the victim in remembering the event is part of the disorder's modus operandi. Dominick LaCapra writes about this dilemma in *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001):

> In traumatic memory the event somehow registers and may actually be relived in the present, at times in a compulsively repetitive manner. It may not be subject to controlled, conscious recall. But it returns in nightmares, flashbacks, anxiety attacks, and other forms of intrusively repetitive behavior characteristic of an all-compelling frame….But when the past is uncontrollably relived, it is as if there were no difference between it and the present….one feels as if one were back there reliving the event, and distance between here and there, then and now, collapses. (89)

The intrusiveness of the experience and the inability of the individual to predict what will trigger their reaction make conscious recall and integration of these memories of immediate and primary importance.

While contemporary treatments for trauma rely predominately on behavioral modification (asking victims to engage in behaviors which make them feel safe, developing a routine that allows them to return to "normal" activities as quickly as possible, reconditioning themselves to associate positive or neutral feelings to conditioned stimuli), nearly all treatment plans call for victims to discuss the traumatic events which plague them and the thoughts and emotions that these events trigger. The hope is for the victims to derive meaning out of experiences that, by nature, defy meaning.

Beginning in the 1970s, perhaps in response to the development of the computer and its widespread integration into modern life, psychologists and cognitive scientists began to explore how the human mind creates subjective meaning out of the objective data we take in through our senses, a process known as *sensemaking* and the closely aligned concept of *situational awareness*. Current scholarship in the area proposed by Gary Klein, Brian Moon, and Robert R. Hoffman suggests that when individuals attempt to derive meaning from events they rely on preexisting frameworks that have developed based on that individual's past experiences. Klein et al. suggest that these change over time as new experiences expand and reform the framework accessible to the individual, thereby creating a symbiotic relationship between observable data and perceptual frame wherein each is responsible for shaping the other. These findings suggest that the mind, unlike a computer, is not built to store objective data; rather, it relies on a subjective method of organizing perceptual information: information is stored as a result of the relationship between bits of information, a fact that has led cognitive scientist Douglas Hofstadter to refer to the concept of analogy as a "the core of cognition." In essence, the mind stores its data through processes akin to narrativization, a point which becomes central to the theory I present in the next chapter in regards to adaptation and its relationship to trauma.

As people make sense of the world through narrativity, organizing traumatic experiences into a personal narrative—one that exists in the controlled, conscious mind—becomes key to working through trauma's toll on the psyche. This process is so crucial to treatment because traumatic reactions are progressive in nature, "survivors who do not tell their story become victims of a distorted memory… which causes an endless struggle with and over a delusion" (Felman and Laub 79). As discussed earlier, traumatic memories produce strong, uncontrollable emotions in their victims; these memories and their associated stimuli become triggers that induce a conditioned response in the victims. Due to the negative emotions tied to these conditioned stimuli, victims learn to avoid these triggers which can often cause havoc on daily functioning as such stimuli can be as common as bright lights or loud noises. This learned avoidance behavior creates a scenario where trauma victims have no control over their emotional wellbeing, short of withdrawing completely from normal activity. Developing a trauma narrative becomes important for two primary reasons: first, it facilitates the dissociation of conditioned stimuli from the conditioned traumatic response, allowing the patient to return to normal function; second, it establishes a scenario where the patient can begin to identify and work through the negative, unhelpful, and often inaccurate thoughts surrounding the traumatic event and "helps organize memories and feelings into a more manageable and understandable psychological 'package'" (*PTSD Trauma Treatment*).

While traditional therapy relies heavily on the spoken word as the primary methodology for developing one's trauma narrative, contemporary therapy practices often make use of other forms of representation in crafting these narratives:

> Trauma narratives can include verbal storytelling, participating in interviews conducted by trained trauma specialists, or the use of written descriptions. An assortment of creative techniques can also be used to develop narratives such as drawing, painting, collage making, creative writing or scrapbooking. (*PTSD Trauma Treatment*).

The development of additional forms of representation-based therapy—including art therapy, music therapy, drama therapy, and dance/movement therapy—continues to expand and revise the available

treatment protocols for treating trauma and mental health professionals continue to debate the individual merits and drawbacks of each. In addition, each form of therapy brings about new ethical considerations regarding how these therapies are implemented and for whom they are best suited. Given psychology's status as a "soft" or "inexact" science, consensus amongst practitioners is all but impossible; it remains up to the individual patient and their consulting therapist to determine what treatment plan is best suited to their needs. Toward the end of this chapter, I will discuss representation and trauma as its own section and explore how scholars in the field have addressed the ethical considerations that such representations pose. However, as this study emphasizes historical trauma, a view of trauma that privileges a shared traumatic response amongst a community of victims, it is first important to explore how this concept has developed over the course of the twentieth century.

THE VIRALITY OF TRAUMA

Up until now, this chapter has relied on a view of the individual response to trauma: how traumatic events affect a specific victim and how their individual response is shaped by those events. In many respects, however, modern concepts of trauma are based on the premise of trauma as a collective experience, wherein an entire community or society is affected in related ways and encouraged to identify with trauma's direct victims. As the events of the twentieth century progressed, trauma became a more integral part of social consciousness and, in particular, identity construction, specifically in response to the public awareness brought to moments of large-scale trauma through the mass media. In her book *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (2005), E. Ann Kaplan describes how "trauma produces new subjects" (1) or "new forms of political identification based in different experiences of victimhood, shared suffering, and witnessing" (Meek 6). Lawrence Grossberg & Co. describe how an emergent identity crisis in the post-war era was the direct result of "the growing power of the media" in a period where "the strength of the traditional sources of identity—religion, family, and work—has declined in proportion to the growing power of the mass media, leisure activities,

and the consumer lifestyles" (220). As the importance of these traditional markers of identity decreased, individual identity became reliant on those things that continue to tie people together; as radio, television, and eventually the internet evolved into the predominant modes of shared experience, the information they disseminated became crucially important to defining collective identities and filling the holes left by the decline of the traditional markers of cultural identity.

By the 1970s, psychology as a field was finally beginning to understand the long-term effects of the Holocaust on its survivors; it was at this time that a new subject emerged, particularly in the United States, as thousands of soldiers returned from the Vietnam War, traumatized by their experiences. By this time, nearly every home in the country had at least one television set giving news media outlets the ability to bring the war in Vietnam into every home in America, drastically increasing the number of people witnessing the atrocities of combat. Studies of the time eventually led the American Psychiatric Association to formally recognize a traumatic reaction in the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* in 1980. While the newly termed *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (PTSD) is only one of many possible reactions to trauma, it is the first trauma-specific reaction to be recognized by the APA and certainly it is the reaction that has attained the most awareness, in part because it is among the most extreme reactions to traumatic events.

As the events of the twentieth century progressed and the mass media became a greater presence in the lives of people across the globe, collective traumatic incidents became more frequent and affective. In many respects, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 mark the capstone of a century of movement toward the development of trauma as a collective cultural experience. Within minutes of the first plane crashing into the North Tower at 8:46 am, the news traveled to the furthest shore of a country that found itself under attack. By the time the second plane hit the South Tower at 9:03 am, news of the attack had been reported across the globe. Television, radio, and internet news sources worldwide covered the story; in addition to these traditional sources of media coverage, email,

SMS messaging, blog posts, and word of mouth ensured that the tragedy of the day was not localized to New York City, New York State, Shanksville, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., or even the United States in its entirety, but had international implications. Most crucially, the events led to hugely problematic and misleading military actions that increasingly took on an "if you are not with us you are against us" mentality that threated to divide countries that had previously been allies and turned Arab and Muslim populations across the globe into symbols of suspicion and fear.

The events of the Vietnam War, the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and the aftermath that followed them illustrate how trauma in the second half of the twentieth century developed from an individualized experience—rooted mainly in victims of abuse and soldiers in active combat—to a collective experience where traumatic events were broadcast instantaneously across nations and continents, bringing the horrific events of the outside world into the comfort of the living room, forever changing the way society interacts with moments of tragedy. At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed Meek's concept of *historical trauma*, an event that fundamentally alters the identity of an entire community in response to large-scale traumatic events such as war, genocide, famine and natural disasters. Meek's concept is most readily understood in regards to specific moments of collective trauma during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries such as the assassination of President Kennedy, the Tiananmen Square massacre, the nuclear disasters in Japan and Chernobyl, the massive earthquake in Haiti, the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, the various school shootings across the world, and the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Each of these events, in addition to scores of others across the globe, have shaped cultural identity in both broad and narrow terms. While such events take place in specific, localized communities, these tragedies exert national and sometimes global influence through media representation and distribution. In these cases, victimhood is no longer limited to those individuals physically present for the traumatic events as such events are simulcast through the airwaves and

cyberspace, instantaneously encompassing individuals from across a specific country or even between nations.

In "Inclusive Victimhood: Social Identity and the Politicization of Collective Trauma Among Turkey's Alevis in Western Europe," Ali Aslan Yildiz and Maykel Verkuyten cite a number of studies in constructing the idea that such historical traumas function "as political capital in creating a shared moral identity—an identity based on moral values and innocent victimhood" (244). Their study unpacks the social identity perspective that defines how people shift personal conceptions of an individual subjectivity ("I") to a subjectivity based on group characteristics ("We"). Yildiz and Verkuyten's study cites the methodology for how collective identity is formed (249). First, the individual engages in an analysis of the distinctions between one's own group and those with which they label others. In essence, the theory suggests that we define ourselves in much the same way we learn to differentiate between similar objects or concepts. Second, shared identity relies not only on an awareness of these differences, but also on an awareness of what the effect of the other is on the group. Here again narrative becomes important as this theory suggests we process this information in a relational way.

In the wake of large-scale traumatic events, individuals are aided in this process through various forms of mediatization that aid in constructing collective identity: "it is not the event per se [that causes collective trauma] but, rather, the cultural representation of it that turns it into a collective trauma" (Yildiz and Verkuyten 251). This idea is perhaps best dealt with through an example: on April 15, 2013, shortly before I began revisions on this chapter, two pressure-cooker bombs exploded near the finish line of the Boston Marathon, killing three spectators, injuring over 250 people, and sparking a manhunt that included a firefight in Watertown, Massachusetts several days later. In the hours, days, and weeks that followed, the tragedy was reported by all the major national media outlets, many of which constructed the event as a national tragedy, popularizing the phrase "We Are Boston Strong" and

constructing a narrative that suggested the city of Boston as a signifier of American identity.[6] There are specific reasons why this event became synonymous with American identity (including Boston's historical significance to the nation's founding, the timing of the event on Patriot's Day, and the character of the city as a mecca of white working-class citizenry); however, the purpose of this discussion is not to question what is or is not a national tragedy, but to point toward the media's role in expanding notions of victimhood and how this influences cultural representations.

A relatively recent area of study suggests a similarly expansive view of traumatic victimhood following the many years spent studying the long term effects of the Holocaust on survivors. The premise of this line of thought holds that children born to survivors of extreme traumatic experiences are likely to exhibit certain psychological characteristics typically seen in direct victims of traumatic events. Theories suggest that the transmission of trauma is the result of both "direct and specific" transmission where the disorder of the parent leads directly to its appearance in the child and "indirect and general" transmission whereby the parent is so affected by their own traumatic past that they become unfit parents and lead to a "general sense of deprivation in the child" (Kellerman "The Long-Term Psychological Effects and Treatment of Holocaust Trauma" 212).

Natan P.F. Kellerman's review of various studies on the topic led him to conclude that the transmission of trauma typically affects the child in one of four areas: 1) an impaired sense of self, leading to identity problems and a problematic identification with the parent's status as a survivor; 2) cognitive difficulty, whereby the child is overwhelmed with anxiety regarding death and is stressed when confronted with stimuli reminiscent of the parent's trauma; 3) affectivity difficulties, whereby the child experiences a generalized state of anxiety and mood disorders coupled with persistent feelings of guilt and anger; and 4) exaggerated interpersonal functioning, making the child hyperdependant on

[6] Following the day of the tragedy, the cover of the *Bakersfield Californian* read "Terror at Home" while the *Indianapolis Star* read "'It Can Happen Anytime, Anyplace.'"

family attachments while at the same time unlikely to form intimate relationships with outsiders (Kellerman 211-217).

There is little agreement about exactly how trauma transmits its effects from parent to child. Some psychologists subscribe to a psychodynamic theory where the emotions of the parents who experienced the trauma—those emotions that could not be integrated into the conscious mind—are unconsciously passed on to the next generation. In this situation, the child unknowingly "absorbs the repressed and insufficiently worked-through Holocaust experiences of survivor parents" (Volkan 43). Another theory suggests that transmission occurs through sociocultural and socialization models that are also responsible for transmitting social norms and beliefs. Whereas the psychodynamic theory suggests an unconscious transmission of trauma, the sociocultural model emphasizes a knowing transmission process where the parent "convey[s] a sense of an impending danger that the child may have absorbed" (Kellerman, "Transmission of Holocaust Trauma--an Integrative View" 261).

Yet another theory suggests an integrated conscious and unconscious mode of transmission through the family system: parental fears about the outside world lead to a closed-off family structure where the parents become obsessed with the child's safety and the child responds with exaggerated anxiety over their parent's welfare. This closed system leads to mutual identification between parent and child, trapping both generations in a reliving of the past. Finally, recent theories have emphasized a biological mode of transmission that assumes that children are predisposed to developing traumatic reactions because the original trauma has altered the brain chemistry of the parent and this anomaly has been inherited by the child. Psychology has long held that some mental disorders (such as schizophrenia) can be heredity, a theory that lays a solid foundation for the idea that traumatic reactions could likewise be passed on like "psychological DNA" (Volkan 44). Regardless of the theory one subscribes to, it is clear that severe traumatic reactions do not exist in a vacuum. Parents who have been subject to extreme traumatic experiences are forever changed—physically and mentally—from their

former selves and these changes lead to significant effects in their ability to parent their offspring. Children develop as a result of the combination of their genetic predispositions and their ongoing socialization, both of which are compromised when the child is born into a traumatized house.

New insight into the legacy created by traumatic events and the expansiveness of victimhood within a mediatized culture demonstrate how trauma in the twentieth century has become viral. No longer seen as a physical ailment affecting an individual, trauma has spread its reach: first retreating inward, fracturing the mind, and then branching out, spreading like an epidemic capable of travelling across both time and space, infecting people as they come into proximity with traumatic events and the traumatized.

TRAUMA AND REPRESENTATION

As our understanding of trauma has developed over the last century, scholars and mental health professionals have continued to grapple with various ideas about treating the victims of traumatic events. Accepted wisdom states that the recovery process hinges on a reintegration of the traumatic memories into the conscious mind, a process that demands the victim come face-to-face with their traumatic experience in order to work through the resulting emotions and psychological blocks that originated from the experience. As trauma exists outside of accessible memory, clearly some form of representation is necessary if for no other reason than to re-present the victims of trauma with the information necessary so that the traumatic event and the associated emotions can be integrated into their consciousness. Currently, cognitive behavioral therapy is the standard treatment protocol for treating psychological trauma. In its various forms, this treatment relies on the victim remembering and even re-living the traumatic experience in order to break the pattern of avoidance associated with the negative emotions traumatic memories induce. The goal of this therapy is to guide the patient to an understanding of their trauma in order to modify the meaning they have constructed around it. Such treatment plans involve the victim re-presenting their experience often through psychodrama or other

forms of traumatic representation including writing, storytelling, and art therapy. In the case of historical trauma, where the definition of victimhood encompasses a broad range of first, second, and even thirdhand witnesses, representation becomes all the more important as mediatized representations of trauma are a necessary component to documenting a historical record of the traumatic events.

In her seminal text, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), Cathy Caruth questions the "surprising impact" of trauma, investigating "how trauma unsettles and forces us to rethink our notions of experience, and of communication" (4). In the introduction to the second half of her book, "Recapturing the Past," Caruth focuses on the paradoxical concept that traumatic memories can somehow be fully recovered into conscious memory because the individual was not ever fully present as such events took place (151). Caruth contends that individuals seeking to recall traumatic events and understand the gravity of their psychological and emotional meaning are unable to fully process this information because their access to traumatic memory is limited and suffers from elision and distortion when brought into conscious recall (152-154). She further explains this argument by suggesting that integrating traumatic events into narrative memory, memory that is accessible to speech (a broad concept that extends to writing and artistic creation), necessitates a process of elision and distortion to fill in narrative gaps experienced by the individual who was not fully present at the time of the trauma.

Caruth's comments illustrate a key point in relation to the experience of the individual suffering from trauma: that the significance of the event lies, to some degree, in the incomprehensibility of the event as a whole. For many victims, the distressing and disturbing truth of traumatic memory resides in the absence of information regarding the experience as often the events exist only in broken fragments and flashes of memory. Individuals are precluded from drawing the pieces of the experience together, leaving these victims with questions regarding the experience and feeling unsettled over the loss of control over their lives.

Caruth's commentary explains a commonly held belief surrounding trauma and its relationship to representation: since traumatic experience precludes any attempt to integrate experience into narrative memory, the truth of trauma's emotional and psychological meaning defies representation in narrative forms including literature, film, and art. Yes, the traumatic events can be narrated and represented, but what is missing is the traumatic significance of these events on the individuals that experienced them since it is the absence—at least the conscious absence—of these memories that proves the most distressing.

In *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, LaCapra distinguishes between the forms of writing *about* trauma, a historiographic form interested in an objective reconstruction of past events (to the degree objectivity is possible), and *writing trauma*, a "process of acting out, working over, and to some extent working through in analyzing and 'giving voice' to the past" (186). The distinction LaCapra makes illustrates how literary forms of expression—to which I add all forms of writing, performance, and art—allow an author to write from a position of emotional and psychological authority, as a subjective witness to traumatic events. This position is antithetical to the seemingly objective position of historical authority taken by those who seek to document traumatic events when writing about trauma. Despite its inability to capture the "truth" about trauma, literature and art in general remain "a prime, if not [a] privileged, place for giving voice to trauma" in their ability to "get at trauma in a manner unavailable to theory" (190, 183). These forms of expression "provide a more expansive space (in psychoanalytic terms, a relative safe haven) for exploring modalities of responding to trauma, including the role of affect and the tendency to repeat traumatic events" (185).

Caruth and LaCapra point toward an idea that Roger Luckhurst explores in *The Trauma Question* (2008): despite trauma's inaccessibility to narrative memory, it continues to inspire countless attempts at representation, all of which rely on narrativization to some degree. Luckhurst contends that the crisis of representation, as it applies to trauma, has generated a "trauma canon, a wide diversity of high,

middle and low cultural forms [that] have provided a repertoire of compelling ways to articulate…the trauma narrative" (83). Since the early 1990s, scholars have responded to this outpouring of traumatic narratives by collecting criticism into monographs that explore certain aspects of traumatic writing. Felman and Laub's *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992) stands as one of the first of these books to explore the role of traumatic events in the cultural products of literature and film. The book examines the literary and psychological significance of several cultural products that were a direct result of World War II, an event the authors label as a watershed moment in the collective traumatic past of the twentieth century. The authors stress the relationship between the witness and the traumatic events in order to come to terms with the intersection of violence and culture. Together with Caruth's *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), these two collections of essays establish the groundwork for dozens of text that follow.

While most scholarship in trauma studies reflects an interest in the Holocaust and the act of witnessing the horrific events of World War II, these collections underwent a significant change in the years following the attacks of 9/11. Examining collections published in the years following these events illustrates a growing interest in similar large-scale national traumas in an ever-growing number of cultural forms, spurred on by the growth of mass media communication. In particular, recent scholarship has broadened its attention—which typically focused on literary representations of trauma in the form of narrative testimonials and the occasional cinematic treatment of traumatic events—to include other forms of visual representation like painting and photography, sculpture, print and televised journalism, documentary film, and, to a much lesser degree, performance art.[7]

Theatre and performance have recently joined this discussion in two recent texts: Wald's *Hysteria, Trauma and Melancholia: Performative Maladies in Contemporary Anglophone Drama* (2007) and a collection entitled *Violence Performed: Local Roots and Global Routes of Conflict* (2009) edited by

[7] See Saltzman and Rosenberg *Trauma and Visuality in Modernity*; Carpenter *Culture, Trauma, and Conflict*.

Anderson and Menon. Wald's text traces the appearance of hysteria, trauma, and melancholia as they "represent the performative quality of gender identity" in a broad range of twentieth century dramatic literature (5) and suggests that "the theatrical stage might be a particularly suitable arena to negotiate the nexus of gender performativity and hysteria, trauma, and melancholia" (9). While Wald's book interrogates a gendered take on representations of trauma thereby placing individual identity into focus, Anderson and Menon's *Violence Performed* considers a broader marker of cultural identity by investigating performance's role in depicting and interacting with political violence. By placing political violence in conversation with performance, the text offers a compelling look at "the ways in which violence insidiously infiltrates the borders between the self and society, and initiates a dissolution of the boundaries separating the intimate and public" (13).

As the traumatic events of the last century have shaped contemporary culture into the traumaculture Luckhurst spoke of, representations of these events have become commonplace within the landscape of art and entertainment that shapes modern life. The pervasiveness of these forms of artistic products have compelled scholars and mental health professionals to begin to theorize the significance of this work both to the victims of the traumas they depict and also society at large.

Of particular interest in this discussion are the ethical considerations that arise from representing trauma, concerns that have led to a series of challenging questions:

- *Are such representations helpful to the victims?*
- *Are they harmful to the witnesses?*
- *Who should take ownership of these representations?*
- *What aspects of trauma are "safe" to represent?*
- *Who is the audience?*
- *Should these forms be treated as therapy or as art?*
- *How do you reconcile commercial appeal and psychological distress?*

Such questions are just a sampling of the myriad of ways representations of trauma have been challenged and interrogated over the last century. For the purposes of this study, these questions can be distilled down into three central considerations that will frame the theory I develop in my next chapter and the individual case studies which follow:

1) Traumatic representations have the potential to retraumatize a victim unable to process the emotions attached to their traumatic experience as well as transmit this trauma to secondhand witness experiencing the representation.

2) Such representations imply authenticity and create a perceived essential truth to the nature of the trauma and are therefore reductionist in their attempt to represent the victim's experience.

3) Such representations threaten to eclipse or de-center the traumatic events they seek to present as a result of the representational medium's own aesthetic and commercial considerations, thereby leading toward a sense of voyeurism on the part of an audience looking to take pleasure in the painful experiences of others.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have put forward a historiographic examination of how trauma was conceived over the course of the nineteenth century. By examining several psychophysiological phenomena and scrutinizing the debate that arose between physicians and psychologists during this time, I have illustrated how the concept of trauma has evolved from a model that locates trauma's effect on the body to one that locates its effect on the mind. Following the thread of this development, I have traced trauma's evolution over the twentieth century, exploring how the concept was reframed as a malady of the mind—and of memory in particular—thereby suggesting that traumatic responses function in ways similar to conditioned responses and giving insight into why many individuals suffering from traumatic responses only recall their trauma in periods of traumatic arousal. Reshaped in this way, I have explored how trauma fractures the self into composite pieces and examined how the individual is incapable of regaining conscious control of the memories of their traumas until the two dissociated sides of their self are integrated. Finally, I suggested that such integration comes only as a result of the role witnessing and testimony play in the healing process and examined how Freud's "talking cure" lies at the heart of traumatic treatment practices.

As my emphasis in this study is firmly rooted in Meek's concept of historical trauma, I next put forward an account of how trauma's significance has outgrown a model defined by an affected individual's experience to show how it has branched outward and taken root in the very fabric of

society, allowing trauma to cross boundaries of time and space. By examining how the birth of the globalized world has engendered historical trauma, through the development of mass media and communication technology that disseminate traumatic images across borders, I have begun to illustrate how trauma has developed into a collective experience that divorces direct contact with traumatic events from the traumatic response.

Finally, I have outlined trauma's relationship to representation and have suggested how scholars have begun to theorize the meaning and significance of these traumatic representation both to victims and the larger community though the mediatization of traumatic experience. Of particular interest to this study are the ethical considerations that the above work suggests as any attempt to represent and mediatize trauma, especially for an audience not directly connected to that trauma, demands reflection over the appropriateness of such representations. To that end, I have suggested three central considerations that address the ethical questions surrounding traumatic representations and it is these three areas that serve as a framework for the theory I build in my next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE
REPRESENTATION AND ADAPTATION

> To whom shall we entrust the custody of the public memory of the Holocaust? To the historian? The critic? The poet, novelist, or dramatist? To the surviving victim? Candidates abound, all in search of a common goal: the detour that will, paradoxically, prevent us from being led astray.
> —Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (39)

INTRODUCTION

Toward the end of the previous chapter, I engaged in a discussion of trauma studies' response to issues of representation and presented a sampling of how scholars have begun to theorize the meaning and significance of traumatic representations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Emphasizing the ethical dilemma that lies at the heart of this discussion, I suggested three primary concerns surrounding the mediatized representation of traumatic events:

1) Traumatic representations have the potential to retraumatize a victim unable to process the emotions attached to their traumatic experience as well as transmit this trauma to secondhand witness experiencing the representation.

2) Such representations imply authenticity and create a perceived essential truth to the nature of the trauma and are therefore reductionist in their attempt to represent the victim's experience.

3) Such representations threaten to eclipse or de-center the traumatic events they seek to present as a result of the representational medium's own aesthetic and commercial considerations, thereby leading toward a sense of voyeurism on the part of an audience looking to take pleasure in the painful experiences of others.

Taken together, these concerns form the crisis of representation that plagues trauma studies: art's *inability* to truly capture traumatic suffering but the *need* of the artist to represent this trauma. The goal of this chapter is to address these concerns and outline a theory of adaptation that demonstrates how the theatrical reworking of classical Greek tragedy provides playwrights with unique opportunities to interrogate moments of historical trauma and represent the emotional and psychological ramifications of traumatic events.

ENGAGING WITH TRAUMA THROUGH REPRESENTATIONAL FORMS

An ongoing debate within the field of adaptation studies concerns the various modes of engagement adaptions take in relation to their source material and the affordances these various modes offer adapting authors. Linda Hutcheon, author of the formative text *A Theory of Adaptation,* carefully outlines three unique modes of engagement and their specific ability to "immerse" the audience in different ways and to different degrees (22). The first of Hutcheon's modes, the telling mode, encompasses adaptations that utilize the literary medium and emphasize narrative literature in the form of short stories and novels. This mode emphasizes a dynamic relationship between audience and text that takes place primarily in the imagination. The words and images of the author confine themselves to the page and it is left to the mind's eye of the reader to fantasize a visual and aural representation of those words. In this mode, readers maintain a highly privileged place in the creation of the representational world: the limitations of this world are bound only by the restrictions of the reader's imagination and the experience of the text remains unstructured, allowing the reader to engage, disengage, and transverse the text independently of the narrative and at their own will.

The second of Hutcheon's modes, the showing mode, encompasses adaptations that utilize performance-based media like film, theatre, and television. This mode emphasizes a more structured relationship between source material and viewer where the visual and aural representation has been constructed not by the audience themselves but by an intermediary: typically a collaborative process of a director, several designers, and a group of actors. Instead of asking the audience to take an active role in the construction of the representation—as they do in the imagined space of the telling mode—this mode asks its audience to interpret and analyze a finite structure constructed for them by the intermediary; while the viewer is not actively engaged in constructing the narrative in this mode, their role remains active in the process of analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating the world constructed for them. This mode of engagement makes use of a highly structured, synthesized, and temporally ordered

process defined by conventional rules relating to the medium of representation and realized by an external set of creators. Unlike the first mode that privileges the reader to engage with and transverse the text at will, independent of the narrative, this mode places the viewer in the more passive role of receiver: the narrative moves forward as it has been designed independently of the viewer's level of engagement within the narrative.[8]

Hutcheon's third mode, the participatory mode, encompasses adaptations that utilize interactive forms of representation such as a videogames or theme parks (such as Harry Potter World) where the world of the narrative has been constructed by the intermediary designers, yet audiences are asked to take part in the way the narrative plays out, effectively replacing the actors who fill this role in the showing mode. While this mode resembles the highly structured showing mode, the audiences' experience of the narrative is experiential rather than critical and individuals are tasked with taking an active role in the unfolding of the narrative.

While Hutcheon's analysis suggests strict separation between these modes of engagement, there is clear overlap, especially between the showing and participatory modes. Environmental theatre productions like *Sleep No More* (2011), a retelling of *Macbeth* set in a series of warehouses in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood made up to look like an abandoned hotel. In this production, the audience mills about the hotel, discovering scenes from the play and piecing together the narrative based on what they discover. This experiential narrative and others like it—such as reenactment towns like Colonial Williamsburg—rely on audience interaction but have been carefully detailed by an intermediary to provide the audience with a controlled experience. While such instances challenge her perhaps overly-simplistic model, it is important to remember that hers are not intended as strict guidelines but rather as a way of conceptualizing like-oriented objects.

[8] Recorded media such as DVDs, Blu-ray discs, and internet streaming video complicate this relationship as viewers are able to pause, rewind, fast-forward, and skip through the narrative at their leisure; however, this ability does not apply to live performance, the primary subject of this study.

Each of Hutcheon's modes of engagement offer unique opportunities to adapters looking to create a specific relationship to their audience. However, for those authors working with narratives based in traumatic circumstances, and particularly for those whose audiences are the subject of such trauma, the showing mode offers key benefits unaccounted for by the others. In the showing mode, audiences are provided with a fully realized image of the circumstances surrounding the narrative. Unlike the telling mode of literature, audiences are not expected to create an imagined space in which the story is to unfold. As I have outlined in the preceding chapter, individuals affected by trauma suffer from an inability to effectively process the circumstances of their trauma into their conscious mind; in an effort to protect itself, the mind blocks a cohesive narrative from forming in regards to the traumatic circumstances leaving the victim unable to consciously access memories of the experience. As the imagination relies on an individual's experience for material useful in the creation of abstract narratives, the literary mode suffers from the likelihood that an individual suffering from trauma would be unable to draw on this information in order to form the imagined space necessary to fully experience the narrative. In addition, such an effort would cause discomfort and distress due to the individual's inability to fully recall or process their own similar experiences. As the individual remains the driving force in the telling mode, such distress might translate into an unwillingness or inability to continue to engage with the traumatic material as written.

As for Hutcheon's participatory mode of engagement, despite the use of role-play as an aspect of drama therapy, experts have long argued over the therapeutic benefits and ethical concerns of such endeavors. In regards to treating trauma, certain studies have shown individuals suffering from trauma benefit from a controlled reenactment of their experiences. In the case of traumatized soldiers returning from war, research indicates that Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy can aid in the treatment of PTSD; this has led the University of Southern California's Institute for Creative Technologies to adapt the X-Box's commercially successful combat tactical simulation game *Full Spectrum Warrior* into an exposure

therapy approach entitled *Virtual Iraq/Afghanistan*, which is now used in many VA hospitals and military bases around the country ("Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy"). Conversely, other studies indicate that some individuals suffering from PTSD might see a worsening of their symptoms as a result of reclaiming their traumatic memories[9] and this can ultimately retraumatize the victim as a direct result of their therapy (Rothschild). Concerns surrounding the efficacy and ethicality of role-playing and its effect on the psyche have been common since the mid-twentieth century at a time when the infamous Stanley Milgram experiment and the Stanford prison experiment captured widespread critical attention.[10] On the clinical level, therapists are tasked with a heavy responsibility to protect the psychological well-being of their clientele during treatment; as there remains little agreement about how best to treat trauma, reclaiming traumatic memories through narration and role-play is widely seen as a delicate enterprise.

Outside of the therapists' office, participatory adaptations are much rarer and are often met with criticism as they are seen as irresponsible, insensitive, and ethically dubious. Several recent incidents illustrate this point including the 2010 political scandal surrounding Richard Iott,[11] a May 2012 legal battle between Andrew Yara and the Perryton Independent School District,[12] and several instances from all over the country where black children have been asked to reenact slavery in the classroom

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[9] See Van der Kolk, McFarlane, Weisaeth "The black hole of trauma" *Traumatic Stress: The Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, And Society*.

[10] Inspired by Nazi complacency to Hitler's demand to carry out inhumane acts of violence, the Milgram experiment tested the individual's response to authority. By design, volunteers were instructed by authority figures to perform acts that were believed to severely harm or even kill another volunteer participant in the experiment (who was actually a confederate of the experimenters). The Stanford prison experiment studied the psychological effects on individuals selected to become prisoners and prison guards over the course of two weeks. The experiment demonstrated how individuals adapted to their roles and integrated characteristics of their assumed part into their personality during the experiment.

[11] In October 2010, Richard Iott, the Republican nominee for United States Representative for Ohio's 9th District, faced national controversy when *The Atlantic* reported that he had participated in World War II reenactments as a Nazi SS officer. Despite polling that suggested the story had little effect on the outcome of the race, Iott was nonetheless dropped from The National Republican Congressional Committee's website as a preferred contender and he lost the election to his democratic opponent.

[12] In May 2012, Yara was allegedly injured while participating in a Holocaust-themed role-playing exercise as a mandatory part of his school work (Cervantes).

(such instances have led the Anti-Defamation League to come out against such role-playing exercises in the classroom).[13]

While there is certainly a great deal to be said about the merits of all three modes of engagement, I contend that it is Hutcheon's showing mode that is best suited to depicting trauma for a number of reasons. First, this mode establishes distance between the victim and the representational form, fostering the critical processes necessary to work through traumatic circumstances. Second, subjectivity in this mode is not determined by the victim's experience, multiple subject positions can be created when the individual is not privileged in the creation of the world of the narrative. Finally, it is this mode, and only this mode, that fosters community—rather than individual—engagement with the material. Individuals gather as a part of an audience and experience the work together as a group with a common interest making this mode uniquely suited to depicting the kind of community-based trauma under investigation in this study.

These reasons align with the three primary ethical concerns facing traumatic representations outlined in the previous chapter. In regards to this final point, I contend that it is the theatre in general—with its various conventions that keep the presence of the audience in view—that most effectively deals with historical trauma and that the theatrical adaptation of classic tragedy in particular is best-suited to address such emotionally and psychological complicated subject material.

RECLAIMING THE PAST/UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA THROUGH THEATRE AND ADAPTATION

As a storytelling medium, the theatre often functions as a vehicle for the production of cultural memory. Playwrights record events important to their society, lending an aesthetic voice to real world situations and these records become accessible—both in print and on stage—to future generations. The plays that are passed down often are given a highly privileged position within a community as, in

[13] See Downey, "Teaching the Holocaust or slavery: Is role playing effective or fraught with problems?"

addition to communicating a history of the period depicted, they provide some sense of the perspective of the time and this information can be quite valuable in piecing together a more complete understanding of a given event or period. The published drama exists as a subjective, aesthetic interpretation of the historical record tied to the events. While the performed aspect of these dramas is ephemeral and does not survive as part of the cultural memory, traces of it linger and add further insight into these dramas in the form of theatrical criticism, musical scores, costume and set designs, production photographs, and, more recently, digital audio and video recordings or clips accessible over the internet. Contemporary theatre historiography routinely utilizes these theatrical artifacts to piece together analyses of past productions in order to situate a particular drama and provide some insight into how it was received within its community as well as the social relevance it communicated in its own time.

When applied to traumatic subject matter, the theatre as a literary form both records and evaluates the given events, detailing the circumstances of the trauma and also providing the author's perspective on these events. Therefore, what is left for future generations is not only a record of what happened but how it was understood and experienced by one particular custodian of public memory. While we must be careful not to assume that a playwright's voice accurately communicates the will of the people, a point that Lawrence L. Langer alludes to in the quote that began this chapter, we can assume that the patronage a play receives—in the form of both readers and audience members—is equitable to some degree with support for its ability to effectively communicate community concerns. In other words, for a play to survive the test of time audiences must connect with the material on some level and find it to reveal something truthful. If a play fails to connect with its community—be it a failure because of its content or form—it is unlikely to become an influential part of cultural memory.

Theatre's ability to reach a broad population as well as its ability to encapsulate and transmit memory is crucially important to consider when contemplating the theatre's relationship to trauma and

its place within our society. So much of our traumatic past is communicated through representational forms precisely because they can simultaneously document historical events and reveal a subjective psychological and emotional response to these events. While an objective understanding of the traumatic events is desired as part of the historical record, it is the effect these events have on the individuals and communities who experienced them that is ultimately more important. For this reason, the theatre becomes a prime space for the representation of traumatic events.

In Hutcheon's text, the author suggests that melodramatic works establish themselves as "adaptogenic…to the form of opera and musical dramas, where music can reinforce the stark emotional oppositions and tensions created by the requisite generic compression (because it takes longer to sing than to speak a line)" (15). Hutcheon wrote those specifically about the novels of Charles Dickens, though her argument extends well beyond this limitation. Melodrama and the formalistic qualities of this genre conform nicely to the conventional affordances provided by opera and the musical theatre: specifically, the emotional flexibility of song and its relationship to the emotional psychology of the character. The idea that a given text—as a source of adaptation—is more or less suited to the conventions of a particular form raises the question, "what makes classical tragedy attractive to contemporary playwrights?"

While tragedy's long and complex history in Greek culture can be traced back to the sixth century B.C.E when the poet Arion first developed the dithyrambic chorus, modern adapters take a much more narrow view of the genre and have focused their attentions on the Golden Age of Greek drama (roughly, the fifth century B.C.E.) because the thirty-two extant tragedies all come from this period. These plays provide ample opportunity for playwrights looking for a suitable framework in which to discuss historical trauma: flanked between two brutal wars, this period served as a time of reflection for the Greek civilization, as is evidenced by the development of philosophy during this century. The Greco-Persian wars, which began in 499 B.C.E. and continued through midcentury (449 B.C.E.)

enveloped the Greek city-states in conflict as Persia sought to expand its empire. Aeschylus, the first of the three great tragedians of the age, served as a soldier for Greece during the conflict and records indicate that he was likely present at two of the most decisive battles that ultimately led to Greece's victory (Boardman 184-5). The first, the Battle of Marathon in 490 B.C.E., effectively ended the first Persian invasion while the second, the Battle of Salamis in 480 B.C.E., signaled the beginning of the end for the Persian armies which spent the next three decades suffering loss after loss as Greece went on the offensive. Aeschylus's *The Persians*, which was part of a trilogy that won the City Dionysia in 472 B.C.E., dramatizes Xerxes's return home following his defeat at the Battle of Salamis. Bookending this period on the opposite side of the century was the Peloponnesian War which ultimately saw the great city of Athens fall to Spartan victory in 404 B.C.E.

The drama of Greece throughout the fifth century served to exemplify Greece's military and social dominance in the region. The tragic playwrights of the age—Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides included—were the keepers of the cultural history of the Greek civilization; for source material, these playwrights looked backward on the history of their culture: their plays reflected a desire to pass on the lessons of the past to the generations to come. Typically, this meant turning to Homer, the greatest of the epic poets, who chronicled Greece's victory during the Trojan War and set down much of the mythology that lies at the core of Greek society. As the concept of conflict was central to this material—as it stands both as an accounting of the military history of the civilization and a record of Greek mythology which saw man come into direct opposition with their gods—Greek tragedy has always favored trauma, particularly community-based historical trauma, as a theme.

As an example, *The Oresteia* puts a human face on the war with Troy, a war that—despite the fictitious nature of its accepted origin—[14] nevertheless did happen and had a dramatic and traumatic

[14] In mythology, the war began when Paris of Troy took the beautiful Helen from her husband Menelaus, king of Sparta.

effect on the Greeks. It tells the story of one specific national trauma and the implications this trauma had on a specific community. While personal tragedy pervades these plays, it is often its effect on the society at large that is placed in the frame; these plays examine the social significance of the traumatic moment: war, plague, regicide, etc, with the chorus functioning as both representative of the community depicted in the play and as a stand in for the audience as a kind of ideal spectator. To cite another example, while *Oedipus* kills his father and marries his mother, it is the plague on the city that results from these actions which frames the tragedy of Sophocles's great play.

It should be noted that each of the three tragedians of the period whose work survives—Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides—handles traumatic subject matter in unique ways; however, this study is far more concerned with how modern authors and audiences conceive the traumatic resonance of these plays in total rather than how each of the three authors' aesthetics shape the individual plays. The process of adaptation effectively replaces both the original author and their intentions with a new creator and new intentions, simultaneously expanding the work's meaning (a point that will be discussed later in this chapter) and diminishing (though certainly not erasing) the importance of the original author's contribution to the final work. For this reason, it may be useful here to mention Aristotle's role in modern conceptions of tragedy: despite the ahistorical nature of Aristotle's commentary—given that his *Poetics* was written nearly a century after the height of the Golden Age of Greek drama—modern conceptions of the genre rely heavily on his treatise. For those without specialty knowledge in theatre history or theory, Aristotle's text serves as rule: it suggests an essentialist look at tragedy and it reads as a prescriptive guide to the genre, a fact that accounts for its gross mishandling in eighteenth century neoclassicism. While those "in the know" have debated Aristotle's arguments for centuries, it would be difficult to argue that tragedy has not, to some degree, been concretized by it over the last 2,500 years.

While the tendency for playwrights to adapt classical tragedy has been a longstanding tradition, the trend of using these texts as vehicles to depict and discuss contemporary traumatic events is a modern innovation in need of examination. Such works demand consideration both for why playwrights tend to adapt these stories and how the process of adaptation aids in representing the traumatic moment they depict. This chapter explores the relationship between trauma and adaptation in order to illustrate the various affordances the process of adaptation offers authors dealing with historical trauma. In the pages that follow, I present a model for understanding how the process of adapting these texts addresses the ethical considerations I presented in the preceding chapter and provides modern playwrights with a powerful tool of working through the crisis of representation that scholars of trauma have long discussed.

DISTANCING THE VICTIM OF TRAUMA THROUGH ADAPTATION

The pervading fears about traumatic representations tend to emanate from a belief that such representations have the potential to retraumatize the victims who experienced the events they depict and to transmit the initial trauma to secondhand witnesses who serve as audience to these representational forms. With its roots in the Platonic suspicion of mimesis, this fear holds that representational images are powerful entities that can easily capture the imagination of the individual and greatly influence the conscious and unconscious self. As the traumatic response of the individual is tied to the reliving of the disjointed memories associated with the traumatic events, formalizing these memories into representational forms – like film, theatre, or even art – could trigger strong emotional responses within the victim.

Evidence of this fear is readily available within theatre culture. In 2001, shortly after the terrorist attacks that decimated lower-Manhattan, the Flea Theatre, a small warehouse theatre just ten blocks north of the World Trade Center site, began its long run of Anne Nelson's *The Guys.* Nelson's play tells the story of an editor who assists a New York City fire captain in preparing eulogies for the firefighters who died when the Twin Towers collapsed. The play drew large audiences when it premiered in December 2001; it remained popular for over a year and has inspired a feature length film and various anniversary productions in the

years since the attack. In his May 2002 article about the continued interest in the piece, Peter Marks discusses the strong emotional reaction experienced both by the audience and Tim Robbins, the play's then current male lead:

> 'There was a moment I almost went over the edge,' [Robbins] said, 'when I had to catch my emotions. It just gets me sometimes.'
> The insular world of the theater is more commonly a sanctuary from reality. But "The Guys" offers no safe haven. On many evenings the actors not only feel the emotional impact of the play, they hear it, too, in the chorus of stifled sobs from reverent theatergoers, who seem to hang on every word. (Marks)

These strong reactions stem from the all too tangible reality of Nelson's subject matter: for many, the play became "a hit that hurt and healed simultaneously" (Finn); for the author, the piece was a reaction to the events themselves, something akin to an unconscious response. In her own words, Nelson discusses how "[she'd] like to think [she] didn't make the play happen. The play happened to [her]" (Ojito).

The Guys is characterized and lauded for its pure, raw, uncompromising emotion and its willingness to engage with the incomprehensibility of the terrorist attacks themselves. While I would not go as far as to say that Nelson's play retraumatizes its audience or its stars, it is clear that it aroused intense and even unmanageable emotions attached to the events. The small off-Broadway Flea Theatre caters to a local audience who witnessed the distressing events that unfolded on that day and Nelson's play, written in just nine days shortly after she met with a fire captain charged with writing these eulogies, makes no attempt to distance herself, the characters, or the audience from the fateful truth of the attacks.

There are all manner of plays written in response to tragedy, both of the personal nature and of events that affect large communities. Authorship and artistic creation often emanate from a position of experience and firsthand knowledge as much of the process of creating art is an attempt to work through one's own experiences. In the case of the plays that make up this study and the countless other related texts, what remains unclear is the reasoning behind the choice to adapt the familiar narratives of

classical tragedy. I suggest that the answer lies in the spatial and temporal distance the process of adaptation creates between the traumatic event and the individual: these familiar stories act as a linguistic and imagistic intermediary between the traumatic event and the trauma's victims.

Most scholars of trauma studies agree that trauma is prefigured on an inability of the victim to organize traumatic events into the familiar structures of one's daily life; the emotional reaction to trauma occurs because the events themselves defy the systematic organization of the knowledge of traumatic events. As I outlined in the previous chapter, the experience of trauma involves a break with the conscious self, leading sufferers to have difficulty in integrating traumatic memory into conscious recall. Such events force the victim into a kind of unconscious trance as a mechanism of defense against the horrific circumstances confronting them. As such events are experienced on the unconscious—rather than conscious—level, the memories associated with these events are inaccessible to conscious recall and instead manifest themselves spontaneously when triggered by conditioned stimuli. As victims recall these memories, they are subject to a heightened version of the experience, one that has been "reformulated in phantasy" (Bronfen et al. 255), and as such, they re-experience the initial trauma.

Drawing focus to the mimetic qualities inherent in such dissociation, Ruth Leys relates this unconscious recall to the interaction between actor and audience, explaining that the victim experiences traumatic memory as a drama unfolding on the stage of the libidinal unconscious where the victim "observes himself or herself performing the scene" over and over again like an actor in a play (300). In her analogy, the victim takes on the role of the audience member witnessing the drama from a detached yet emotional invested position. As certain stimuli become associated with the strong unconscious emotional experience of the trauma, these stimuli threaten to trigger traumatic recall. As representations seek to reenact the initial trauma, they are rife with such stimuli and hold the potential to retraumatize the victim or even transmit the trauma to a third party.

I suggest that the classic tragedies present well studied and understood frameworks—a dramaturgical shorthand—that contemporary playwrights can capitalize on in order to create distance between the victim and their traumatic circumstances. As their ancient narrative elements are known to both all manner of people familiar with the dramatic histories of these plays as well as even the most casual students of ancient culture and myth, these stories provide an organizational schema through which traumatic events can be both narrativized and worked through. The practice of adapting these stories capitalizes on the primal process inherent to the way we gather and understand information: through analogy, the process of transferring meaning from a previously known source to a new subject. The information we take in through sensory stimuli remains unprocessed bits of information until our higher brain functions categorize the information through tracing relationships between the stimuli and our previous experiences. Like computer binary code made of zeroes and ones, this information relies on an internal process of translation where we convert the stimuli into meaningful associations.

As traumatic experiences defy our ability to process the information they provide, they create a breakdown in the process that governs the making of these associations. I suggest that adaptation creates a bridge by which these associations can be made. As victims of traumatic circumstances, one may be unable to fully internalize the information associated with the trauma, thereby drawing associations to one's own previous experiences; however, the ability to draw analogous relationships between the trauma and a previously known story may allow some flexibility for the individual to relate to their trauma. The use of these familiar stories creates an empathetic relationship between the victim of trauma and the subject of the tragic narrative, allowing the victim to organize their trauma in line with the trauma of the tragic character, providing them a framework through which to process and organize their own experience. As these plays are dramaturgically structured around concepts of historical tragedies,, they provide particularly fertile ground for playwrights looking for a suitable vehicle to represent contemporary traumatic events.

By establishing this empathetic, analogous relationship, playwrights create distance between the victims and the trauma they endured as the story being represented is far enough removed from the personal experience of these victims but still manages to connect with the psychological and emotional core of the trauma. In addition, the use of these familiar stories allows outsiders unaffected by the trauma a way of organizing the experience into an accessible (if perhaps reductive) schema of understanding,[15] thereby avoiding the transmission of trauma, one of the major ethical dilemmas concerning traumatic representations. As audiences are generally aware of the narrative form of these tragedies—whether they are familiar with the source texts themselves or merely have a limited understanding of their narrative aspects—they come to these works with foreknowledge that helps them process and organize the information and thereby avoid the dissociative emotions attached with experiences of traumatic events.

In this way, the adaptation of classic tragedy avoids the ethical considerations of retraumatizing the victim and passing the trauma along to secondhand audiences. Instead, audiences are able to process the information represented in these plays through an already integrated cognitive schema: the learned account of the classic tragedies. This allows the adapted plays to work around the specific nature of the trauma and instead represent an approximation of the emotional and psychological core of the events. This process creates considerable spatial and temporal distance between the victim, audience, and the traumatic experience, allowing an approximation of the traumatic circumstances to be represented.

[15] I say "reductive" because it is important to acknowledge that these adaptations do not attempt to represent the actual trauma experienced by victims, but rather attempt to concretize a way for an outsider to understand their trauma.

AVOIDING THE ESSENTIALISM OF REPRESENTATIONS OF TRAUMA

Despite the popularity of Nelson's *The Guys*, the text remains one of a select few plays that openly discuss the events of September 11, 2001. Of course, the events of that day tangentially work their way into all manner of dramatic texts—just as they have in other representational forms—but a great deal has been written about the fact that very few plays seek to deal directly, rather than passingly, with this subject matter. In an article entitled "10 years after 9/11, where are the iconic plays?," theatre director Rupert Goold comments that such events present themselves "very much like the Holocaust, really…. When staring at enormity, dramatic artists find it intimidating and hubristic to say, 'I shall go to the heart of this tragedy'" (Kennedy). Goold speaks to the fear that such events are unrepresentable because their bearing on society is so great that any attempt to reduce this affect into a manageable representational form would be somehow profane, a crime against the experience of the victims affected by such circumstances. Much of this sentiment derives from discussions of representations that originated in response to the Holocaust. In his forward to *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust* (1989), Elie Wiesel comments that "one does not imagine the unimaginable. And in particular, one does not show it on screen. [To do so may] profane and trivialize a sacred subject" (xi). Picking up on this idea, LaCapra suggests that this suspicion of representation might derive from a resistance to working through the trauma:

> Those traumatized by extreme events, as well as those empathizing with them, may resist working through because of what might almost be termed a fidelity to trauma, a feeling that one must somehow keep faith with it. Part of this feeling may be the melancholic sentiment that, in working through the past in a manner that enables survival or a reengagement in life, one is betraying those who were overwhelmed and consumed by that traumatic past. (22)

The implications of LaCapra's sentiment are twofold. First, it suggests that trauma, particularly historical trauma like the Holocaust, takes on an air of the sublime and becomes something beyond cultural comprehension; therefore, representations that address these events contribute nothing of value to society and should be regarded as grotesque. In response to this point, Adam Lowenstein

suggests that the fears surrounding traumatic representation have overextended their reach and asserts that "the desire to shield victims/survivors from the disempowering and destructive forces of, for example, Holocaust denial, is a noble and humane one" but "when traumatic experience becomes equated solely with the 'unrepresentable', then this respect for victims/survivors transforms, paradoxically, into a silencing of both experience and representation" (5). Perhaps the most high-profile example of this came in 2001, shortly after the terrorist attacks, when Roundabout Theatre Company cancelled its revival of *Assassins* just weeks before it was to begin previews and claimed it was "not an appropriate time to present a show which…asks audiences to think critically about various aspects of the American experience" (qtd. in Salsini).The problem with this impulse is that it passively shuts down dialogue and strips people of their right to express themselves. While, in theory, such representations may be dangerous and even harmful to some, no good can possibly come from silence.[16]

A second implication of this sentiment suggests that representations of historical trauma threaten to establish themselves as essentialist depictions of the traumatic events; as if the story they tell is everyone's story and the emotions associated with their given circumstances are universal to all victims of the given trauma. Following this analysis, playwrights would shy away from this complicated material because any attempt to dramatize the experience would be necessarily reductionist. As an example, Nelson's two-character play places Nick, a fire captain charged with writing eulogies for his fallen colleagues, and Joan, an editor seeking to help Nick organize his thoughts, in the subject position. While the play is based on a real-life conversation the author had with just such a fire captain, the characters are fictionalized versions of real people and their function in the play is to represent the experience of the entire community that witnessed the attacks. Despite the play's many successes, the

[16] The production was later a critical and commercial success in 2004, winning Tony Awards® for Best Revival of a Musical, Best Featured Actor (Michael Cerveris), Best Lighting, Best Orchestration, and Best Direction of a Musical (Joe Manetllo). On December 3, 2012, Roundabout brought the cast back together for a benefit concert reading.

experience of Nick and Joan cannot account for the variety of experiences of an entire nation under attack, giving the play a narrow scope.

If, for our purposes, we can call this a problem, the issue with works like Nelson's play is that, in crafting their narrative, playwrights are forced to restrict their stories to stageable size, excising the epic nature of these sorts of traumatic events. While there is little argument to be made here given the fact that traumatic representations are, in fact, reductionist, in reality no representational form can do justice to any experience, traumatic or otherwise. Such a sentiment is exactly what Plato argued nearly 2,500 years ago and which Western culture has been rebelling against in all manner of the arts for centuries. True, the process of representing historical trauma—or any collective experience—necessitates reducing the experience of the many down to the experience of a select few; however, there is still value to be found in this.

It is my belief that the adaptation of tragic source texts addresses both of these implications when applied to traumatic events. In regard to the fist, which proposes that representations cannot account for the sublime nature of historical traumas, I propose that one of the primary benefits of working with tragic source texts is the epic characteristic that they suggest to audiences: classical tragedy originates as a discussion of how calamitous events effect great civilizations and their leaders. Built on an Aristotelian understanding of the plays of the Golden Age of Greek tragedy, these texts concern themselves with problems on a grand scale: at the core of Aristotle's theory is a definition of tragedy that states it "is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude" (*Poetics* VI). These stories dramatize the rise and fall of royalty, entire civilizations on the brink, and man's struggle with the gods. The scope of tragedy is enormous when compared to the traditional dramatic fare of contemporary Western theatre and audiences witnessing tragedy are primed to think of its content in these terms. This provides adaptations of these works a feeling of grandeur unaccounted for in other attempts to dramatize similar events. Authors who use these works as vehicles

for discussing historical trauma are not representing traumatic events themselves; rather, they are adapting the familiar narratives of tragedy in order to address the emotional and psychological ramifications of trauma. In this way, the process of adaptation simultaneously respects Wiesel's assertion that such *events* are unrepresentable and finds a way of dealing with and working through the emotional and psychological *responses* to these events.

As for the second implication, which suggests that the reductionist nature of representation establishes an essentialist point of view in regards to traumatic events, the adaptation of classical tragedy avoids essentialist depictions by privileging complex subjectivity on a dramaturgical level. Classical tragedies are structured in such a way that they present multiple perspectives on their presented subject matter in the form of dialogue between the protagonist, antagonist, and the chorus (which both represents the witnesses to the tragedy within the narrative and functions as an idealized representative of the audience watching the drama). Each play examines the circumstances surrounding the tragedy from a multitude of perspectives, allowing authors adapting these plays an opportunity to explore several subject positions in regards to the trauma about which they write. Of particular use to authors dealing with historical trauma is the inclusion of the chorus, a device lost in most contemporary dramatic practice. When electing to write about a moment of historical trauma—such as the terrorist attacks of 9/11—the chorus provides authors with an opportunity to include the audience within their dramatic texts, immediately expanding the scope of the play beyond the personal experiences of the central characters to the community's experience of the events.

In addition to the fact that the classical from of tragedy avoids traumatic essentialism by simultaneously suggesting multiple perspectives of traumatic events (protagonist, antagonist, chorus, polis), the very process of adaptation resists concepts of authenticity and essentialism, drawing attention away from the specificity of form to the subjectivity of theme. While the basic form of these texts remains consistent across adaptations, these texts mean different yet related things to each

author/audience that experiences them and therefore each privileges a unique perspective toward the story at hand. Were a Syrian author to select *Oedipus Tyrannos* as a source text in order to represent the Arab Spring, this play would mean something drastically different than Rita Dove's *The Darker Face of the Earth*, a version of the play set in South Carolina just prior to the Civil War. While the narrative and formal structure of these plays might be quite similar, the thematic subjectivity of such works demonstrates how the process of adaptation opens a narrative up to multiple meanings, defying any sense of an authentic and essentialist version of their narrative.

Contemporary adaptations are influenced not only by their ancient source texts but also by the countless versions of the same story that preceded them. In this way, each adaptation expands the set of meanings inherent in the basic narrative and, as a result, can greatly influence future retellings of the same story, further divorcing the narrative from a sense of essentialism and authenticity. Taken together, the adaptations form a set of interrelated plays akin to the Adornian conception of the constellation image. Adorno puts forward the constellation in response to Hegel's concept of absolute idealism, suggesting that constellations provide "a juxtaposed rather than integrated cluster of changing elements that resist reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle" (Jay 14-15). Building off of Benjamin's concept of the dialectical image, Adorno suggests the imagistic metaphor of the constellation in order to account for objects that retain their individuality yet form complex relationships to other similar objects. Constellations, which are made up of a collection of stars which exist in both a spatial and temporal relation to each other, are comprehensible to viewers only from a distance. As some stars exists further from us, their light takes longer to reach us, while others are much closer in proximity to us and therefore their light reaches us faster. It is only because we perceive these constellations from a distance that the relationship between the separate stars is made visible (and therefore form the image of the constellations which we know).

This study reads the adaptation of these texts in a similar fashion: the individual components that make up the text (the classical original and its many adaptations) exist within a greater organizational structure that places these components in conversation with each other. Despite their differences, the classical source texts and their various iterations form a correlation around the basic narrative structure of the story that they tell and it is this correlation, rather than the individual texts themselves, that form the object of the adaptation. In this sense, Dove's *The Darker Face of the Earth* is not an adaption of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannos* or even of the Oedipus myth itself, but rather an adaptation of the larger image or object of Oedipus, an image that contains all subsequent versions of and relationships to this tale. This becomes particularly poignant when you consider that Sophocles's original text, as well as the plays of his contemporaries, were often based on the writings of Homer several centuries earlier (which in turn were based on oral histories passed down through the culture). An adapting author may be intimately familiar with the myth; the classical tragedy; other adaptations or theatrical productions of this work; or perhaps the music, art, and poetry that in some way relate to the narrative or its themes; or, they may only be aware of the existence of these elements, yet their work in adapting the narrative is influenced by this knowledge and the product of their labors cannot be dissociated from this knowledge. Essentially, I suggest that each new component of the constellation to which these adaptations belong expands the landscape of meaning inherent to the source material just as the addition of luminous spheres within a constellation of stars would further enhance the detail of the image while avoiding altering its organizational form.

This creates a particularly productive way of understanding adaptation and its relationship to its audience. *The Oresteia*, for example, is not a fixed entity: it has been rewritten and restaged consistently since its initial inception in ancient Greece. It is not a text written by Aeschylus, but rather a set of texts, images, and ideas that reveal and expand upon the basic narrative of a family dealing with extreme dysfunction just following a period of wartime. It is the collection of texts, images, and ideas that form

the basic constellation image of *The Orestiea*. The same can be said of all the Greek texts and for that matter all texts that continue to live on in adapted form. Each subsequent adaptation of these texts functions as a single star within a constellation; the individual components of these texts (their themes, characters, aesthetic style, etc.) exist within a greater organizational structure that places these components in conversation with each other and forever expands the image of the constellation.

The elegance of this model in regards to the handling of historical trauma is twofold: first, it foregrounds the idea that, in addition to the texts themselves forming relational bonds, the subject matter they address (the specific circumstances of the trauma) also exists in relation to other moments of trauma throughout history. By placing the traumatic circumstances of the specific adaptation on a continuum along with other traumas, this work pushes against conceptions that there can ever be an essential trauma; instead, the events are placed in historical relief and the plays demonstrate how one age (the age that produced the specific adaptation) dealt with and understood circumstances in some way similar to the traumatic events of other times and places (in other adaptations). A second and related point: like the adapting authors who maintain an awareness of their source materials' many iterations, audiences retain knowledge of the previous adaptations of the story and their various relationships to other iterations. This awareness primes the audiences' understanding of the adaptation to be part of this larger set, foregrounding the idea that the text encompasses a range of different treatments of similar subject matter. In essence, the process of adapting this work actively signals to the audience that the resulting product is only a small part of a much larger picture, an idea that cannot be accounted for in other representational forms such as Nelson's play.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Unlike film, which depends on widespread—even global dissemination—theatrical representations tend to be smaller, community-based endeavors: plays often pick up stories that originate within the localized community of the author and audiences come directly from the same

community. While continued commercial and critical success may lead to subsequent productions all over the world, no one could argue that widespread dissemination is central to the playwright's work as this kind of success in the theatre is nearly unheard of. While commercial considerations are key to much artistic production in one way or another, one needs to look elsewhere to uncover the motivation for authors to write a play as theatre is no longer the solid commercial enterprise it was a century ago; its position as the most popular form of entertainment was long ago usurped by film and television and theatre now caters to a much more limited niche market. Where theatre may exceed the capacity of film and television, however, is in its ability to actively engage with an audience and represent embodied experience, something for which other forms of recorded representational media cannot account.

As the theatre trades in live performance, it is uniquely positioned to deal not only with the *product* of memory but also with the *production* of memory. Unlike film, which separates its community into two disparate entities—with members of the production team on one side and the audience on the other—the theatre is presented live allowing its definable community to extend past the limitations of the silver screen. In the theatre, the actors, designers, and directors responsible for its creation work in dialogue with the audience, creating a conversation within the theatrical space. The live stage provides an opportunity—one of the few remaining in our ever-increasingly digitized world—for people to gather together in person to share in a common experience. As a community-based art form, the theatre often draws its makers from within the same community that will serve as its audience. This relationship between artist and community is particularly true of dramatic works that take traumatic circumstances as their subject, a point made evident in the earlier discussion of Nelson's *The Guys.* Such cases create unique possibilities for engaging trauma victims as either members of this audience or actual participants in creating the piece of theatre, thereby providing individuals with a sense of ownership unavailable to them in other representational forms.

In regards to our discussion of trauma, the community-based nature of live performance shifts focus away from the rebuilding of the self—the aim of individualized therapy—to the rebuilding of the community and the transformation of that community's understanding of the events that shape its identity. Such a shift naturally moves us further away from the concerns of drama therapy and instead embraces the applied theatre discipline, inspired by the work of Bertolt Brecht and Augusto Boal. These seminal figures concerned themselves primarily with a politicized theatre, one that sought to unpack and address the given circumstances of our world and that challenged its audiences to come to a greater understanding about the relationship between citizen and civilization, individual rights and those systems of power that both protected and oppressed them.

Unlike film, whose aesthetic and commercial considerations—in the form of A-list actors, various editing techniques, blockbuster budgets and the resulting marketing endeavors, and the need to appeal to a broad-based audience—threaten to eclipse and de-center the traumatic events they seek to present, the *liveness* of the theatre concretizes the effect such circumstances have on actual people and heightens the connection between the content of the drama and its audience. In a sense, all of the glitz and glamour of Hollywood film production threatens to detract from a given film's ability to represent trauma; a point which becomes clearer when you consider how rare it is for audiences to agree that a film both succeeds as a film and as a representation of traumatic events.

One of the most popular and highest grossing movies ever made, James Cameron's *Titanic*, perfectly exemplifies this point. Centered on one of the most iconic tragedies of the modern age, most audiences agree that, while the film provides an emotionally satisfying entertainment, it merely uses the disaster of the Titanic as the background to a relatively straightforward and clichéd romance plot. While this certainly aids in ticket sales, it alters the film's ability to accurately represent the trauma. As a film, it is hindered by the conventions of popular cinema as defined by the studio system. Audiences are drawn

in by the epic spectacle of the film: the cinematography of the disaster,[17] the lush costumes and sweeping musical score, and the gratuitous nudity. That is not to say that film is incapable of representing trauma: the point here is that popular cinema tends to be heavily constricted by the financial expectations of its investors and therefore depends on achieving mass appeal, a scenario that threatens to decenter the trauma of such subject matter in favor of other cinematic concerns. Theatre benefits from much looser economic strictures because of the smaller financial risk associated with producing material on the live stage. This creates the circumstances that allow dramatic content produced for the stage to avoid necessarily taking a backseat to the commercial and aesthetic forces that greatly affect film production.

In terms of dealing with traumatic circumstances, the live stage offers a further benefit unsuited to film and other recorded representational media: while all performance-based representational media like theatre and film rely on striking a balance between mental/emotional conception and physical expression—a key concern in any discussion of trauma—film can never account for the physical and emotional immediacy of the stage due to its live nature. The theatre allows for the significance of the traumatic events and its repercussions to be seen on the actual live body rather than experienced only in the imagination or memory (as in literature) or through a visual intermediary (the cinematic screen) and in this way the embodied experience of the audience is kept in focus. One central criticism of film is the sense of voyeurism it creates within the audience as they are entirely removed from and have no interaction with the performance space; in this way, film's communication with its audience is one-directional, the audience has no ability to interact with what has been filmed previously. In the theatre, however, the interaction between the performance space and the audience is fluid; while an imagined fourth-wall often exists between the two—creating a sense of voyeurism—this idea is regularly

[17] In one of the film's most iconic shots, a man falls from the stern of the ship as it is sinking and careens off of a propeller. Fans have become so captivated by the spectacle of the moment that the character now has several Facebook fan pages, one of which has over 40,000 likes.

dismantled by performers through direct address and asides and collapses entirely following the end of a performance as both actors and audience acknowledge each other's presence. Voyeurism in the theatre, therefore, is a tool that can be wielded to suit the purposes of the production whereas in film it is omnipresent. In addition, the theatre, unlike film, provides little physical separation between actor and audience, uniting both entities into a singular community within a shared space and, in the case of adaptations of classical tragedy, often places the audience (or its representative in the form of the chorus) at the center of the action, removing the sense of voyeurism inherent to film and television.

A prime benefit of theatrical adaptations—whether dealing with classical tragedy or some other source—is that such texts tend to announce themselves to audiences as having been told, retold, adapted, appropriated, and previously translated. In many cases, playwrights make use of a self-reflexive voice in constructing their narratives and build in clues to the nature of the material as a palimpsestic entity, leaving audiences to see through to the inner workings of the piece. The self-reflexivity of these texts defies the passive mimetic qualities of other representations (like film), and a continual awareness of the theatrical artifice keeps audiences focused on the specificity of the adaptation. Instead of being drawn in to a sympathetic understanding of the narrative, audiences are encouraged to take a more objective, critical look at the material since it continually announces itself as a reworking of a previous form. This self-reflexivity explains Brecht's continued interest in adaptation as a playwriting process.

Just as it is unrealistic to believe that economic concerns are central to the playwright's desire to adapt, it would be a mistake to assume that authors turn to these texts solely because they have "stood the test of time." Clearly, an author is concerned with supplying an audience with pleasure and entertainment; however, with so many versions of each of these narratives already in existence, what need do we as audience members have of yet another account of *The Oresteia.* "It is obvious," Hutcheon declares, "that adapters must have their own personal [and perhaps even political] reasons

for deciding first to do an adaptation and then choosing which adapted work and what medium to do it in" (92). The true essence of these works is not to be found in their reworking of the original structure of the narrative—although there is certainly enjoyment to be found in the creativity of the individual adaptations—but rather it is the message, themes, or circumstances that inspired the author's work and their handling of this material that draws the audience's critical attention.

While it is ultimately a futile and unconvincing point to suggest that theatre is in any way better than film or television, or vice versa—for one thing, not all films or pieces of theatre are the same and to generalize to this extreme is problematic—the goal of this discussion is not to argue for the supremacy of a particular medium. Rather, it is to address how a specific *kind* of theatre—the adaptation of classical tragedy—accounts for one of the central ethical concerns continually mounted in trauma studies: that the representational medium's own aesthetic and commercial considerations threaten to eclipse or de-center the traumatic events they seek to present. In the above section, I have attempted to break down the aesthetic and commercial considerations of the theatrical medium in order to demonstrate how these texts succeed: through the live, communal nature of theatre that privileges embodied experience within a more narrowly defined audience. Are films capable of representing historical trauma in similar ways? I imagine so, and I invite other scholars to articulate their ideas about the circumstances in which this is true.

THEORIZING THE ROLE OF ADAPTATION

In discussing the cinematic element of montage in his 1929 essay "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram," Sergei Eisenstein posits that filmic montage derives its meaning not from a linkage of two juxtaposed images, but through a *collision* of the two distinct images. In this shift in language, Eisenstein suggests an active relationship rather than a passive one, one that demands the receiver contemplate the discordance between the two independent images. Eisenstein's use of active imagery supports his claim that "the basis of every art is conflict" (38) and that "art's task" is "to make

manifest the *contradictions* [emphasis mine] of Being" ("A Dialectic Approach to Film Form" 46). Drawing inspiration from Baudelaire, Eisenstein further suggests that art derives its beauty through irregularity which arises from the dramatic clash between two images (51), and uses the case of musical counterpoint—the simultaneously interconnected yet independent component elements of a musical melody—to exemplify his claim (52). Here, Eisenstein suggests that individuals perceive the images in a discordant relationship to each other and are tasked with contemplating the uniqueness and meaning of the separate images, creating a dialectical relationship that—borrowing from Lenin's understanding of dialectics—engenders a deeper and more complex understanding of meaning inherent to the two images: their relationship, interconnectedness, and independence (81). Eisenstein finds meaning and beauty (art's purpose) not in the existence of the individual images but in their relationship to each other.

Such an understanding has clear resonance in the case of adaptation. As both the adaptations and their source texts often exist in drastically different times and spaces, each individual image—or adaptation—carries with it the unique sensibilities of the age that produced it or, drawing a term from Walter Benjamin, its unique *aura*. Any discussion of the aura naturally leads to a discussion of the concept of authenticity, a reviled word in the field of adaptation studies as it establishes a hierarchy between adaptations and their source materials and suggests that the original work somehow possesses greater worth simply because it came first and inspired subsequent versions. For his part, Benjamin challenges this notion quite brilliantly in his influential 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In the essay, Benjamin demands a rethinking of traditional conceptions of art as a product of tradition and posits that mechanical reproduction, unlike early forms of reproduction, divorces the art form from tradition and "can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself" (214). Citing the example of the photographic negative and its potential to be recreated in an endless stream of unique reproductions (216), Benjamin questions the

validity of the concept of authenticity in the mechanical age (214). The example illustrates how the process of reproduction, itself a form of adaptation, offers an opportunity to reactivate a work of art for a community far removed from the audience of the original source text, just as modern audiences are removed from the original circumstances of Greek tragedy.

Applying Eisenstein's ideas to the framework of the current study, I suggest that each new adaptation is experienced and understood in relation to the source text. That is not to say that an audience must be intimately familiar with the original work in order to appreciate the adaptation, a point Hutcheon stresses regarding the success of adaptations for "unknowing audiences" (120-28). Instead, I suggest that the simple knowledge that a text is an adaptation, that it exists within a greater framework and possesses a history of reworking, changes the way audiences perceive the adapted product: audiences are primed to accept that the material being adapted has a history and that the artist who created the adaptation sees resonance of that history in their own time. These circumstances challenge the audience to consider the relationship between the adapted work and the past, to recognize the interconnectedness of the social and environmental aspects of the current work with its textual heritage. It is this relationship that gives adaptations, particularly those dealing with traumatic circumstances, the spatial and temporal distance necessary to inspire active engagement with the difficult themes such works present (a concept discussed at length in the work of twentieth century theatre theorist Brecht in his concepts of *alienation* and *historicization* as well as the vast amount of criticism inspired by his work). In addition, it is this relationship that provides adaptation with its ability to avoid the dangers of traumatic essentialism discussed in the earlier part of this chapter.

To elaborate on this last point, a slight revision on a theory Vivian Sobchack presents is pertinent. In her chapter, "Phenomenology and the Film Experience," Sobchack, a notable film theorist and cultural critic, discusses the dialectical relationship between film and its audience and comes to the conclusion that each entity possesses a distinct "embodied view" (that of the film and that of the

audience) that "meet in the sharing of a world and constitute an experience that is not only intrasubjectively dialectical, but also intersubjectively dialogical" (53). Sobchack understands that viewership simultaneously demands the individual consider their own understanding of an artistic product but also their relationship to the others involved in its creation, including the filmmakers, other audience members, and critics. To revise Sobchack's work for my purposes, I believe that adaptation layers in a third distinct embodied view: that of the sourcematerial and its ever-expanding artistic and aesthetic heritage (the constellation image discussed above).

In discussing the need adaptation fills in society in a chapter entitled "Adaptations: The Contemporary Dilemmas," Imelda Whelehan suggests that they arise from an intense feeling of nostalgia created as a result of "the condition of the national psyche which is shedding layers of modernity and reverting to its own past tones under the stress of contemporary economic, political and social crisis" (Cartmell and Whelehan, *Adaptations* 12). Whelehan suggests that we delight in recalling the past as a way of seeking to reinvent ourselves in a moment of national psychic crisis, perceptively pointing to the breakdown of fixed identity within the twentieth century. She suggests that what we gain by looking back is an understanding of our own roots and the events that have contributed to making us who we are; a reclamation of an identity lost to us in the confusion of the complicated world in which we live.

CONCLUSION: ESTABLISHING THE CONSTELLATIONS OF SUFFERING

The constellations to which these texts belong have a long history of traumatic resonance: these narratives are steeped in suffering—of both the individual and the community—making these texts suited to the concerns of authors writing during the traumatic twentieth century. As authors struggle to comprehend the multiplicity of tragedies plaguing modern life, the process of adapting these texts allows them the distance necessary not only to place the specific events in their appropriate social and historical context but also to demonstrate how such traumatic concerns have plagued cultures from the

beginning of time. These stories demonstrate that life continues despite the hardships and trauma we face; while our pain may feel unique and often unbearable, we can find comfort in the knowledge that those who came before us endured.

The process of adaptation also allows authors the flexibility necessary to engage with specific traumatic incidents from various angles and viewpoints, thereby avoiding any sense of traumatic essentialism. Perhaps the most important legacy of the twentieth century is the understanding that history itself is unstable and constructed: the binary system that pits science against faith, fact against fiction, and victim against victimizer is dangerous and misleading. As a global culture, we can no longer afford to see the world and its problems in such black-and-white terms. It is precisely this kind of antiquated thinking that has given rise to some of the most traumatic circumstances of this century.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the process of adaptation provides authors with a means to keep the audience critically engaged with the important themes about which they write (through self-reflexivity). For a piece of art to bear the label adaptation it announces itself as an ongoing, living entity. The process unfixes a work from its crystalline past and reactivates it, bridging temporal and spatial divisions and demands a deeper process of engagement on behalf of the viewer.

Taken together, the plays under review in this study form a *constellation of suffering*, an ever-expanding set of images that address the way we understand and work through those traumatic circumstances that shape and inform our collective cultures. In the following chapters, I present three case studies, each an adaptation of a different classical tragedy and each addressing a specific community-based, historical trauma in order to demonstrate the affordances the process of adaptation provides playwrights dealing with such complex material and themes. First, in chapter three, I discuss *The Darker Face of the Earth* by Rita Dove, an adaptation of *Oedipus Tyrannos* set in pre-Civil War South Carolina that explores the horrific toll the great sin of slavery has inflicted on a young nation trying to establish its identity. In chapter four, I examine *Molora* by Yael Farber, an adaptation of *The Oresteia*

that studies post-apartheid South Africa and the effects the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had on both victims and perpetrators of violence in the preceding years. Finally, in chapter five, I present *Too Much Memory*, an adaptation of *Antigone* by Keith Reddin and Meg Gibson, a play that explores the rebuilding of the post-9/11 world where individual responsibility and agency are encouraged over the complacency and indifference that colored the past. Using a combination of close reading techniques and traditional dramatic analysis with an eye toward reader-response criticism, I analyze each of the three plays in order to define how the adapting authors engage with their source texts in terms of the construction and creation of contemporary narratives, character relationships, as well as structural and aesthetic elements. The goal of this analysis is to simultaneously demonstrate how each of the three texts functions as *constellatory adaptations* (in relation both to their source texts and the subsequent adaptations these sources inspired) as well as how the process of adaptation creates an opportunity to represent the horrific realities of historical trauma, typically seen as unrepresentable.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE DARKER FACE OF THE EARTH

> I was fascinated by the way the concept of fate in Greek myth was analogous to the African American experience. If there's any group of people that knows what it's like to try to find a certain amount of freedom within a cage, it's the African Americans.
> —Rita Dove, author of The Darker Face of the Earth (Steffen and Dove 114)

INTRODUCTION

In 1994, Rita Dove, Pulitzer Prize winner and Poet Laureate, began developing her first full-length dramatic text. Based on Sophocles's most famous work, Dove's play resets Oedipus's tragedy in antebellum South Carolina on a cotton plantation. The story draws a parallel between Oedipus's fateful search for identity and the African American experience of slavery. Known primarily for her poignant poetry, Dove created an engaging drama full of haunting stage images and complex themes.

Written in free verse, Dove's play draws inspiration not only from Sophocles's masterwork, but also the Bible and the slave revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (particularly that of Haiti in 1791 and South Carolina in 1822). Dove blends together elements of poetry, song, and dance to create an "incantatory fable that captures the United States' ethos as surely as Sophocles caught that of the Greeks" (Neilen); the play reveals "a deeper understanding of how slavery's cost continues to exact its cruel payments" from both sides of the slavery divide (Neilen).

During its two-year development, Dove made many changes to the play as it evolved and was presented in various readings across the country, including a short stint at the 92nd Street Y in New York City, the Round House in Silver Springs, Maryland, and the Roundabout Theatre on Broadway (Dove Acknowledgments). The play received its world premiere at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in 1996 in a joint production with the Crossroads Theatre Company of New Brunswick, New Jersey, which served as host to the play later that same year before it moved on to the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Response to the work was quite positive with critics calling the play a "powerful exploration of sexual and racial tensions" (Tiffany 187) and a "heart-wrenching masterpiece [that] leaves you skeletal as you

battle for breath during the final minutes of the production, only to come to terms with the broken pieces of a puzzle" (Andrews 20). The success of *The Darker Face of the Earth* led to a completely revised second edition that was published by Story Line Press in 1996 and the play has been a regular fixture on both Regional and academic stages across the country since its publication.

In this chapter, I will examine Dove's text as it relates to Sophocles's original in order to trace the resonance of Dove's innovative vision for the adaptation. I begin this chapter with a brief overview of the original narrative in order to set the stage for the major adaptations Dove makes. Next, I present a sampling of other twentieth century adaptations of *Oedipus Tyrannos* in order to reveal how this narrative has inspired authors to reinvent the story as a framework for representing modern traumatic events and to place *The Darker Face of the Earth* within this movement. As my goal in this chapter is to establish the play as a model example of this movement, I transition to an overview of the historical context in which Dove sets her work: the slavery-ridden world of the American South in the years leading up to the Civil War. Finally, I end the chapter with an extended analysis of Dove's adaptation, focusing on the content and form of the play (its setting, plot and structural alterations, character construction, language, and imagery) in order to concretize how Dove's alterations and creative vision imbues the classic narrative with new meaning.

THE ORIGINAL NARRATIVE: *OEDIPUS TYRANNOS*

As with all Greek tragedy, *Oedipus Tyrannos* begins near the climax of the story and dramatizes the swift fall of a once great man. A priest and the chorus of Theban citizens arrive outside of the palace and lament to Oedipus, their new king, about the plague that is ravaging the land. Oedipus acknowledges the plight and reveals that he has dispatched Creon, his brother-in-law, to the oracle at Delphi for answers. When Creon enters, he reveals that Thebes currently harbors the murderer of Laius, the former king, and that the plague has been sent by the gods as punishment. Hearing this, Oedipus vows to root out the person responsible for the death and for bringing this plague down on Thebes.

Oedipus calls on Tiresias, the blind prophet, for answers, but Tiresias initially refuses to help Oedipus and counsels him to give up this quest. Hearing this, Oedipus begins to believe that Tiresias must be complicit in the murder and accuses him. Tiresias finally reveals that Oedipus himself is the man responsible for Laius's death, causing Oedipus to believe that Creon is conspiring against him with the prophet's help. Enraged at Oedipus's accusations, Tiresias storms off after revealing that the murderer will be discovered to be both a foreigner and a native citizen of Thebes, both a father and a brother to his children, and both a husband and a son to his mother.

Hearing about Oedipus's continued accusations, Creon arrives to defend himself. Oedipus threatens him with death but both the chorus and Jocasta, Oedipus's wife, intervene. Jocasta then persuades Oedipus to not put stock in the prophecy, citing an example from her past: many years ago Laius received a prophecy claiming that he would be killed by his own son. As Laius was killed by robbers at a fork in the road, she believes the prophecy ineffectual.

Jocasta's mention of the crossroads concerns Oedipus as many years ago he was responsible for murdering a man at just such a place. He asks Jocasta for more information before sending word for the witness to Laius's murder. Confused by this, Jocasta asks Oedipus what is troubling him and he reveals that many years ago, while still in Corinth, a man accused him of not being his father's son. As a result, Oedipus went to see the oracle at Delphi and asked about his birth. The oracle gave him a prophecy that suggested he would one day murder his father and marry his mother. Fearing such an event, Oedipus decided not to return to Corinth and sought refuge in Thebes. On his journey, he came to a crossroads at which point he was forced off the road by another driver. An altercation broke out that resulted in Oedipus accidentally killing the passenger of the carriage, a man that meets the description of Laius that Jocasta provided. Oedipus tells Jocasta not to worry, though, as the story about Laius's death was that he was murdered by a band of robbers and Oedipus was travelling alone.

While waiting for the witness, a messenger from Corinth arrives and informs the king and queen that King Polybus of Corinth—the man that raised Oedipus—had died from natural causes and that Oedipus stood to inherit the crown. Oedipus takes this news as proof that the prophecy he received was mistaken, though he reveals that he is concerned about claiming the throne because of the second half of the prophecy that suggested he would marry his mother. To soothe his fears, the messenger tells Oedipus not to worry, as the queen was not his real mother. He tells Oedipus that many years ago, while traveling near Thebes, he was given a baby by a servant of Laius's house who needed to dispose of it. Oedipus was that baby and was taken to Corinth and raised by the king and queen as their son. Oedipus asks the chorus about the identity of Laius's servant and they reveal that it is the same man he has been waiting for, the witness to the murder. Jocasta begs Oedipus to end his quest as she has put all the pieces of the puzzle together. When he refuses, she runs into the palace.

The servant arrives and, despite his initial hesitation, reveals the truth to Oedipus on pains of torture: Oedipus is the child of Jocasta and King Laius and he is responsible for the death of his father. Oedipus curses himself and leaves the stage and shortly thereafter a palace servant enters and reveals that Jocasta has hung herself and that Oedipus has stabbed out his own eyes after seeing her dead. Oedipus exits the castle and begs to be exiled in order to save Thebes. Creon enters and tells Oedipus that he and his daughters will stay in the palace until the oracle can be consulted.

HISTORICAL TRAUMA AND THE ADAPTATION OF *OEDIPUS TYRANNOS*

Writing in the fourth century B.C.E., about a hundred years after the height of Greek tragedy, Aristotle selected Sophocles's *Oedipus Tyrannos* as a literary model with which to convey the fundamental aspects of tragedy. The selection of this play sparked a centuries-long fascination with the text, making it one of the most frequently studied and adapted plays well into twentieth century. Following its rediscovery during the fourteenth century, the play became an important part of the theatrical landscape of the Renaissance and the neoclassical age. In 1585, the play was selected to be

the first production staged at the newly built Teatro Olimpico, one of the oldest still-extant theatres in the world.[18] Later, during the seventeenth century, both Pierre Corneille and John Dryden (with the help of Nathaniel Lee) adapted the narrative to suit the tastes of the French and English respectively, both of which found great success with their versions.

Several twentieth century versions of the story exist and are worth discussing here. Two versions in particular serve as precedents for the work Dove does in *The Darker Face of the Earth.* First, Jean Cocteau's 1932 *La Machine Infernale* is particularly notable as it is among the earliest attempts to radically adapt the narrative. Like Dove's play, Cocteau begins his play long before the climactic moments we see in the Sophoclean original. Acts I and II take place concurrently and depict the night Oedipus solved the riddle of the sphinx, a moment not scene in Sophocles's play. For Act III, Cocteau dramatizes a scene between Jocasta and Oedipus on their fateful wedding night. Finally, it is in Act IV that Cocteau finally embraces Sophocles's original narrative and presents the downfall of Oedipus. Cocteau's play serves as an allegory to the weak and ineffectual political structure of the French government in the interwar period of the 1930s. Those in positions of power—the sphinx, Oedipus, and Jocasta—continue to act on shortsighted impulses that serve only to speed individuals toward their fate and those over which they hold power suffer in silence. Second, is Hélène Cixous's 1975 feminist interpretation of the text that follows a non-linear narrative structure that Charlotte Canning has argued "scrutinizes the relations between Oedipus and Jocasta, particularly as they play out patriarchal and heterosexual prescriptions affecting female desire and agency" (Canning 45). In Cixous's work, Jocasta thrusts herself to the center of the action of the play as a fully realized subject of female agency rather than the passive construction depicted both in the Sophoclean original and its many subsequent translations and adaptations. As I will demonstrate later in this chapter, Dove imagines thematic and

[18] Interestingly, the theatre's stage was designed specifically for the production, making it the oldest theatrical set still in existence.

formulistic innovations in her adaptation that call to mind elements from these early attempts at adapting the tragedy of Oedipus.

Despite those texts mentioned above, modern adaptations of *Oedipus Tyrannos* are quite rare, a point Marvin Carlson alludes to in his introduction to a 2005 collection of adaptations entitled *The Arab Oedipus*. In the introduction, Carlson states his belief that it is precisely because Sophocles's *Oedipus Tyrannos* has been held up as a model of tragic perfection, both by Aristotle and subsequent dramatists, that many modern authors have been hesitant to adapt it. Carlson argues that this fact does not hold true in the Arab world, thereby making room for the plays he is tasked with introducing. Of the texts that appear in this collection, Carlson argues that three of the four authors have turned to this myth in order to address—whether implicitly or explicitly—the specific social and political climate of the Middle Eastern countries in which they originate, thereby establishing a direct connection between these plays and those under review in this study.

While the text is infrequently adapted by Western authors, those who do take it as source material often share Dove's interest in the play's relationship to traumatic themes. Several modern works demonstrate this trend including Ola Rotimi's 1968 version of the story entitled *The Gods Are Not To Blame,* Swedish playwright Lars Norèn's 1995 play *Blood*, and Luis Alfaro's 2010 version *Oedipus el Rey.* Rotimi sets his play in the Yoruba kingdom of Nigeria, and centers the action on the tribal warfare between the Kutuje and the Ikolu. Norèn sets the action of his play in 1973 during the Chilean coup d'état that saw Augusto Pinochet come to power and the author creates a thoroughly modern tragedy about a couple forced to abandon their young son in the war-torn country only to be reunited many years later under the most traumatic circumstances. Alfaro's *Oedipus el Rey*, which premiered at the Magic Theatre in San Francisco in 2010, casts Oedipus as a young Chicano ex-con out to become the leader of the ganglands of South Central Los Angeles.

Dove's *The Darker Face of the Earth* joins this steadily growing list of plays that reinvent the basic narrative of *Oedipus Tyrannos* in order to connect the tragedy that befalls the blind king with modern instances of community-based, historical trauma. Each iteration of this tale layers new meaning onto a drama already rife with complicated themes organized around tragic circumstances. In Dove's case, the author draws on the United States' darkest era to explore issues of identity, racial inequality, and the legacy of slavery in the years preceding the American Civil War.

CONTEXTUALIZING *THE DARKER FACE OF THE EARTH*: THE TRAUMA OF SLAVERY

The traumatic resonance of slavery in America is one of the most deeply felt among the nation's people, both black and white. The practice of slavery and the institutionalization of its methods have left indelible marks on the soul of the country as it gave birth to a deeply ingrained sense of institutional racism that has drastically affected much of America's three hundred year history. The victims of slavery are widespread as the anger, hatred, and fear associated with the practice has been passed down through the descendant generations of both slaves and slaveholders. Set in the antebellum South, Dove's play grounds itself in the history of American slavery. The themes and images she establishes through her narrative and character development rely on this highly specific moment of historical trauma. To analyze this text is to view it through an awareness of the social and political realities of the slave trade and slaveholding in the United States. As the current study emphasizes trauma—both in its physical and emotional form—I have elected to focus on the traumatic realities of the slave-trade rather than provide a comprehensive history of slave practices in the United States.[19]

While trade between Europe and Africa dates back to the eighth century with the continent providing the majority of Europe's gold supply, the African slave trade only developed in the second half

[19] The following discussion of American slavery is extrapolated from several key sources: Horton and Horton, *Slavery and the Making of America*; Meltzer, *Slavery: A World History*; Rasmussen, *American Uprising: The Untold Story of America's Largest Slave Revolt*; Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*.

of the fifteenth century and slavery in America began in earnest in 1619, twelve years after the founding of Virginia. Originally, the Virginia settlement was established to seek out gold like that which had been found by the Spanish in parts of Latin America. As the settlers quickly realized that Virginia offered none of the riches that the crown sought, they turned their attention to agriculture—particularly tobacco—as the main source of economic export within the continent. The agricultural demands necessitated an extensive workforce to cultivate the crops and early attempts to press the native populations into subservience proved disastrous. While the settlers continued to bring in white indentured servants to work the fields for a bound term of service, this workforce proved too small to meet the demands placed on the settlement and additional labor was needed, leading the settlers to embrace the African slave-trade.

The trans-Atlantic slave trade was a truly brutal practice. African villages were raided and burned, their inhabitants captured—often by other Africans forced into labor—and made to walk hundreds of miles to the coast where they would be sold into bondage. In *The Darker Face of the Earth*, Hector—one of Dove's principle characters—suffers from traumatic memories associated with his capture, reliving the moment when his village was burned to the ground as he watched the children of the village attempt to escape their captors. For those sold into slavery, the six to eight week sea voyage across the Middle Passage was miserable and dehumanizing; conditions aboard the ships provided these slaves their first glimpse of the horrible existence that waited for them across the ocean. Slaves were forced below decks for most of the journey, chained together in cramped quarters, and only allowed above deck a few moments a day for food and exercise. The ships themselves carried 500 or more slaves at a time, many of whom died from disease or chose to commit suicide during the voyage.[20]

[20] Many slaves starved themselves or used their opportunity above deck to throw themselves into the ocean, preferring to die rather than be sold into perpetual slavery.

When they finally arrived at port, the slaves were auctioned to slaveholders who saw them as little more than animals to be exploited for their work and bred to produce more slaves. Often, individuals were purchased by their masters on the basis of their ability to breed and it was common for masters to subject female slaves at auction to a humiliating and violating inspection to determine their ability to produce children. Under traditional English law, the status of a child followed that of their father, a law that was rewritten in Virginia in 1662 in such a way that slavery now passed to the child from its mother, ensuring an endless supply of free slaves produced from the sexual unions between slaves or between white masters and their black slaves. The legal basis of slavery becomes interesting in regards to Dove's play because, under such laws, her main character would actually be born a freeman as his mother is a white woman, though this fact is suppressed following his birth. Carolina (later South Carolina), the setting of Dove's work, played an integral role in shaping the legal basis of slavery in America, providing the first comprehensive slave code in 1691 and subsequent laws which governed how slaves were to be treated and sold. In part, South Carolina's role in the concretization of slavery in America was because slaves accounted for as much as seventy percent of its population by 1720 (Horton 32), significantly higher than in the other colonies.

Slavery depended on a system of stripping the individual of their identity and forcing loyalties upon them. As a result, not only were families torn apart but slave owners attempted to sever those ties that bind the individual to their ancestry and their homeland, leaving generations of African slaves cut off from their past. Despite their efforts, slave owners found it quite difficult to destroy this heritage as slaves brought their customs to the colonies in the form of dances, ring shouts, and songs, many of which play a significant role in Dove’s play. As property, slaveholders exercised their rights to strip their slaves of even the most basic connection to their past: depriving them of their given names and renaming them either after their owner (to reinforce their possession), with biblical names (in an attempt to convert them to Christianity), or with ironic names of the great heroes and philosophers of

the past (to emphasize their lack of literacy and degrade them). This final practice is evidenced in *The Darker Face of the* Earth in several characters, a point that will be discussed at length later in this chapter. While not universal, many slaves were even branded with the mark of their owner to reinforce possession and the practice was quite commonly used to punish slaves for misbehaving.

Brought to work on plantations, most slaves would be put to work in the fields: plowing, harvesting, and planting during long, arduous hours in the hot Southern weather. Such slaves were often beaten with whips to increase their productivity or for any perceived disobedience to the plantation owner, his family, or the overseer. Life for such slaves was extremely difficult and often short. For those bought to work in the house, life presented further difficulties as young women were often forced into sexual relationships with their male owners, whether for fetishistic reasons or simply in order to produce free labor in the form of slave children. In such cases, these young women were then subject to the jealousy of their owners' wives and the many punishments and injustices that accompanied that jealousy.

Over the course of the eighteenth century, it appeared that slavery was slowly dying out. Many Northern states had abolished the practice entirely and the Southern states had passed legislation that vastly restricted the importation of new slaves from Africa and the trade of slaves between states. However, the invention of the cotton gin in 1794 dramatically reinvigorated the practice. Prior to this, cotton had to be picked and separated from its seeds by hand, a process that was tedious and unprofitable. Eli Whitney's device enabled slaves using it to increase their productivity fifty times over. The invention of the device coincided with the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 that saw the territory of the United States double, creating both the technology and the opportunity to vastly expand American cotton production. Prior to these developments, cotton accounted for only seven percent of American exports (140,000 pounds per year) a figure that ballooned to upwards of thirty million pounds per year by 1812 (Horton 83); as production increased, cotton became the single most valuable export of the

newly formed independent nation. The growth of the cotton industry emboldened proponents of slavery who relied on the free labor force and the economic success of the industry translated into even more political power for those states that controlled it. As demand increased, Southern states, which had previously passed legislation restricting the importation of slaves, relaxed their restrictions and the slave population soared, causing a corresponding increase in the number of domestic slave traders who would purchase slaves from the northern and eastern parts of the South and transport them westward to work in the cotton fields. This practice added to the traumatic realities of slavery as often slave families were broken up as fathers and sons were bought and sold *down the river*—the Mississippi River—to work in the much more difficult (and prosperous) cotton plantations.

Despite the increase, abolitionist sentiment continued to grow throughout the country and across the globe. In 1791, a slave rebellion in Haiti took place that saw approximately ten thousand French slaveholders flee the colony, thereby giving birth to an independent Haiti. News of the revolution spread quickly and many Southern slaveholders began to fear that the events would spark an uprising on American soil. Their fears were well founded and several slave revolts took place in subsequent years. One of the most notorious was planned in Charleston, South Carolina in 1822. Abolitionist Denmark Vessey, a free black man, had conspired with a number of others over several years to draft a strategy to end slavery in Charleston. Their plan was to attack the arms stockpile and then burn the city and raid the countryside before sailing to free Haiti. Six weeks before it was to be set in motion, Vessey's plan was uncovered and a local military force put down the rebels and hung many of those involved, including Vessey. In response to the revolts, new legislation was passed throughout the Southern states to restrict interaction between free blacks and slaves. Dove's play draws reference to the revolts in both Haiti and South Carolina, which become a major plot point that will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

The Darker Face of the Earth reworks the tale of *Oedipus Tyrannos* to explore the traumatic resonance of slavery and its practices during this period. Dove integrates plot and images with direct correlation to the slave trade and plantation life in order to establish a connection between her characters and the specific historical moment her play discusses. In doing so, the play explores the traumatic effects of slavery on a generation of African slaves and suggests the significance of slavery's traumatic legacy, a legacy which continues to affect American culture.

ANALYZING THE PLAY: THE DARKER FACE OF THE EARTH

Set in the antebellum South, *The Darker Face of the Earth* establishes a deeply rooted connection between Oedipus's struggle to come to terms with his true identity and with the shameful legacy of slavery in the United States that saw entire generations of slaves cutoff from their heritage, separated from their families, and denied the basic right of individuality and a unique subjectivity. *Oedipus Tyrannos* provides Dove with fertile ground on which to frame her discussion of the trauma of slavery. By reimagining the play's setting, plot structure, and characters, and imbuing her version with imaginative linguistic and imagistic qualities, Dove firmly establishes new meaning in this centuries-old text. In the pages that follow, I analyze each of Dove's creative alterations to the narrative in order to demonstrate how *The Darker Face of the Earth* utilizes the basic structure of *Oedipus Tyrannos* to engage with the historical trauma of slavery.

Power Dynamics and the Division of Space in the Era of Slavery

Dove sets her play on the Jennings Plantation, a cotton plantation in South Carolina in the years leading up to the American Civil War. Her prologue, which shows the birth of Augustus (the Oedipus character), takes place around 1820, and then the action of the play shifts to twenty years later for Acts II and III. The years between 1820 and when the Civil War began in 1861 were an extremely tumultuous

time in the South; this period saw the unfolding of several slave rebellions including the one led by Denmark Vessey in Charleston in 1822.

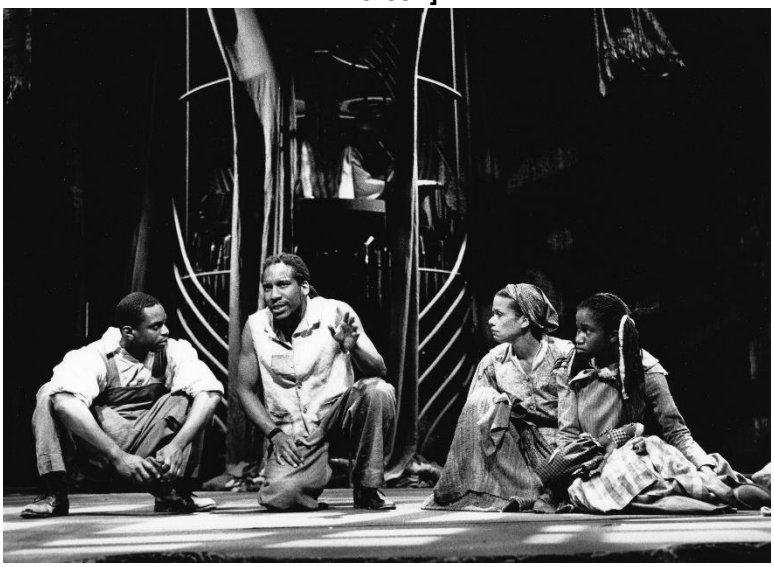
As Dove's play is particularly concerned with the culture of slavery on the plantation, most of her scenes take place in those areas most associated with slave labor, namely: the cotton fields and cotton house, the slave cabins, the slave cemetery, and several surrounding areas including a swamp that is present on the plantation grounds. In such scenes, Dove emphasizes the work-related role the slaves play on this plantation, and in these scenes we often see the slaves working the fields or stomping the cotton in the cotton house. Occasionally interspersed with these scenes are several that take place just outside of the Big House (owned by Dove's version of Jocasta and her husband) or in certain areas inside the house including Amalia's (Jocasta's) bedroom, her husband Louis's study, or the parlor. Typically, scenes in the Big House only occur at the beginning and end of each act (and the prologue) and serve as framing pieces to the action.

In addition, whenever Dove moves the action of her play inside the Big House, she is careful to always break the stage picture up in such a way that the slaves' presence is still felt. This often occurs by showing the area just outside the house where the slaves gather (for example, when they are waiting for the birth of Augustus) or by interweaving the sound of the slaves' chanting in the fields in more intimate scenes within the parlor. Such intimate scenes, which occur mainly between Amalia and Augustus, are never the only things happening on stage; typically, Dove crosscuts between these scenes and those that depict Louis toiling away in his study, establishing a sense of secrecy and wrongdoing to a slave's presence in the Big House.

Dove establishes this coding of slave and master spaces immediately in the prologue. As the play opens, we see a slave, Hector (Laius), standing on the porch outside the Big House looking up at the second floor window of Amalia's bedroom, waiting for her to give birth to their son. Phebe and Psyche, two young slave girls, run around nearby and laugh at Hector. Other slaves come in and out as the scene

between Amalia and the Doctor unfolds inside Amalia's lavish bedroom. Crosscutting between the interior and exterior scenes, Dove firmly establishes the division of power between her two sets of characters: the rich slaveholding whites literally look down (through the window) on the slaves playing and working in the fields as they conduct their secret machinations surrounding the birth of Amalia's bastard child. This spatial juxtaposition further concretizes the balance of power that exists between the privileged spaces of the white masters above (the Big House) and the labor-oriented spaces of the slaves below (Fig. 4).

Figure 4. Outside the cotton house. Davon Russell, Ezra Knight, BW Gonzalez, and Nadine Griffith in a production of *The Darker Face of the Earth* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, 1996 [© T. Charles Erickson].



The scene ends as both worlds collide in the shared space of the front hall. Louis has given the child to the Doctor to take away and instructed him to tell the slaves it died in childbirth. The Doctor delivers this news to Ticey, a house slave, who quietly delivers this news to the others who work outside the house. In the final moments of the prologue, the Doctor leaves carrying Augustus away in Amalia's sewing basket, as Hector laments the death of his son on the porch. The Slave Woman/Narrator steps to the front of the stage as the lights dim and "*the stage begins to transmogrify, simulating the passing of twenty years: a tree growing, the big house being enlarged, etc.*" (31).

Act I proceeds, shifting the action back and forth between the cotton fields, the Big House (split scenes in Louis's study and the main parlor), and the slave cabins and surrounding areas. Dove continues to use the juxtaposition of different spaces to demonstrate the cultural divides between the two groups of people. Scenes in the Big House reflect the wealth and status of Amalia and her husband, the white landowners: lavish furniture and set dressings fill the stage and the characters are costumed with rich materials and are often seen sipping brandy, enjoying their leisure time. In contrast, the slaves are seen working hard in the cotton fields, lorded over by their often-violent overseer Jones.

Figure 5. In Scylla's Cabin. Tamu Gray, Gina Daniels, and BW Gonzalez in a production of *The Darker Face of the Earth* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, 1996 [© T. Charles Erickson].

To further emphasize the disparity of power and class, Dove moves some of the action into the living spaces of the slaves, first depicting a scene that takes place in Scylla's cabin and later moving to the swamp where a now heartbroken Hector lives. In crafting the character of Scylla, Dove embraces the trope of the magical slave and codes Scylla's living space with all manner of items associated with voodoo practices: "*bones, twisted roots, beads, and dried corn cobs*" (53). Lit by candlelight, the scene depicts Scylla performing a kind of spiritual reading for Phebe involving mystic powders, candles, and incantations (Fig. 5). Frightened by the ritual and the prophecy that Scylla delivers, Phebe flees the cabin

to seek refuge outdoors near the rest of the slave dwellings, where she encounters Augustus and the two form the beginnings of their friendship.

After briefly returning to the cotton fields for a scene, Dove moves the action to the swamp where Hector lives. We first see the swamp in Act I when Hector overhears an exchange between Augustus and the Conspirators who are plotting a slave revolt. Later, in Act II, we return to the swamp to witness the scene where Augustus accidentally murders his father. In this scene, Dove provides a revealing depiction of the setting:

> *(Night; mottled light. Strangely twisted branches, replete with Spanish moss and vines; huge gnarled roots slick with wet. The whole resembles abstract gargoyles in a gothic cathedral. There's a gigantic tree trunk which HECTOR will festoon with moss later in the scene to serve as a makeshift throne. At some remove—in front of the proscenium, or silhouetted against the backdrop—the SLAVES pantomime the motions of evening chores: mending tools, shelling beans, stirring the stew.)* (112)

In Dove's play, Laius is not a king but rather a slave. Toying with the idea of Laius the king, Dove depicts Hector lording over his dominion: in this case, the dark, dank swamp, full of the snakes that he perpetually roots out and kills. His throne is not the regal seat of a king but rather a large collection of tree roots surrounded by vines and moss. Southern folklore imbues swamps with an air of danger and unruliness;[21] they are emblematic of an uncivilized space, as impediments to the progress associated with plantation farming. As such, the swamp stands in sharp contrast to the civilized sphere of the plantation owners (the Big House). Here, Hector is free to embrace his isolation on his own terms, free of the watchful eye of his owners and their overseer, Jones. This also accounts for the swamp's use as a meeting space for the Conspirators who are planning to revolt.

Act I ends with Amalia demanding that Augustus, the new slave who has a reputation for challenging his role as a slave, come visit her in the parlor. Dove brilliantly constructs a multilayered scene where the audience's attention is split between the sexually-charged power jockeying between

[21] See Miller *Dark Eden: The Swamp in Nineteenth-century American Culture*.

Amalia and Augustus in the parlor, Louis's vaguely mad ramblings as he paces back and forth in his study while looking to the heavens for answers (with the aid of his telescope), and the ever-present "*evening song of the slaves* [that] *floats in from the fields*" (81). Shifting back and forth between the three components, Dove's scene is an elaborate microcosm of the overall power dynamic that transpires throughout the play. Caught in the center of the tragedy—or the net, as it is often referred to both in the play and in the general conceptions of Greek tragedy—are Dove's Jocasta and Oedipus (Amalia and Augustus), the mother-son lovers of the piece whose circumstances provide the play with its main tragedy. In the scene, Dove experiments with a visual metaphor as the lovers are literally surrounded by their circumstance: with Louis on one side and the sounds of the slaves on the other.

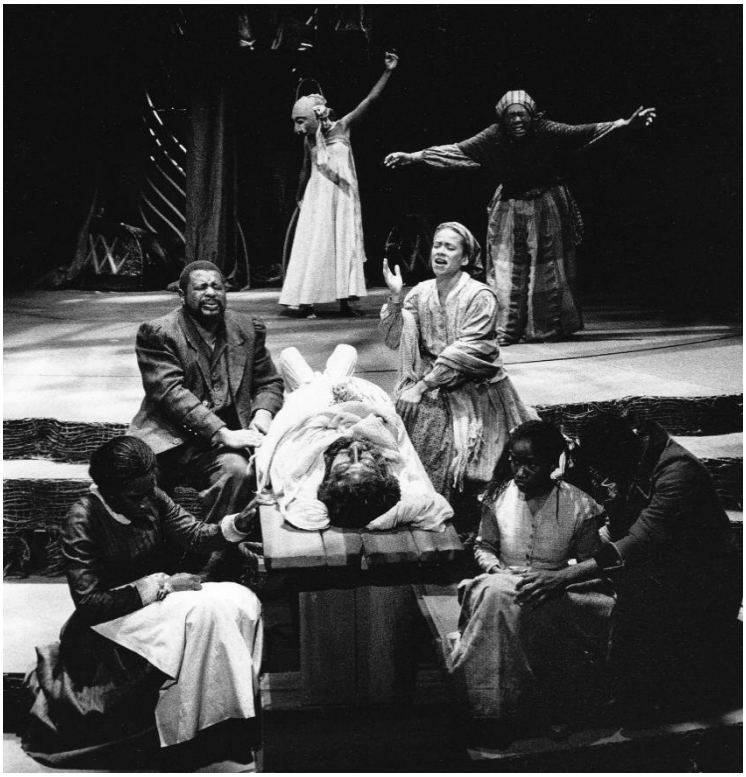
At the beginning of Act II, Dove moves the play into a more metaphoric, impressionistic realm with the inclusion of a "Dream Sequence" that shows each of the characters in the play in their own space (94), established through a carefully composed lighting scheme, as they each contribute to a choral lament over the driving action of the play. At the end of the scene, the conventions used to establish the individual spaces fade away and leave us once again in the slave space of the cabins. As in Act I, Act II proceeds switching back and forth between the various slave-spaces (including the aforementioned swamp scene where Augustus kills Hector) and interior scenes within the Big House.

At the climax of the play, just after the final love scene between Amalia and Augustus (that visually is an almost exact copy of the scene that transpired in Act I) Dove introduces a new setting: the slave cemetery. After accidentally killing Hector in the swamp, Augustus wraps the body up in vines and moss and hides it under a tree where it is eventually discovered and taken away to be buried. As the scene in the cemetery opens, we see Hector's body:

> *lying in state on a crude platform, covered with a rough blanket. The SLAVES march around the bier as they sing. After a little while JONES enters and stands uncertainly in the background; AMALIA watches from her bedroom window.*
> *LOUIS sits at his window but has turned his back. He stares into nothingness, brandy glass in hand.* (131)

As the scene unfolds, the slaves conduct their elaborate funeral rights over Hector as Amalia looks on over the body of her former lover (Fig. 6). During the scene, Phebe confronts Augustus on his failure to show up to the meeting of the Conspirators, a meeting he missed because he was making love to Amalia. Dove uses the physical arrangement of the stage to create a visual representation of the divide in Augustus's soul: on one side are his people—represented by Hector and the slaves—and their need for freedom, on the other side is his lover, Amalia, who functions simultaneously as the object of his desire as well as a representation of his oppressor.

Figure 6. Hector's funeral. Ensemble in a production of *The Darker Face of the Earth* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, 1996 [© T. Charles Erickson].



The play ends as it began, in Amalia's bedroom in the Big House. Sent by the Conspirators to kill Louis and Amalia, Augustus confronts his owners and learns the truth of his birth. When Amalia realizes who Augustus is and that the Conspirators are on their way to ensure that he carries out their plan, she does what he is unable to do and stabs herself in an effort to once again save her son from certain

death. As she falls to the ground dead, the stage comes alive with light as the rebellion sets fire to the cotton house and other buildings on the plantation. The Conspirators and other slaves run in and take Augustus up on their shoulders as Scylla sets fire to the curtains in Amalia's bedroom, leaving the stage smoldering as the lights dim to black. The audience is left with the final image of the plantation engulfed in flames, a symbol of violent retribution for the unjust social and economic divisions between the two classes.

Alternating between spaces deeply coded by the socioeconomic circumstance of slavery, Dove creates a unique setting for her play, one that firmly establishes a visual representation of the balance of power and the tensions that exists between her characters. By including such iconic spaces such as the cotton fields and the cotton house, Dove charges her stage space not only with the traumatic circumstances of the play but also the legacy of American slavery.

Revising the Traumatic Subject

Dove's principle alteration to the Sophoclean original is the invention of the prologue, which sees the birth of Augustus, and the shifting of the action to focus on events that transpire before the action of the original narrative. In doing so, Dove deemphasizes the role of Augustus, favoring instead the chorus of slaves and Amalia, Dove's version of Jocasta. This emphasis is established in the opening scene of *The Darker Face of the Earth* as we see Amalia give birth to her bastard son and lament the fact that she must give him up else her husband will murder him:

DOCTOR I'm just trying to save
your Daddy's good name.
As for your precious little bundle—
how long do you think he'll last
with Louis feeling as he does?
How long before your child
accidentally drowns
or stumbles under a horse's hooves?
You can't keep him, Amalia;
if you truly love him,
you cannot keep him. (24)

In Dove's hands, Augustus is the result of a love affair between the white slave owner Amalia Jennings and her black slave Hector. By revising the basic parental relationship constructed in the original narrative and casting her Oedipus's father not as a king but as a slave to the plantation, the author creates the circumstances which engender the play's traumatic resonance: under the law, Augustus should be free as he was born to a white woman. However, in reimagining Augustus's paternity, Dove is free to invent the character of Louis LaFarge, Amalia's white husband, who usurps Augustus's status by allowing himself to be perceived as the boy's father, thereby insinuating that Augustus was, like many before him, the product of a white father and a slave mother.

This revision to the basic narrative allows Dove to develop an interesting history of master/slave romance for the character of Amalia, a history that becomes important when the character unknowingly begins her affair with her son Augustus many years later, making her a much more tragic figure. During this opening scene, we learn from Amalia's conversations with the Doctor that she and Hector were childhood friends and that this friendship blossomed into a romance after she returned to the plantation as a married woman, in the wake of her husband Louis's many presumably-forced indiscretions with his slave women. The alteration to Augustus's paternity also frees the playwright to do away with the oracle plot of the original text and give Amalia a much more immediate reason to give up her son: her fear that her husband will kill the boy out of spite.

Following Dove's prologue, the action of the play advances twenty years in the future to the days leading up to Augustus's return to the plantation. In scene three, we learn that Amalia has purchased a new slave, Augustus Newcastle, who previously belonged to a British sea captain who raised him as his own son. When the captain died, Augustus was sold off to pay the captain's debts and, since this time, he has gained the reputation as wild and willful, a reputation that Amalia readily ignores. In her discussion with Jones, the overseer, Amalia instructs him not to concern himself with Augustus's poor reputation ["I own Augustus Newcastle, / and I'll make him serve up. / Any objections?" (44)]; her

protestations suggest she takes a degree of pleasure in the thought of breaking down his willfulness, as one might enjoy breaking the spirit of a wild horse. This sense of pleasure becomes all the more relevant in subsequent scenes when Amalia pursues a sexual relationship with Augustus, fetishizing his role as exotic slave.

Dove invents this backstory for Augustus to provide justification for her second major alteration to the basic narrative: the invention of a slave rebellion of which he will serves as a key figure. Toward the middle of Act I, Augustus finds himself walking through the swamp where Hector lives when he comes across several slaves conspiring to organize a rebellion against the Jennings Plantation. Citing his history as a slave to a slave trader, the Conspirators threaten Augustus with death in order to draw him into their plot:

LEADER — But our Lord is a vengeful God.
"Whoever steals a man," He says,
"whether he sells him or
is found in possession of him,
shall be put to death."

Who is not with us
is against us.
You answered the call.
If you turn back now… (70-1)

While it is never confirmed outright, Dove uses the scene to suggest that Augustus was complicit in the enslavement of others, helping his adoptive father build his fortune on the backs of the thousands of slaves he captured. The Conspirators know exactly what buttons to push with Augustus as he quickly agrees to join the rebellion. Unbeknownst to them, the exchange is overheard by Hector, who becomes suspicious of Augustus and fears he will act against Amalia, whom he still loves. The scene ends with the Conspirators telling Augustus that he needs to select a second-in-command to assist him in the rebellion and insisting that he incite his fellow slaves to "rise up…[to] a mighty army marching into battle" (74).

Augustus does as he is told and begins to work on his fellow slaves in the next scene, which is overheard by Amalia. In an attempt to quash the rebellious feelings, Amalia demands that the slaves be

forced to work an extra hour that night and arranges for Augustus to join her up the Big House at sunset, setting the stage for their courtship which becomes a central line of action within the play made more interesting because its development is witnessed by the slaves in subsequent scenes.

For his second-in-command, Augustus chooses Phebe, a young slave girl who he befriended earlier in the play. While Dove removes the prophecy about Oedipus from her play, she invents a new prophecy in regards to Phebe. In an earlier scene between Phebe and Scylla, a slave with mystic abilities, Phebe learns about a curse that plagues the land and is given a set of warnings:

SCYLLA I give you two warnings.
First: Guard your footsteps;
they are your mark on the earth.
If a sharp stone or piece of glass
falls into the path you have walked,
you will go lame.
Second: Guard your breath;
do not throw with words.
Whenever the wind blows,
if your mouth is open, your soul could be snatched away. (56)

Frightened by Scylla's words, Phebe runs from the cabin and into Augustus, thereby beginning their friendship. As this friendship develops, Phebe become more enamored with Augustus, making the revelations at the end of the play (that he murdered Hector, his father, and slept with Amalia, his mother) all the more tragic. Dove's transposition of the prophecy from Oedipus to a member of the chorus demonstrates her interest in repositioning the central focus of the play: Phebe becomes a tragic figure in the adaptation, a victim of the traumatic and tragic circumstances of the play. We first see Phebe as a child, playing on the porch of the Big House as Hector waits for news of the birth of his son. She is an innocent, a victim of the tragic circumstances which shadow Augustus throughout his life. Scylla's warnings position Augustus as the shard of glass in Phebe's path and the dire nature of the prophecy proves true by play's end.

As the play moves steadily toward its climax, Dove cashes in on the dramatic potential of her innovations. The middle of Act II sees a return to the swamp and the second appearance of the

Conspirators. After a brief exchange with Augustus, the Conspirators leave and Augustus delivers a soliloquy where he admits his feelings for Amalia. Both the admission and the proceeding exchange with the Conspirators are overheard by Hector, Amalia's former lover and Augustus's father, and he leaps from his hiding place to confront Augustus for his treachery. The two men struggle and Hector threatens to reveal Augustus's plotting:

HECTOR *(in a low growl)*

You are planning a great evil.
You come out at night
when the innocent sleep—

(raising his voice)

but I won't let you harm her!

AUGUSTUS Sshh! Someone might hear.

HECTOR I won't let you harm her! (118)

In an effort to quiet Hector, Augustus attacks him. The two men struggle and eventually Augustus chokes Hector to death. While Augustus does not yet know that Hector is his father, the audience is keenly aware of this fact and we foresee the coming fall of Augustus. Drastically different from Sophocles's original story, Dove's decision to revise Augustus's paternity sets the stage for this tragic confrontation. Driven mad by the loss of both his lover and son, Hector has retreated into himself and the swamp that he now calls home. He lashes out at Augustus both out of fear (as Amalia's safety is threatened) and jealousy (after hearing Augustus proclaim his feelings about her). The alterations to the basic plot provide the author with an opportunity to explore some previously unrealized dramatic potential between Oedipus and his father, his rival for Jocasta's affections.

Following Hector's death, Augustus spends the night with Amalia and misses the call of the Conspirators to rise up in rebellion. He learns of this the next day at Hector's funeral. The Conspirators confront Augustus with his failure and turn control over to Phebe, his second-in-command. To prove his allegiance to the rebellion, they demand that Augustus prove his worth by killing Louis and Amalia. It is

at this point that Dove's play begins to align with the action of the Sophoclean original. In place of the plague, Dove substitutes a slave rebellion and sets an unknowing Augustus off on a quest to uncover the truth of his birth. When he goes to the Big House to carry out the plan, he begins to suspect that Louis is his father when Louis mentions some details about the basket in which the Doctor took away the child.

Enraged at the thought that his white father forced himself on a slave and then cast his bastard son aside, Augustus becomes emboldened in his task. Before Louis can reveal the truth, Augustus stabs him and runs downstairs to confront Amalia for her part in casting him away. As Augustus reveals what transpired between him and Louis, she begins to understand the truth and reveals it to Augustus with the help of Phebe, who has come to ensure that he has carried out his part in the rebellion. As Augustus struggles to come to terms with his actions (both the murder of his father, Hector, and the affair with his mother), Amalia picks up the knife he dropped earlier and ensures his safety from the Conspirators by stabbing herself:

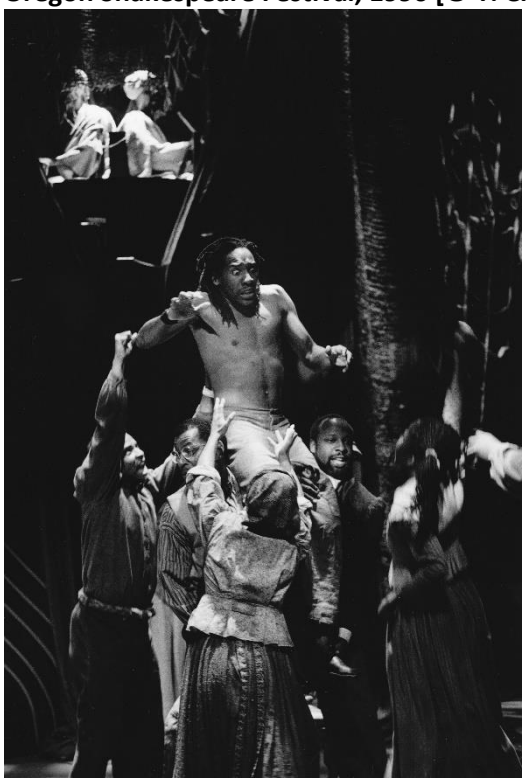
AMALIA Poor baby! I thought
I could keep you from harm—
and here you are,
right in harm's way. (159)

Phebe and Augustus act too late to stop her, and she dies in her son's arms. Driven mad by his actions, Augustus begins to see visions of a slave woman staring at him out in the field, another being beaten, a boy eating dirt, and many others beaten and branded with the mark of the slave. His visions, while not seen by the audience, are clear representations of the physical and emotional abuses endured by slaves of the period. The images flood Augustus's consciousness; they are the traumatic memories of generations of slaves who have come before him and whose legacy depended on his ability to right the wrongs of the past.

At this point in the play, the Conspirators and the rest of the slaves enter and, seeing Amalia dead, take a now stunned Augustus up onto their shoulders chanting ["Freedom, freedom, freedom…" (161)] (Fig. 7). While the characters celebrate their victory on stage, knowledgeable members of the

audience are dreadfully aware of the futility of their victory. The rebellion in South Carolina was a miserable failure, ending in the death of many of the instigators including Vessey (a clear model for Augustus) and the practice of slavery endured another two-and-a-half decades until it was final abolished by the thirteenth amendment and the end of the American Civil War in 1865. Signaling the tragic end of the play, Phebe follows the Conspirators out sobbing, as Scylla sets fire to Amalia's bedroom curtains.

Figure 7. Augustus is carried off at the end of the play. Ensemble in a production of *The Darker Face of the Earth* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, 1996 [© T. Charles Erickson].



Dove's many alterations to the basic plot and structure of *Oedipus Tyrannos* provide her with opportunities to layer new meaning into the ancient text. First, by altering the circumstances of Augustus's paternity, Dove embraces the myriad of issues of identity that arise out of a slaveholding society where children are stripped from their families and sold off as the property of their white landowners. The play also alludes to the common occurrence of white slave owners raping their female

slaves and the children born into slavery as a product of these unions; however, Dove turns this issue on its ear by devising the sexual relationship between a white woman and a black man.

Second, by restaging the play in the antebellum South, Dove creates a circumstance where the experience of the chorus, in this case a chorus of slaves, occupies a central position in the play. In Sophocles's original text, the chorus serves a rather minor role, acting as a sounding board to the tragedy playing out between Oedipus and Jocasta. Dove moves her chorus front and center and the experience of the slaves—Hector and Phebe in particular—become central to the play's development and its thematic concerns.

Finally, the emphasis of the chorus' role in the story is strengthened by the addition of the rebellion plotline. Drawing on historical events in South Carolina around the time the play is set, Dove's invention of this subplot as a kind of analogue to the plague of the original text both heightens the dramatic action of the piece and provides the play with specific historical circumstances which serve as a framework in which to set her representation of the trauma of slavery.

Traumatic Inheritances and the Legacy of Slavery

Dove's drastic resetting of the play in the antebellum South calls for radical changes to the construction of her characters and the power dynamics that exist between them. As a result, Dove reimagines the chorus as a group of slaves and places many of the secondary characters in *Oedipus Tyrannos* [including analogues to Laius (Hector), Tiresias (Scylla), and even the unseen daughters of Oedipus (Diana and Phebe)] within the context of the slave chorus. This aesthetic and thematic alteration heightens the traumatic resonance of *The Darker Face of the Earth*: by grounding the play in a specific historical situation and establishing characters that are subject to the given circumstances of this period, Dove enables her play to shift from the tragic (a generalized sense of suffering tied to an event) to the traumatic (the physical and/or psychological suffering in response to a specific event). Central to this shift is the relationship Dove explores between her Oedipus and Jocasta (leading up to the climax of

Sophocles's original play). Dove's play concerns itself with the lasting physical and psychological scars of slavery. As mother and son, Amalia and Augustus represent the traumatic legacy of slavery which serves as the principle theme in *The Darker Face of the Earth.*

In recasting the role of Jocasta as a white woman of privilege, Dove imagines Amalia in ways similar to Henrik Ibsen's Hedda Gabler: raised in wealthy house by a widowed father, Amalia learns to appreciate her independence outside of the traditional domestic role afforded women, and instead models herself in her father's image:

PSYCHE — Her mama was the weakest excuse for a woman
ever dropped on this earth. But this one—

(with a significant look to the window)

this one got her daddy in her.

ALEXANDER — Nothing but trouble, I tell you.
Nothing but trouble. (15)

Like Ibsen's Hedda, Amalia is the victim of her own heredity: her father's spirit plagues her, emboldening her to challenge the role her circumstances have dictated. In turn, Amalia passes this curse on to her son, Augustus, who falls victim to the desire to free himself from the bounds of his own circumstances. As Phebe assumes the role of his heir, the play leaves us with the implication that she has been likewise infected with this plague. A careful reading of each of the characters in the play is necessary to understand Dove's traumatic themes.

Throughout the play, we learn that Amalia's first playmates were the slaves on the plantation, and she was allowed to run and play in the fields with them. This freedom afforded Amalia with the opportunity to begin a friendship with Hector when the two were merely children, a relationship that developed into a love affair shortly after Amalia returned to the plantation as a married woman. Unfortunately for Amalia, this freedom was short-lived and she was eventually sent off to a finishing school in Charleston. In her own words, Amalia's love for her husband dissipated as a result of his philandering, and she gave into her feelings for Hector out of spite.

In the opening scene, Amalia skillfully salts Louis's fresh wounds after he realizes that he is not the child's father:

AMALIA What, Louis—struck dumb?

LOUIS My God!

AMALIA Isn't he a fine strapping boy?

DOCTOR This is unnatural.

LOUIS Who did this to you?
I'll have him whipped to a pulp—

AMALIA *(hissing)*

So it's all right for you
to stroll out by the cabins
any fine night you please? Ha—
the Big White Hunter with his scrawny whip! (17)

In response to Amalia's betrayal, Louis conspires with the Doctor to get rid of the baby. The Doctor convinces Amalia that giving him up is the best decision and warns her that the child would pay for Amalia's behavior ["How long before your child / accidentally drowns / or stumbles under a horse's hooves?" (24)] if he were remain on the Jennings Plantation. Fearing her husband's wrath, Amalia agrees to the Doctor's plan to sell the baby into slavery; however, it is clear from her actions toward the end of the prologue that her heart is breaking:

AMALIA This blanket will be your cradle now.
Blue silk for my prince, and a canopy of roses!
Don't be afraid: It's warm inside.

(places first a small blanket, then the baby inside, takes one last look, nearly breaking down)

I dreamed you before you came;
now I must remember you before you go. (29-30)

Dove envisions this scene as a defining moment in Amalia's life, and it becomes clear that the decision has had a great effect on her. In this instance, Amalia is both victimizer and victim: as victimizer, Amalia's actions doom the freeborn Augustus to a life of slavery; as victim, she is forced to part with her

son, a representation of the freedom she enjoyed in her youth. As a result, she experiences an immense sense of loss: a trauma brought on due to the fear of reprisal both from her husband (who would threaten the baby's safety) and society at large (who would condemn her for her affair with a slave).

Figure 8. Amalia says goodbye to her son. Elizabeth Norment in a production of *The Darker Face of the Earth* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, 1996 [© T. Charles Erickson].

A gendered reading of the scene demonstrates how Amalia is subject the patriarchal system of her society in ways similar to her slaves; as a woman, her ability to challenge the system is extremely limited and therefore she has no real choice in the matter. In her final moments with her newborn, Amalia expresses the deep grief she feels; when the Doctor takes the child from her, she is incapable of watching him leave, choosing instead to bury her face in the pillows to stifle her cries. This sense of loss pervades the construction of the character throughout the play, leading several of the slaves to discuss the change in her character in the subsequent scene ["She grow eviler year for year" (33)]. Amalia exercises strict control over her slaves as this is the only power she is allowed in this society.

Dove envisions Amalia as a restless woman, struggling to reclaim the freedom she enjoyed in her childhood. Her rebellious nature makes her a suitable match for Augustus who has cultivated a reputation of being willful and rebellious toward his masters. We first learn of Augustus's reputation when Amalia tells Jones she has purchased him: Jones informs her that Augustus was raised by a British sea captain who treated him as a son and promised him his freedom, a promise that was later broken by the captain's brother who sold Augustus off to pay family debts. The audience is left to infer that Augustus feels cheated out of his freedom, a fact we know to be true, and this has made him angry, bitter, and especially hostile toward his subsequent masters. Attempting to persuade Amalia to back out of the sale, Jones informs her that Augustus is educated and well-read, qualities that mark him as a dangerous slave ["Ma'am, an educated nigger / brings nothing but trouble" (43)]; however, this revelation sparks Amalia's curiosity and further entices her interest ["I wonder just how smart he is" (43)]. Her fascination with Augustus's reputation suggests she looks forward to exercising her control over him: he poses a challenge to her, one that will necessarily be hard fought.

When Augustus Newcastle arrives on the Jennings Plantation, he is brought onstage in leg irons, foregrounding both his slave status and the rebelliousness associated with his reputation. After the irons are removed, he is introduced to the other slaves. His education is immediately evident as he waxes poetic about Greek mythology and the etymology of many of the slaves' names. They marvel at his literacy and his well-spoken manner of speech, and compliment him on his knowledge of such things, giving him an opportunity to reveal his longing for other slaves to be granted their freedom:

DIANA You know a lot of things.

AUGUSTUS Nothing you couldn't learn
if you had the chance. (52)

This longing becomes more evident as the play develops through Augustus's involvement with the Conspirators and his conversations with the other slaves about various rebellions, particularly the revolution that forced the colonial French slave owners out of Haiti and led to the founding of the

independent Haitian Republic (an event that is alluded to in the play as Louis immigrated to South Carolina after he and his parents were forced out of Haiti). In the middle of Act I, Augustus tells the slaves the story of the rebellion while working in the cotton fields, inspiring them to take up the chant of the revolutionaries ["Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité" (78)]. Unbeknownst to Augustus, Amalia overhears the exchange, further intriguing her interest in her willful new purchase ["I see you're a poet / as wells as a rebel" (79)]. While she punishes the other slaves, she asks Augustus to join her that evening at the Big House, the fateful meeting that begins the affair between mother and son.

Dove complicates Augustus's character further in the next scene by making it clear that the ship on which Augustus worked was a slave ship and suggests that he was complacent in the trade (or at the very least, willing to overlook the hypocrisy in exchange for his own freedom and survival). While Augustus appears to bristle at Amalia's insinuations, his devotion to his former master is repeatedly hinted at, suggesting his relationship to slave practices is not a clear-cut one:

> You followed your precious captain
> everywhere; you were there when
> he loaded slave cargo into the hold
> or plotted a new course.
> What an admirable science, navigation!
> It must have been terribly complicated,
> even for you. (89)

Augustus reveals that under the captain's command he learned to read, write, and received a basic classical education. In response, Amalia reveals her own education in the art form of conversation. Dove uses the exchanges to form the beginnings of the power dynamic between the two lovers, with each testing the limits of their master-slave relationship (85).

Throughout the scene, it is clear that Amalia is challenging the extent of Augustus's rebelliousness and attempting to provoke a reaction in him, baiting him with references to his time aboard the ship and stories about failed slave rebellions that led to the deaths of their instigators. Throughout the exchange, it becomes evident that it is precisely this revolutionary spirit that she admires most:

I've often wondered why our niggers
don't revolt. I've said to myself:
"Amalia, if you had been a slave,
you most certainly would have plotted
and insurrection by now."

(turns away from AUGUSTUS)

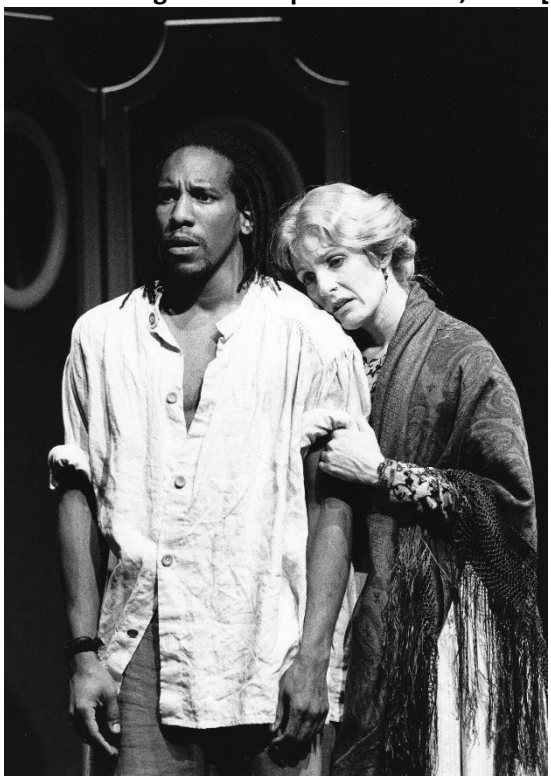
But we say all sorts of things
to ourselves, don't we?
There's no telling what we'd do
if the moment were there for the taking. (87)

After stepping up to her repeated challenges, Augustus rewards Amalia with what he believes is the story of his birth. He tells her of his belief that his white father forced himself on his slave mother in an effort to produce another slave to be sold off. Augustus comments on the irony of his existence and his current experience, standing in the parlor of another master, "entertaining the pretty mistress / with stories of whippings and heartbreak" (93). Augustus's compliment of Amalia fuels her desire for the strange and exotic Augustus, and she openly seduces him, running her fingers across his wrist and up his arm leading the couple to their first embrace at the end of the scene.

Dove casts Augustus as a foil to Amalia: they share a similar rebellious nature, yet while fear keeps Amalia in check, Augustus does not let his fear or his history as a slave control him. Her attraction to him is three-fold. First, the attraction is, in part, narcissistic as the quality she most admires in him is what she values most about herself: they share a common spirit, each longing to break free of their bounds. At the same time, her feelings are envious since she feels incapable of fully embracing this side of her; in the past, she allowed herself to be compromised by the patriarchal restrictions placed on her when she gave up her son out of fear of losing her status and reputation. Finally, her attraction stems from a desire to subjugate Augustus's own willfulness, to exercise power over him as she herself feels powerless to her circumstances. Amalia's seduction of Augustus in this scene is, in part, an attempt to embrace her true nature: she hopes that his continued presence will influence and shape her into the version of herself that she desires to be. At the same time, her seduction is an overt attempt to

dominate him in any way available to her; since he is not afraid of her in the traditional master-slave sense, sex remains the only tool she can wield to control him.

Figure 9. Amalia and Augustus's affair. Ezra Knight and Elizabeth Norment in a production of *The Darker Face of the Earth* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, 1996 [© T. Charles Erickson].



Subsequent scenes reveal a deepening of their relationship leading up to their final night together before the rebellion. After Augustus slips into the house unseen by the watchful eyes of Jones, Amalia asks him how he was able to get past him and he reveals he was able to hide in the shadows citing the fact that "Shadows are kind to niggers." Amalia bristles at his crassness, chiding him that "[He is] not a nigger!" Surprised by her willful-blindness to their circumstance, Augustus reminds his lover "Yes I am, Amalia. / Best not forget that" (126). The short exchange allows Dove to reveal that the lovers recognize the precariousness of their involvement and have, to an extent, turned a blind eye toward their given circumstances ["Shh! If this is all the world they've left us / then it's ours to make over" (127)]. The exchange is all the more tragic because we pity the characters for their naiveté: while star-crossed lovers are commonplace on the dramatic stage, the circumstances which divide Amalia and

Augustus are, for example, far greater than the family feud that exists between Romeo and Juliet. As mother and son, their love is an affront to nature, yet they remain entirely oblivious to this point, making their tragedy all the more compelling.

As Dove's story races toward its tragic conclusion, we are witness to one final exchange between the lovers as Augustus and Amalia come to grasp the true nature of their relationship. Amalia discovers the truth of their circumstances based on Augustus's retelling of a conversation he had with Louis shortly before murdering him. She reveals the truth to her son and tells him that giving him up nearly destroyed her:

AMALIA I felt like they had hacked out my heart.
But I wouldn't let them see me cry.

AUGUSTUS *(wrestling with the horror)*

You? My mother?

AMALIA *(clutching herself)*

It was like missing an arm or a leg
that pains and throbs, even though
you can look right where it was
and see there's nothing left. (158)

Having stunned Augustus into shock, Amalia makes use of the opportunity and retrieves the knife he dropped, stabbing herself to death before the Conspirators arrive and discover that he failed in his mission to kill her. This is the final act of a mother longing to save her son from impending doom. By bringing Jocasta's death onstage and motivating it with the threat of the death of Oedipus, Dove grounds Amalia's actions within the newly created circumstances of her play. Amalia dies not from the shame of her actions—for the scene suggestions she does not regret them—but out of love for her son and a willingness to protect him. Despite the nobility of Amalia's sacrifice, we recognize it as a pointless gesture, further defining the tragic nature of the narrative: the Conspirators and slaves enter celebrating their victory and carry Augustus off on their shoulders to all but certain doom given the failed nature of the South Carolina uprising.

The relationship forged between Amalia and Augustus is an attempt to rewrite history: circumstance ended Amalia's love affair with Hector and she chose to sacrifice their child rather than be shamed by society for her actions. At the end of the play, Augustus presents her with a chance for redemption and this time she sacrifices herself for his benefit. The true tragedy of Dove's play, however, is the knowledge that for all the characters' struggles, the legacy of slavery persists and freedom is not so easily won. Amalia dies to protect Augustus, but her actions have already committed him to his fate: by unjustly forcing him into slavery as a baby, she is responsible for the bitterness and anger which drove him to embrace the rebellion in the first place. In turn, Augustus taught both his longing for freedom and his spite to the other slaves, ensnaring them in a shared fate. Phebe, the model of innocence at the beginning of the play, is corrupted by her love for Augustus; when she assumes the role of his second-in-command, she seals her own doom and fulfills the prophecy Scylla gave her, allowing her soul to be "snatched away" (56).

The Language and Rhetoric of Suffering

In constructing her slavery narrative, Dove crafts an elaborate drama in free verse, drawing elements from slave culture (including several instances where the slaves chant songs from a traditional *ring shout* and engage in incantations to the Yoruban god who oversees travelers and fate ["Eshu Elewa ogo gbogbo!"]) and mixing these moments with references to the classical past of the narrative. The resulting play is a blend of intersecting styles that combine to create an approximation of the heightened poetic language that marks the play in its original form. In effect, Dove's poetry in *The Darker Face of the Earth* establishes aesthetic distance between the audience and the traumatic subject matter in which the play deals. The rhythmic chanting and heightened language both ground the play within its tragic heritage—clearly modeled on the Greek dramatic style—and also reinforces the status of the work as an adaptation of such classical pieces.

Additionally, Dove succeeds in foregrounding the adaptive nature of her play through various meta-references to its Greek heritage littered throughout the piece. Most notably, her decision to name her characters after classical figures presents a direct correlation between her play and its classical past while at the same time underscoring a common practice amongst slave owners interested in demeaning their slaves. Dove ensures that this relationship is clear to the audience in Augustus's first scene with the other slaves working on the plantation. As he greets each one, he reveals the etymology behind their names including Scylla (the rock that threatened to sink Odysseus's ship), Diana (the Roman equivalent of Artemis, goddess of the hunt, the moon, and birthing), Phebe (a feminized reference to Pheobus, the Roman version of Apollo the sun god) and Hector (one of Troy's most valiant heroes), and tells them snippets of the stories associated with each figure. Such tongue-in-cheek references to the classical origins of the story continue in the scene between Augustus and Amalia when she asks him read to her from a copy of *The Tales of the Greeks*. When he laughs off her request, Amalia replies with Dove's sense of irony: "Too difficult? No doubt you'd do better / with the Greek original— / *(slyly)* / but we are not that cultured a household" (83). The ironic quality of such language and the overt references that they call to mind continually remind the audience of the play's adaptive nature. As a result—and in combination with the heightened poetic styling of the piece—*The Darker Face of the Earth* subtly divorces itself from strict representational realism and its audience is therefore tasked with greater autonomy in experiencing the work.

The Visual Traces of Slavery

While less overt, several of Dove's central images function in much the same way as her self-referential language, drawing attention to the classical Greek origins of the material. Repeated references appear to the net of fate (52, 54, 94)—a common symbol in Greek tragedy—and Dove layers in several other visual references, such as the snakes Hector chases and roses, each with significance in

Greek culture.[22] Yet it is the way Dove treats these images that reveals the horrific nature of slavery and evokes the traumatic resonance of this period.

Chief among these images are the scars left on the body of Augustus, both from his repeated beatings at the hands of his masters and those that were given to him by Louis before being sent away as a baby. We first learn of the scars from Jones as he expresses his displeasure that Amalia has purchased Augustus. According to Jones, Augustus has been cited with "twenty-two acts of aggression and rebellion" and that as a result "his back's so laced with scars it's as rutted as a county road" (43). In a later scene with Phebe, Augustus acknowledges the violent treatment he received as a slave, but asserts his unwillingness to let these scars break him:

PHEBE Ain't you ever scared?

AUGUSTUS Of what? White folks?
They're more afraid of me. Pain?
Every whipping's got to come to an end.

PHEBE I heard you've been whipped
so many times, they lost count.

AUGUSTUS They think they can beat me to my senses.
Then they look into my eyes
and see I'm not afraid. (58-9)

Augustus's scars signify the physical violence slaves were treated to at the hands of their masters. While we never explicitly see this violence within *The Darker Face of the Earth*, Dove is careful to imply its presence early in the play when Amalia observes Scylla, Phebe, and Diana neglecting their duties. Amalia enters the scene carrying a whip, presumably because she was out riding, and she overhears the women

[22] Dove uses the image of the rose, often associated with Aphrodite the Greek goddess of love, as a symbol of the affair between Hector and Amalia. She capitalizes on this image by joining it with her other central image, the snake, which is first tied to Hector (who spends his days hunting and killing snakes in the swamp) and later to Augustus [Scylla tells him that evil lurks inside him, waiting to shed its skin like a snake (116-117)]. In ancient Greek culture, the snake came to symbolize rebirth for its ability to shed its skin. It was associated with the rod of Asclepius, the Greek god of healing who was known for his ability to bring people back from the dead, a practice for which Zeus had Asclepius killed. Dove's juxtaposition of the two images suggests the ongoing legacy of slavery, her play's central theme.

talking about Diana who has been suffering from some sort of physical ailment. Amalia tells Phebe that the girl "seems healthy enough" and then prods Diana with the stock end of the whip, urging her to get back to work yelling "Lazy pack! I swear I've seen cows smarter than you!...Get these niggers in line" (39-40)! As she rides off, Jones picks up the whip and begins cracking it, forcing the slaves back to work.

While we never see Amalia inflict violence on her slaves [in fact, she reveals to Augustus that her father taught her never to beat a slave as "it was a poor businessman who damaged his own merchandise" (84)], her fascination with Augustus's scars suggest some sort of odd attraction, perhaps even a fetish, to the violence they suggest. In one of their final scenes together, Amalia traces the scars on Augustus's back, and those marks made by Louis's spurs with her finger:

> Your back is like a book
> no one can bear to read to the end…
> each angry gash, each proud welt…
> But these scars on your side are different.
>
> *(touching them gently)*
>
> They couldn't have come from a whipping.
> They're more like—more like
> markings that turn up in fairy tales
> of princes and paupers exchanges at birth. (129)

The scene ends with Augustus and Amalia making love as the sounds of the Conspirators' signal to begin the rebellion flood the stage. Augustus ignores their call, choosing his white mistress over his black brothers and sisters, suggesting that Amalia has succeeded in her quest to tame Augustus where all his other masters have failed.

This idea is alluded to earlier in the play shortly before Augustus kills Hector fearing that he will reveal his involvement with the Conspirators. In the soliloquy that Hector overhears, Augustus draws a connection between his scars and the power Amalia has over him:

> And when she looks at me—
> such a cool sweet look—
> each scar weeps like an open wound.
>
> *(softer)*

If fear eats out the heart,
what does love do? (114)

While Augustus never has a chance to answer his own question, it becomes clear as the play moves toward its conclusion that love has the power to cripple the will. In the end, Augustus has no power to act against Amalia despite his need to do so. When he learns the truth of his birth, he becomes paralyzed to all action, leaving Amalia to kill herself to protect her son from the rebelling slaves who would no doubt see him as a traitor for his inability to act against their shared oppressor. While many masters have tried to subjugate Augustus through fear and violence—as is evidenced by the visible traces of slavery that mark his body—it is only through Amalia's immoral love that his rebellious and willful nature is calmed, a point many of Augustus's slave brethren recognize ["A whip can't make him behave: / Miss Amalia knows that. / So she's trying another way— / and it appears to be working." (108)].

As has been discussed earlier, one of Dove's central innovations to the tragedy of *Oedipus Tyrannos* is the revisions she makes to the chorus. Dove establishes her chorus as slaves of the Jennings Plantation and introduces specific imagery to tie their presence to the historical role of slaves working on cotton plantations. Chief among these images is a scene that takes place in the middle of Act II in the cotton house. The scene opens at the end of the work day and depicts the slaves tramping down the cotton that they have harvested from the fields earlier in the day. Throughout the scene, Dove's poetic dialogue is underscored by "*the dull thud of stomping feet [that] punctuates the dialogue*" a rhythm that "*signal[s] changes in mood and tension*" in the scene (106). As the slaves continue their tiresome labor, dragging sacks of cotton into the house and tramping it down in order to store it, Augustus is summoned to the Big House to meet with Amalia and the rest of the slaves discuss the budding affair between the unlikely pair as Jones the overseer barks orders at them:

JONES Keep it moving!
Don't be looking at the sun;
you got a whole long while

before your day is over! (105)

A sense of resentment creeps into the scene as the slaves lament the treatment Augustus receives:

SCYLLA For weeks on end? As soon as
the sun eases into the sycamores,
there ain't a hair of his to be seen
till daylight.

(significant pause)

Except maybe on his lady's pillow.

...

ALEXANDER He's certainly the boldest nigger
I've ever seen.

SCIPIO *(shaking his head in admiration)*

That's the truth there!
The way he handles Massa Jones—
no bowing or scraping for him. (107)

As the slaves continue to discuss the affair, Phebe's jealousy gets the better of her and she lashes out against them, Scylla in particular, for their harsh words against Augustus. The scene reveals that Augustus's presence—in particular the special treatment he receives—has driven a deep wedge between the slaves.

Dove emphasizes the divide by staging this scene in the cotton house, the only time the meaning-loaded setting makes an appearance in the play. As the rhythmic stomping comes to an end, Scylla cuts to the heart of the matter and casts a pointed warning to her fellow slaves:

But something's foul in his blood,
and what's festering inside him
nothing this side of the living
can heal. A body hurting that bad
will do anything to get relief—anything.

(looking around at all of them)

So keep talking about Haiti
and sharpening your sticks!
But know one thing:
that nigger's headed for destruction,

and you're all headed there with him. (111)

By juxtaposing talk of the slave revolts in Haiti, those championed by Augustus earlier in the play, with one of the most iconic images of slavery in American history—the cotton house—Dove signals the tragedy that awaits those who participate in the revolt at the end of the play. While the play ends before we see the result of their rebellion, history tells us that Scylla's warning is sound as it would be several more decades before slave practices would end in America.

Dove introduces two final significant images late in the play which connect her work to the traumatic history of slavery. The first comes in the moments before Hector's death at Augustus's hands. Fearing that Augustus means Amalia harm, Hector slips into a state of madness where he begins to re-experience traumatic memories from his childhood, presumably just before being taken as a slave:

HECTOR *(apparently in a vision from his childhood in Africa)*

Fire! Fire!
The huts... the boats...
blood in the water.
Run, children, run! (119)

The presumed threat of violence against his childhood sweetheart sends Hector reeling into a fit of traumatic recall, a brief moment in Dove's play that signals the nature of colonial practices that saw villages burn and children ripped from their parents' arms to be sold into slavery. While the moment is fleeting, it remains poignant as the words stand as Hector's last in the play. In order to silence the fit, Augustus strangles his father and assuages his guilt citing the noble aims of the coming rebellion ["Who is not with us, is against us....Sleep, Hector. Sleep and be free." (119-120)].

The second of Dove's final images comes during Hector's funeral. After Hector's body is found by Phebe, he is brought back to the slave cemetery where the slaves conduct their ritual burial rights. During the service, Diana is selected to take part in the symbolism of the ritual. Two older slaves lift her up and pass her under and over Hector's coffin (134), a custom that is thought to have originated among the Ubani of West Africa and that was intended to keep the spirit of the dead at peace and, in particular, from entering the body of a child too young to fully understand the nature of death (Holloway). The

image of the young child Diana being ritualistically passed over the body of Hector, the elder of the slave group, further suggests the legacy of slave culture as the customs of the past are retained by the culture of slaves despite the fact their ties to their homelands have been severed by colonial practices. Dove complicates the image further by drawing a connection between the ritual practice—its connection to the cycle of life—and the fate that awaits Augustus and those who follow him into a rebellion steeped in hate and violence:

SCYLLA He thought evil could be caught.

AUGUSTUS Yes.

SCYLLA But evil breeds inside, in the dark.
I can smell its sour breath.

AUGUSTUS Don't come around me, then.

SCYLLA You believe you can cure the spirit
just by riling it. What will
these people do with your hate
after you free them—as you promise?

...

But do you know what's inside
you, Augustus Newcastle?
The seeds of the future; they'll have their way.
You can't escape.
You are in your skin wherever you go. (134-5)

Scylla's commentary reveals a central theme in Dove's play, the nature of hate as a byproduct of the legacy of slavery. The play concretizes the idea that slavery is born of hate and violence and that its legacy begets more of the same. The experiences of the past continue to live on as they are passed down among the generations, indicating that pain and suffering live on after the death of the individual; they become "the seeds of the future" a festering plague of evil that "breed inside," infecting everyone they touch. Given the nature of fate to the original myth of *Oedipus Tyrannos*, it is fitting that Scylla grounds her commentary in the inescapability of destiny [“You can’t escape. / You are in your skin wherever you go.” (135)]. Augustus cannot divorce himself from his past and escape the role it plays in

shaping his current behavior. He was literally born into hatred, a fact that has plagued him throughout his life and that will ultimately follow him into his inevitable death following the play's last scene.

INTEROGATING THE TRAUMA OF SLAVERY THROUGH ADAPTATION

For modern audiences 150 years removed from the era of slavery in the United States, many of the traumatic scars of the past have seemingly healed. The temporal distance that a century-and-a-half provides leads the trauma of slavery to lack the emotional and psychological immediacy that the other plays under review in this study contain, given their more recent historical positioning. As a result of the amount of time passed, most people have little difficulty organizing their thoughts about slave practices, indicating that we are capable of dealing with overt representations of slavery because our processing of this material is not impeded by the emotional stress that often accompanies fresh trauma. This suggests that our understanding of the trauma of slavery is a logical, cognitive, understanding rather than an emotional one.

That is not to say that emotion plays no role in conceptions of slavery. Shadows of the trauma remain and are made visible through the race and class-based tensions that plague contemporary life: despite our best intentions, our society has perpetuated the underlying mentality that privileges the ever-shrinking white majority over the non-white minority in the form of economic and social policies that continue to favor those in positions of power, a status long-associated with the white middle and upper classes. Feelings of suspicion, fear, resentment, and hostility accompany this mentality on both sides of the divide, leaving individuals sensitive to representational forms that engage with race-based themes.

As a specific historical phenomenon, slavery has attained a lofty place within our cultural history. Not unlike the Holocaust, it has been elevated to the sublime due to its relationship to both the birth of this country and the fight for its soul during the Civil War. As a result, representations of slavery are infrequent, with many critics arguing that it is off-limits to representation; when such

representations do appear they often draw a great degree of critical attention and even derision on the basis of their insensitivity to those who lived through the trauma. Most recently, this reverence was on display in response to Quentin Tarantino's 2012 remake of *Django Unchained.* When the film was released, noted black filmmaker Spike Lee challenged the morality of the film, arguing: "American Slavery Was Not A Sergio Leone Spaghetti Western. It Was A Holocaust. My Ancestors Are Slaves. Stolen From Africa. I Will Honor Them" (Lee). While many disagreed with his open hostility toward the film and came to Tarantino's defense, Lee's comments sparked a widespread debate over the ethics involved in crafting a revenge-fantasy on the sacred ground of American slavery. Running parallel to this discussion was the debate over the film's use of historically accurate yet racially-insensitive language and graphic imagery (in the form of a scene where a slave woman is violently beaten with a whip), as well as the film's controversial ending which shows the fiercely loyal house servant Stephen—played by Samuel L. Jackson, a prominent black actor—turn against other black characters in the film.[23] While the film was ultimately a critical and financial success, the controversies it stirred echo the traumatic crisis of representation discussed in this study.

I suggest that Dove's play avoids this crisis on a number of levels: first, as a piece of theatre, *The Darker Face of the Earth* enjoys a more privileged place within the representational landscape. When compared to film, which has been steeped in pop culture since nearly its inception, theatre (particularly serious dramas like that of the Greeks) has long been held up as a high art form. While this distinction is certainly problematic and perhaps unproductive, it offers one possible reason for the lack of controversy surrounding Dove's play. While criticism of the play has been somewhat mixed during its twenty year production history, an examination of this criticism offers no evidence that it has been challenged on an

[23] Speaking about his character in a May 2013 interview with Karen Butler of *United Press International*, Jackson referred to the character as "the Spook Cheney of Candyland," a derogatory reference to former Vice President Dick Cheney, and "the most despicable Negro in cinematic history."

ethical basis in the same way as Tarantino's *Django Unchained* or other similar filmic representations.[24] Of course, also contributing to this is Dove's status as a Nobel Prize-winning Poet Laureate and the fact that she, unlike Tarantino, is African-American.

More crucial to this study is the related fact that Dove's play is an adaptation of a significant work within the theatrical canon. Established by Aristotle, *Oedipus Tyrannos* is the perfect model of tragedy; its structural form has provided the basis for hundreds of years of dramaturgical thought and it has influenced many authors and their works—both implicitly and explicitly—since its rediscovery in the European Renaissance. It is, along with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, one of the most widely read and studied plays in the history of Western theatre. For this reason alone it enjoys a privileged place in our cultural consciousness, one capable of holding up to the aura that has developed around the topic of slavery. Given the audience's familiarity with the play and their acceptance of its privileged position, Dove avoids the ethical concerns that plague representations of slavery in other media.

As an adaptation, the play asks its audience to draw critical associations between the tragic story of Oedipus and his mother/lover Jocasta and the traumatic history of slavery. By bridging the divide between these two entities, Dove concretizes a relationship between our emotional understanding of her narrative's source material and our cognitive understanding of slavery's traumatic history. This relationship is further aided by the personal traumas suffered by Dove's characters over the course of the play, most notably: the traumatic loss Amalia suffers at giving up her son and the traumatic loss the slaves, Augustus in particular, experience over their cultural identity in light of slave practices.

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[24] While *Django Unchained* is the most recent example of this phenomenon, controversy plagues most filmic representations of slavery dating all the way back to *Birth of a Nation* (1915). The film includes heavily stereotyped depictions of black men, all of which were played by white actors in blackface. The film was widely criticized for its attitude toward race and was even banned in several cities. Partially in response to the criticism, D.W. Griffith followed up this work the following year with *Intolerance*, a sweeping three-and-a-half hour epic told in four parts, each exploring historical instances of intolerance.

This interplay between the emotional and cognitive response allows Dove to explore a many-faceted approach to the material. While the audience empathically follows Augustus on his journey, we also experience an empathic connection to Amalia, Hector, the other slaves of the chorus, and even Louis—arguably the play's antagonist—as each suffers in reaction to the events depicted. While our cognitive understanding tells us that Amalia and her husband are the perpetrators of a great injustice inflicted upon Augustus and the other slaves, the melodramatic conventions of hero and villain break down in this play and the concepts of right and wrong lose their black-and-white surety. We pity Amalia for her inability to make a different choice regarding her son and even find ourselves empathizing with Louis as he is betrayed by the woman he loves. As a slavery narrative, *The Darker Face of the Earth* does not present a simple subjectivity, one that privileges an essentialist look at the trauma of slavery. Instead, we are treated to an expansive idea of slavery's legacy on both victim and victimizer: a legacy that is responsible for the continued role the history of slavery plays in contemporary culture.

Dove's aim in adapting this work is not to educate an audience as to the history of slavery or to point fingers, but rather to demand that we question and come to terms with its lasting effects. Slavery is part of the very fabric that makes up our culture, yet in many ways we have placed a label on it and pushed it to the side as something that happened but that we have moved on from, thereby ignoring the possibility that it continues to play a role in shaping our culture (much like Louis and Amalia did when confronted with the uncomfortable truth of Augustus's birth). Our role as audience in experiencing this play is to reframe the discussion that treats slavery in such simplistic terms; *The Darker Face of the Earth* challenges us to reexamine the issue as a community and explore its traumatic resonance which continues to play a role in our lives.

CONCLUSIONS

Dove's play picks up the idea of fate presented in the original text and crafts an elaborate and heart-wrenching tale of the legacy that slavery leaves in its wake: one of hatred and fear. While *The*

Darker Face of the Earth never quite deals directly with the physical trauma of slavery (with the exception of a few key moments in the play), its resonance is far greater as it attempts to explore the emotional and spiritual scars that remain generations after the physical pain subsides. Dove's play elaborates on the ideas Sophocles first presented centuries ago; her aesthetic and structural changes provide her with an opportunity to represent one of the most traumatic subjects in American history.

Her decision to stage her play on a cotton plantation—perhaps the most prevalent image of American slavery—in South Carolina, with its long history of pro-slavery sentiment, provides her version of the *Oedipus Tyrannos* narrative with layers of new meaning and thematic resonance. Her primary settings—the Big House, the slave cabins, the cotton fields—ground her work within the word of antebellum slavery and the disparity of privilege felt between black slaves and their white owners. Traditionally, these spaces are coded in terms of race and class and Dove capitalizes on such meaning by moving back and forth between the settings and exploring the power dynamic that exists between her white and black characters within these meaning-laden spaces.

Expanding on her central theme, Dove reimagines her characters' histories and grounds each within the slave culture of the period. She strips Augustus of the crown he deserves—as the son of a white woman of privilege—and casts him in the role of slave. The change allows her to explore a more complex relationship between Augustus and his lover/mother Amalia, who takes on a more central role in Dove's version of the story. Their affair plays out against the backdrop of plantation life; an affair that is threatened not only by social convention, but by Louis—Amalia's still living husband—and a chorus of slaves and slave-Conspirators who long for freedom and cannot understand the attraction between their new hero Augustus and their mistress.

Dove's rewriting of the basic history of Augustus allows her to introduce one of the most traumatic aspects of slavery: the loss of an individual's identity. Both Oedipus and Augustus engage in a journey of self-discovery, but Augustus's is presented through the lens of slavery that actively strips its

victims of their heritage and their birthright. In this way, Augustus's journey becomes a metaphor for the loss of the African-American identity in the wake of slave practices. Forcibly removed from his parents, he knows nothing of his past, a feeling that festers into bitterness and anger and ultimately results in the tragic outcomes of the play. In much more subtle (and perhaps inadequate) ways, this decision enables the author to explore the Jocasta figure in more depth and present an under-explored side of both the narrative and the legacy of slavery as it relates to the white slaveholder. Amalia struggles with her own nature: she enjoys her privilege immensely but longs to break free from this system that she finds confining both for herself and those slaves with which she was raised. She feels the loss of her son deeply, and also morns the loss of her original lover, Hector. Clearly a victim of circumstance, Amalia has no real agency in the patriarchal system that threatens to crush her if she does not play by man's rules. In addition, Dove extends the legacy to the next generation of slaves within the play by tying Augustus's fate to Phebe and illustrates how the plague of hatred ingrained in this society has passed from one generation to the next, like a virus.

Experimenting with a heightened sense of language and integrating specific imagery that grounds the play in the traumatic realities of American slavery, Dove's play draws a connection between the tragedy of the ancient source material and the African-American experience. *The Darker Face of the Earth* provides the author with a platform on which to explore the nation's shameful history and represent the traumatic legacy of slave practices in an effort to challenge our culture to reexamine its past rather than ignore the uncomfortable legacy it has spawned. Her insightful and compelling play joins a long string of adaptations that seek to extend the boundaries of Sophocles's *Oedipus Tyrannos* and connect the ancient tragedy with contemporary instances of historical trauma.

CHAPTER FIVE
MOLORA

> Elsewhere, I've written that far too many people have misinterpreted the dictum "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth"—which appears in the Torah, the Koran and the Old Testament—as some divinely-ordained rate of exchange, instead of a warning that no profit can possibly come from violence.
> —Yael Farber, author of *Molora* (Woods)

INTRODUCTION

In 2003, Yael Farber was commissioned by the National Arts Festival of South Africa to write a retelling of Aeschylus's famous *Oresteia*. Inspired by the Bush administration's response to the attacks of September 11, 2001, Farber envisioned a version of the story set in post-apartheid South Africa during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings. These hearings were established to give the victims and perpetrators of violence during the period of apartheid a venue to air their grievances in public and reclaim their respective *ubuntu*, or humanity (Tutu 31).

Farber began work on the play in 2003 with the assistance of the Ngqoko Cultural Group, "a body of men and women committed to the indigenous music, songs, and traditions of the rural Xhosa communities" which was formed in 1980 (Farber 12). In an interview discussing the creation of the text, the author recalls how the experience of introducing the narrative of *The Oresteia* to the group took many hours since every word of the story needed to be translated and the Xhosa women of the group took an active role in the story by discussing the moral implications of each character's actions. In many ways, the NCG presented itself as "a manifestation of the chorus," "a deliberative body…that metabolizes events for us" (Woods); this relationship between author and chorus became the seed on which *Molora* (2008) was based.

Following its premiere in 2003, Farber was invited to bring *Molora* to the Market Theatre in Johannesburg for a commercial run in 2007 followed by an international tour with stops in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Greece, Canada, and the United States. Audiences across the world responded to its "raw" (de Beer), "intensely powerful, hypnotic and truly engaging" nature (Otas

"Review: Molora"). Through its visceral, explosive narrative, the play becomes "a metaphor for how we implode as a tribe, and how we destroy ourselves, our own blood from within, when we engage in…acts of violence" (Woods).

In this chapter, I will explore Farber's text as it relates to the original narrative of *The Oresteia* in order to show how the author develops new meaning out of the centuries-old text and will discuss both the implications of her choices and the play's status as a prime example of a work that successfully represents a specific moment of historical trauma through the adaptation of classic Greek tragedy. I begin this analysis with a short recounting of the original narrative in order to establish a basis for understanding the alterations Farber makes in her version. Next, I discuss several significant twentieth century adaptations of *The Oresteia* in order to demonstrate the second life this narrative has had in representing trauma and situate *Molora* within this growing trend. As the central aim of this chapter is to establish *Molora* as a significant example of the use of adaptation in representing historical trauma, I shift focus to the specific context in which Farber approaches her adaptation: in this case, the horrors of apartheid-era South Africa and the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that originated in the years following the end of apartheid. Finally, I turn to an in-depth analysis of the playtext—its setting, plot and structural alterations, character construction, language, and imagery—in order to demonstrate how the process of adaptation creates new and significant meaning with regards to the specific moment of historical trauma in which the author crafts her play.

THE ORIGINAL NARRATIVE: *THE ORESTEIA*

For ten years, Klytemnestra has patiently awaited the return of her husband, Agamemnon, from the war in Troy so that she may enact her bloodlust in response to his ritual sacrifice of their daughter's life at the beginning of the unjust war. The queen has borne out her time apart from her husband and consoled herself in the arms of a lover, Aegisthus, who has established himself as de facto ruler and head of her house in the absence of the king.

News of the end of the war reaches Argos, sending Klytemnestra into action. As Agamemnon returns victorious, accompanied by the spoils of war including a new mistress, Klytemnestra feigns love and insists her husband accompany her into the house so that she may bathe him and wash away the years of his absence. Once inside, Klytemnestra brutally murders Agamemnon, establishing herself and her lover, Aegisthus, as usurping rulers.

Fearing her mother will murder her brother Orestes so that he cannot seek revenge over their father's murder, Elektra spirits the boy away to safety. Years pass and Orestes, now a grown man, returns to Argos to pay libation at his father's grave. At the gravesite, Orestes spies his sister mourning their father's death and lamenting the absence of her long lost brother, who she hopes will one day return and take revenge for the murder. The siblings meet and plot together to ensnare Klytemnestra and Aegisthus. Orestes disguises himself and seeks his mother out to inform her that her son, whom she feared would one day return and seek revenge, was killed in battle. Klytemnestra sends for Aegisthus so they can be seen to morn Orestes's death. A servant leaves the palace and informs the chorus that Aegisthus returned just in time to witness the assassination of Klytemnestra before the siblings turned their murderous rage on him.

Having committed matricide, an unforgivable sin against the gods, Orestes flees Argos, pursued by the furies, in search of Apollo whom he believes will forgive him this murder. At Delphi, Orestes is put on trial for his crimes; the case is initially put before Athena, though she eventually turns power over to a jury of citizens to decide his fate. When the result is a split decision, Athena casts the tiebreaking vote to forgive Orestes his crime, thus ending the cycle of violence that had marred the House of Atreus and all its descendants.[25]

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[25] The curse extends back to Tantalus's decision to test the gods' omniscience by murdering his son, Pelops, and serving the meat of the body to the gods. After Demeter unknowingly ate some of the meat, Tantalus was sent to the underworld and his line—in the form of a restored Pelops—was forever marked. Decades of murder, rape, and betrayal plagued the family before the curse was finally broken following Orestes's trial.

HISTORICAL TRAUMA AND THE ADAPTATION OF *THE ORESTEIA*

While *The Oresteia* has long fascinated playwrights and adaptations of the basic narrative appear as early as 240 B.C.E. when Roman playwright Livius Andronicus adapted the story in his *Aegisthus*, the twentieth century trend of reinventing this story is drastically different from earlier attempts in that playwrights began to significantly alter the context surrounding the action of the play, crafting insightful parallels between the bifurcated family and the social and political climates in which these adaptations were written. While *Molora* marks a particularly significant attempt to connect the internal struggles of this family with an instance of historical trauma, it is only one example of a longstanding trend within the traumatic twentieth century. A brief look at several other adaptations from this period—from a range of different times and countries—illustrates the large constellation of adaptations in which *Molora* exists.

Written in 1931 in the shadow of the stock market crash of 1929 and the resulting Great Depression, Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* focuses on the effect the national crisis had on the concept of the "American Family." While the economic downturn of the period created a need for the family to pull together as a unit in search of comfort, support, and shared responsibility, the period actually saw an increase in the dissolution of the family as a unit as men were forced to leave their homes in search of distant job opportunities and many individuals resorted to extreme measures—such as theft and suicide—to escape the economic hardships, leaving their loved-ones to cope with the aftermath. In adapting the trilogy of plays, O'Neill retains many of the principle motivations behind the actions of his central characters but also invents new motivations that alter the principle themes established in *The Oresteia* and casts several of his characters—primarily Elektra—as deeply selfish individuals operating out of jealousy and spite rather than seeking justice and revenge. The elements O'Neill chooses to highlight in his version betray his interest in commenting on the complicated fabric of family dynamics during this time; the play gives us insight both into the author's own relationship to his family and his awareness of the changing family dynamic in light of the new social climate.

Written a decade later in Europe during the height of World War II, Jean-Paul Sartre's *Les Mouches* (*The Flies*, 1943) adapts the story of *The Oresteia* in order to capture the global crisis of identity and the loss of faith that define the philosophical and moral underpinnings of the existential movement. Sartre's play, in addition to his larger body of work, questions the existence of a higher power and encourages audiences to rethink their nature as moral beings in light of the atrocities of the war and the mass genocide of entire cultures. Unlike the original narrative or O'Neill's retelling, Sartre's version removes justice and vengeance from the story altogether. Instead of murdering his mother and stepfather to avenge his father's death, Orestes kills the pair in order to save the Argive people from the psychological slavery to which they are subject. His actions are motivated by an awareness of a corrupt system, a system that devalues human life and manipulates its people for its own gains. Sartre carefully selects a narrative tied closely to the concept of fate and the gods in order to illustrate his message that the ideal of a higher power is a nothing but a grand myth, one that has been dangerously suggested as an excuse for many evils in the world. The piece emphasizes the individual's ability to stand against the tide; it demystifies the nature of power and illustrates how those in positions of leadership depend on support from the people under their guidance: without it their ability to dictate and control is lost.

Picking up on the thematic relevance of war to the narrative of *The Oresteia*, two examples from the second half of the twentieth century demonstrate the usefulness of the source text to deal with conceptions of violence and the psychological effects of violent actions during wartime. David Rabe's *The Orphan* (1970) firmly establishes the action of the play within the context of the Vietnam War, while Charles Mee's *Orestes 2.0* (1992) speaks to the general conception of armed conflict in the twentieth century. Rabe's text focuses on the psychological ramifications of war, a theme Mee expands on in his chorus of wounded war veterans.

Both plays are written in response to the establishment of war as a kind of entertainment—a mass media event on par with film and video games[26]—and reflect the loss of the human aspect of armed conflict.

Finally, two late twentieth century adaptations explore *The Oresteia*'s themes of disenfranchisement within the family structure and within the larger community structure, returning to the themes O'Neill established in the beginning of the century with *Mourning Becomes Electra*. Dacia Maraini's *I sogni di Clitennestra* (*The Dreams of Clytemnestra*, 1973) sets the action of *The Oresteia* in the deeply patriarchal society of Italy in the early 1970s and explores the psychological stress experienced by ordinary women as a result of the ongoing tension between Second Wave Feminism and the socioeconomic system that denied them equal status to men. In particular, Maraini's play presents a "sustained attack on the family as institution, as purveyor of a hypocritical petit-bourgeois morality and as a fount of erotic perversion" teasing out the availability of female roles in a society dominated by male power (Wood 374). Meanwhile, David Foley's *The Murders at Argos* (2000) explores the classic narrative within the last decade of the twentieth century, a time marred by frequent acts of senseless violence committed by young, disenfranchised individuals. Foley locates his play in the world after the Columbine High School massacre and "the rash of schoolyard shootings that had taken place around America" during this time (8). Foley's darkly comedic text juxtaposes the characteristics of "young innocence and monstrous guilt" (8) that exist in the alienated youth of the fractured American family.

While the adaptations discussed here are by no means exhaustive, they demonstrate a trend in modern playwriting that draws parallels between ancient Greek tragedy and the historical traumas that shape, in part, the twentieth century. Using the basic framework of *The Oresteia* as a model on which they can layer specific and contemporary meaning, these playwrights have crafted new narratives of traumatic distress, narratives that explore ancient Greek themes of suffering and pain in national or

[26] See Ebo, "War as Popular Culture: The Gulf Conflict and the Technology of Illusionary Entertainment."

even global contexts. Yael Farber's *Molora* continues this trend, using the narrative of *The Oresteia* as a framework to discuss the traumatic implications of South African apartheid.

CONTEXTUALIZING *MOLORA*: THE TRAUMA OF APARTHEID

Unlike several of the examples listed in the above pages which explore a general sense of trauma around a particular theme, Farber's play relies on a highly specific historical moment and a definable sociopolitical event as the locus on which her adaptation is centered. Any analysis of this text demands a brief summary of the events leading up to the establishment of the apartheid system, an overview of the system's traumatic policies, and a discussion of the breakdown of the system and the transition South Africa experienced as a result of the creation of a true democracy.[27]

Established in 1948 when the National Party attained a majority in the South African parliament, *apartheid*—literally meaning "apartness" in the Afrikaans and Dutch languages—was a system of state-sponsored segregation and racial discrimination aimed at maintaining white minority dominance over the black majority. Though the policy was formalized during the 1948 elections, racial discrimination and legalized segregation had a long history in South Africa beginning with the Dutch colonization of the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of the continent in 1652. The Dutch East India Company originally envisioned the area as a base to resupply its trade ships en route between Europe and Asia and the continent's agricultural production depended on slave labor from elsewhere on the African continent as well as from Southeast Asia. Following British colonization in the nineteenth century, slave practices were banned but the growth of the gold and diamond trade at midcentury created the need for a massive inexpensive labor force. In order to keep these industries profitable, the

[27] The following discussion of the apartheid system is extrapolated from several key sources. See Boraine, *A Country Unmasked*; Louw, *The Rise, Fall, and Legacy of Apartheid*; Moon, *Narrating Political Reconciliation: South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*; Posel and Simpson, *Commissioning the Past: Understanding South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*; Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*.

British turned to a system of migrant labor, bringing workers into the country from places like Mozambique and China.

In May of 1910, South Africa established itself as a union under the dominion of the British Empire and based its political system on the British parliament. The new system allowed political power to any simple majority among its four capitals (the original four colonies): Cape Town, Transvaal, Pretoria, and Bloemfontein. In order to protect white control over the country the constitution specified only white individuals of European descent could hold office. Recognizing the untenable nature of the economics in the mining community that demanded massive quantities of African men to leave their rural homes in favor of work in the urban centers—thereby threatening to create a dangerous black majority—the new government immediately began to institute segregationist policies (affecting land ownership rights, job security, and the right of travel) that would keep the black-African masses in check. Key among these policies were increased limitations on the ability of the African people to own land (only seven percent of the total land available in South Africa was allocated for African ownership, a number that was only later revised to be a meager thirteen percent) and increased taxation on this ownership which effectively priced the black population out of ownership all together. In order to maintain a livelihood, African men were forced to leave their families in the rural areas and seek out temporary migrant labor. Their movements were controlled by pass laws that allowed the government to track these individuals and control where they were and when they were authorized to work in the white communities. Essentially, the new government legalized a structure that maintained white power while at the same time forcing Africans into the workforce. In response to this exploitation, African workers engaged in protests, strikes, and resistance movements that were often elicited brutal responses by the white business owners.

With the outbreak of war in 1914, South Africa's economy drastically changed. British forces were in need of goods and supplies leading to a boom in the growing manufacturing market. Like the

mining industry, manufacturing relied on inexpensive black labor and brought even greater quantities of African men and women into the city centers. In response, the government was forced to relax segregationist regulations during the war as they lacked the sheer manpower needed to enforce such policies. Instead, they allowed the black-African populations to establish squatter camps just outside city limits where they could live year round instead of returning to their rural homes when their contracts expired. As many of the white workers were called to fight in battle, these industries turned to the black population to fill their positions, often requiring black workers to be trained in skilled positions for which they received much less pay than their white counterparts. By the end of the war, South Africa's non-mining workforce was dominated by black workers who were severely underpaid and who enjoyed few rights. Squatter camps began to develop local self-governments and organize unions and labor strikes leading the white leaders and business owners to retaliate. The growing number and power of black workers frightened the white minority (who never accounted for more than twenty percent of the population) into demanding more strict regulations that could protect their interests.

When hostilities on the world stage ended, the two major political parties in South Africa—the British United Party (the majority) and the Dutch National party—again found themselves struggling for control. Though now the stakes were higher as black workers flooded the cities and thereby threatened white supremacy. The United Party saw integration as inevitable and took a "business as usual" approach to the problem while extremists within the National Party wanted to establish a complete apartheid that would forcibly send the black masses back to the rural areas, an action that would likely decimate the South African economy. Others in the party saw a more practical solution and argued for a system that would allow the African populations into the urban areas under tight governmental control and oversight. This system would dictate where these individuals could go and what jobs they could hold based on the needs of the economic system.

In 1948, the National Party outlined its agenda, misleading voters into believing that the United Party wanted complete integration of the African population. The election that year brought the National Party to power as they captured a majority of the contested seats (seventy-nine to seventy-one) despite the fact that they lost the popular vote 624,500 to 443,719 (Clark and Worger 45). D.F. Malan was named prime minister and he and his party immediately began to draft the legislation that put apartheid into effect. Despite their victory, the National Party found itself on politically shaky grounds since it failed to capture the popular vote; therefore, swift action was necessary to put policies in place that could not be easily overturned should they fall out of power in the next election. Recognizing the National Party's weakness and seeing the proposed apartheid as a prime battleground on which to attack, the United Party positioned itself against apartheid, claiming it was an impracticable solution to a problem, though they never attacked the plan on its ethical legitimacy.

Beginning with the Population Regulation Act of 1950, which legally classified the population as either White, Couloured, or Native (later adding the category of Asian), the National Party began laying out the segregationist and racist policies that would form the foundation of apartheid law for the next four decades. This legislation worked in tandem with a number of other pieces of legislation developed over the next few years, all aimed at systematically separating the races and structuring a hierarchy that kept the white population in power. Two pieces of legislation in particular were created to ensure that the mixing of the races would end: the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and the Immorality Amendment Act of 1950, which respectively prohibited races from intermarrying and from engaging in all sexual contact.

In the early 1950s, the National Party passed a number of acts which further separated the white and non-white populations. The Group Areas Act of 1950 forced a physical separation between the races by creating separate residential areas and removing individuals from one area if they were deemed undesirable based on their racial classification. The following year, the Bantu Authorities Act

was passed which established black, self-governing homelands in the rural areas. The intention behind the creation of these homelands was to be able to relocate individuals from the cities if they were unemployed or banished under the Native Administrative Act of 1927.

While the early legislation focused on strict separation between the races, the National Party soon turned its attention to drafting legislation that empowered the white minority and subjugated the non-white majority. The Natives Act of 1952, commonly referred to as the Pass Laws Act, expanded the use of pass books which were required to be carried by any non-white individual over the age of sixteen. These books included various kinds of identification information, including information about the individual's right to employment and any criminal background. These documents allowed the government to track individuals and enforce where an individual could go and how long they could remain there.

In 1953, three acts were passed that formalized the economic and social disparity that separated the races: the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, which forced the segregation of all public amenities and stated that these amenities need to be judged equal; the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act, which prohibited all strike actions and legal unionized representation; and the Bantu Education Act which enforced separation of the races in all educational institutions. While the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act and the Native Labour Act created an unlevelled playing field between white and non-white citizens, the Bantu Education Act was even more nefarious in its desired result: by removing control of the education of the non-white population from the Ministry of Education and giving it instead to the Ministry of Native Affairs, this act allowed for a separate and unequal educational standard. Prior to its passage, ninety percent of the native population attended one of 4,360 mission schools subsidized by the state which were stripped of their funding and closed following the passage of the act, thereby relocating the student population to one of 230 government operated schools (Clark and Worger 52). As the government controlled schools were established as an arm of the

pro-apartheid regime, these institutions essentially indoctrinated their non-white pupils into accepting their position within the segregated system, one that relied on their status as a cheap workforce.

The systematic disenfranchisement of the non-white population was met with a great deal of opposition resulting in protests and attempts to overthrow the system. These protests were immediately dealt with by police action and were often followed by new laws that threatened greater consequences to opponents of the apartheid system. In 1950, the Suppression of Communism Act passed which, in addition to outlawing communism, declared that any criticism of the government—regardless of ideological bent—was considered communist. Three years later, the government passed the Criminal Law Amendment Act which declared that anyone accompanying a person found guilty of offences while protesting would be presumed guilty and had to prove their innocence. Finally, in 1956 the Riotous Assemblies Act barred people from all types of public gatherings if the Minister of Justice saw them as a danger to the public peace. Over the course of the decade, power gradually moved away from the courts in favor of a police state based on surveillance and enforcement, eventually giving the police the right to detain individuals without charge under the General Law Amendment Act of 1963. As a result of the laws during this period, more than 500,000 pass-law arrests were made annually, more than 600 people were named communists, more than 350 people were banned, and more than 150 people were banished (Clark and Worger 63).

The establishment of the homelands was the crown jewel of the apartheid system—the cornerstone of the *grand apartheid* that would totally separate the races—though in reality, they remain the single greatest and most expensive failure of the apartheid system. When the ten homelands, or *Bantustans*, were originally created, they occupied seven percent of the total land area of the country, a figure that was only later adjusted to approximately thirteen percent (and six more homelands were established). These areas were established as self-governing, quasi-independent states that would allow the South African government to relocate natives based on their ethnicity and strip

them of their nationality, allowing them to be treated as aliens. From an economic standpoint, this was attractive because it allowed the state to cut financial costs associated with providing amenities not only for people living in the homelands but also by reducing costs outside the homelands as a result of the decline in population.[28] These homelands were stocked with political leaders loyal to the South African government and were provided with basic security forces to ensure the status quo. By the end of the 1970s, overpopulation and poverty were so bad in these areas that the South African government saw them as a total failure, especially considering the astronomical cost of subsidizing their existence. In addition, a 1979 report by the Commission of Inquiry into Legislation Affecting the Utilization of Manpower proved the total failure of this policy when it found that poverty was so bad in the homelands that individuals had no choice but to enter the cities illegally in order to survive.

In addition to the internal pressures that the apartheid system created, global attention turned to South Africa and its inhumane practices in light of the Soweto Uprising, a series of high school-student led protests in June of 1976 that led to the killing of 176 people and the death of Stephen Biko, the high profile leader of the Black Consciousness Movement, while in police custody in August of 1977.[29] Under significant pressure, Prime Minister Pieter Willem Botha, who came to power in 1978, took a more pragmatic approach to dealing with the opposition to apartheid practices and extended some limited rights to the non-white populace in hopes of assuaging the social turmoil he inherited, though these offers were treated with a great deal of suspicion. In 1979, Botha announced his plan to seek a revised constitution that he promised would extend political rights to all races in South Africa. The new constitution, which was established in 1983, created two additional parliaments—the House of Representatives (for Coloureds) and the House of Delegates (for Indians)—in addition to the white-only House of Assembly. In practice, the new structure did little to stymie unrest since most native Africans

[28] In reality, population continued to grow and this math only works on paper.

[29] As founder of the Black Consciousness Movement, Biko's death—resulting from his experiences while being interrogated and tortured in police custody—was extremely high profile.

were not represented as they were disenfranchised under the creation of the homelands and the whites maintained a fixed massive majority among the houses.[30] In addition, the new constitution gave the State President (Botha) vast powers to overrule legislation.

The new constitution was met with continued protest and violent opposition, specifically by the African National Congress which was originally founded in 1912 in direct response to the injustices felt by black South Africans. Such opposition was becoming extremely costly to deal with and eventually led Botha to offer to free Nelson Mandela, leader of the ANC's military wing (the Umkhonto we Sizwe) if he promised to renounce the violence. Mandela's refusal to meet Botha's terms forced the government to reconsider its position toward apartheid practices. Such opposition was not only draining the country's resources but also was bringing increased global criticism in the form of the withdrawal of foreign capital, most notably represented by the passage of the 1986 Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act in the United States which imposed sanctions against South Africa and, among other things, demanded an established timeline for ending apartheid and the release of Mandela. Sanctions from Europe and Japan followed suite, forcing the South African government to make a real commitment to change.

In response, Botha announced parliament had outgrown the dated concept of apartheid and took action to repeal the pass laws. In addition, Botha arranged for various heads of state to begin meeting with Mandela and the ANC in hopes of negotiating a peaceful resolution to apartheid, though in practice these negotiations likely began in hopes that they would weaken the ANC's revolutionary power (Louw 160). In early 1989, Botha suffered a stroke that forced him out of office later that year, turning power over to Frederik Willem de Klerk who took immediate action in ending apartheid. In addition to lifting the banning orders against the ANC and other political organizations—thereby allowing the press to report on the continued negotiations between these organizations and the South

[30] The white-only House of Assembly was set at twice as large as the Coloured House of Representatives, and four times as large as the Indian House of Delegates.

African government—de Klerk freed Mandela in early 1990. Later the same year, de Klerk announced his plan to begin reincorporating the homelands into South Africa proper and by 1993 the government was in full negotiations with the ANC in order to establish an interim democratic constitution that would allow for the representation of all people in South Africa.

The election of 1994 saw ninety-one percent of the registered voters—some nineteen million people—cast their ballots in South Africa's first democratic election, effectively ending apartheid (Clark and Worger 118). While the ANC fell just short of the sixty-six percent it needed to change the interim constitution unilaterally, it captured a popular majority and proceeded to nominate Nelson Mandela to be the country's first President in a unanimous vote. The National Party, which had controlled South Africa for the previous four decades, captured approximately twenty percent of the vote ensuring that de Klerk would serve as Mandela's deputy in the new government. In the months following the 1994 elections, the new South African government labored to hash out a permanent constitution that could replace the intermediate constitution that presided over the elections. The new document came into effect in early 1997 and provided—for the first time in the history of South Africa—a bill of rights that outlined the social, cultural, and political rights of the people of South Africa, built on a foundation of human rights.

Despite the relatively peaceful nature that surrounded South Africa's movement away from this dark period in its history, moving forward as a united country was difficult given the atrocities committed by the people in power for nearly 350 years. In an effort to unite the country, the new government quickly passed the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act in 1995. The act established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a body tasked with the difficult mission of investigating the suffering of ordinary people under apartheid and with hearing testimony from former agents of the state seeking amnesty for crimes they had committed. Over the next two-and-a-half years, the committee listened to the public testimony of approximately 22,000 people—including 7,112 cases

of people seeking amnesty, of which only 849 cases were granted (TRC/Amnesty Hearings and Decisions)—in order meet the goals of the commission as established by Dullah Omar, former Minister of Justice: "to come to terms with their past on a morally accepted basis and to advance the cause of reconciliation" (TRC website). While the TRC's success in attaining a measure of reconciliation is debatable and the different parties involved in the practice tend to view the outcome drastically differently, the hearings have nevertheless become a model for other countries dealing with human rights violations in contrast to the problematic Nuremberg Trials in the years following World War II.

The traumatic significance of apartheid is far reaching and extends beyond the physical traumas sustained by the African people, to which the TRC was commissioned to hear testimony. The principle task of the committee was to hear from individuals who had suffered violations to their basic human rights during this time, testimonies that were eventually collated into a 1998 publication presented to President Mandela. In this report, the TRC outlines five basic categories: killings, torture, severe ill-treatment (attempted killing and bodily harm), abduction, and associated violations, and breaks each of these categories down into a specific types including being beaten to death, shot dead, death resulting from a petrol bomb, death from torture, bodily mutilation, psychological and mental torture, suffocation, and sexual assault. While the published findings of the committee barely scratch the surface of the trauma endured by individuals, they point toward the kind of physical and psychological suffering taking place under of the apartheid system.

ANALYZING THE PLAY: *MOLORA* (2008)

Yael Farber's *Molora* picks up on the thread of reconciliation in the years following the collapse of the apartheid system and draws a parallel between the national internal conflict on the issue of apartheid and the familial conflict presented in the narrative of *The Oresteia.* Given the thematic relevance of division and internal unrest in *The Oresteia*, the source text provides an excellent vehicle for Farber to explore the resonance of these themes during the post-apartheid years. In the process of

adapting the original narrative—its setting, plot and structural alterations, character construction, language, and imagery—Farber creates excellent opportunities to explore new possible meanings within the text. The following analysis explores the alterations and additions Farber makes in her version and demonstrates how the adaptation of *The Oresteia* provides her with ample source material to deal with the trauma of apartheid.

Post-Apartheid Divisions of Space

Farber sets her play shortly after the end of the apartheid practices, during the years of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings. The playtext calls for a simple design with absolutely no separation between actors and audience who, if being produced in a traditional theatre, both occupy the stage space which should be stripped of drapes, curtains, and anything used to demarcate the borders of the playing area. Farber notes that "contact with the audience must be immediate and dynamic, with the audience complicit—experiencing the story as witnesses or participants in the room, rather than as voyeurs excluded from yet looking in on the world of the story" (19).

The proximity between the audience and stage action illustrates a key concept regarding Farber's use of a classical source text. The performance of these ancient tragedies was an extension of Greek citizenship. Held over the course of several days, the City Dionysia saw the entire community come together to celebrate, pray, and enjoy the dramatic ritual. In fact, the performance of these plays depended on direct support from the citizens in addition to their role as audience: each year, wealthy members of the society were selected to be the *choregoi* and were responsible for hiring, training, and costuming both the chorus and musicians. In addition, choruses were made up of other members of the Greek society and were often as large as fifty citizens, though the choruses of the related dithyramb competitions were much larger and all together could account for more than 1,000.

For *Molora*, the audience sits on three sides of the action with the fourth lined with seven chairs that will eventually seat the chorus of Xhosa women. The playing area is then divided in half and on each

side sits an old table with a microphone on a stand and a single chair; these tables are the testimony tables that Klytemnestra and Elektra will occupy. Beneath Klytemnestra's table is the corpse of Agamemnon wrapped in black plastic, unseen by the audience. At center stage, between these tables, is a low platform on which sits a "grave filled with the red sand of Africa" next to an old pickaxe (Fig. 10). Over the course of the play, the platform functions as a stage-within-a-stage where scenes of the past and of memory are re-enacted. The grave is covered from the audience's sight by a large black sheet (19).

Figure 10. Agamemnon's grave and the chorus of the Ngqoko Cultural Group in a production of *Molora* at the Laokoon Festival, Kampnagel in Hamburg Germany, 2003 [©Christian Enger].

The "bleak beauty" (20) of Farber's mise-en-scène immediately situates itself within the narrative of trauma and its relationship to the act of testimony and witnessing. The author foregrounds the action of testimony by constructing a space where the audience has gathered to hear the story of each participant's experience. Modeled on the basic physical structure of the TRC hearings, Farber's set divides the space in half, placing victim and perpetrator on opposite sides, leaving us and the chorus to bear witness to their interaction as each individual takes their place at their respective testimony table and recounts their narrative. Despite the inherent divide between Klytemnestra and Elektra and between the audience, its natural extension the chorus, and these two women, the unified space

suggests the audience is part of the same community as Klytemnestra, Elektra, and the chorus as all the characters are seated together in a cohesive group at the beginning of the play. In so doing, Farber concocts a unified body symbolic of the nation as a whole where victim, perpetrator, and witness all congregate together waiting for the hearing to begin.

In a visual metaphor for the slow uncovering of past sins that makes up the action of the play, a member of the chorus—an elderly Xhosa woman—removes herself from the audience and makes her way to center stage where the grave is covered from the audience's sight. Grabbing one corner of the plastic sheet, the woman slowly and methodically draws the plastic away from the gravesite, revealing the painful results that stand between the parties represented here: Agamemnon is dead. His grave has taken on symbolic resonance as the end to the just order of things in this decimated country: it marks the failures of the past to come together as a united nation. Standing over the grave, singing in her native Xhosa, the woman remarks "Ho laphalal'igazi[31] [Blood has been spilt here]" (20): the sand that fills the grave is stained with the blood of the nation. The ritualized uncovering of the grave establishes it and the platform it sits on as a privileged space; it is an altar to the memory of the past. As the action of the play unfolds, the witnesses "commit to the process of unearthing the past" by leaving "the safety of their tables" to stand upon the earthen floor of the altar (25). This action propels Klytemnestra and Elektra deep into the recesses of their memory and creates a space where the trauma of the past can be embodied as their testimony unfolds.

Remembering to Forget: Working Through the Trauma of Apartheid

While most of the events of *Molora* originate in Aeschylus's *The Libation Bearers,* the second play of *The Oresteia* trilogy, the author invents two primary plot and structural alterations that provide

[31] The chorus, Elektra, and Orestes often speak in a mix of their native Xhosa and English (which is spoken by a chorus member acting as a translator for the hearings). From this point on I will only cite the English translation unless specifically speaking about the significance of the Xhosa/English usage.

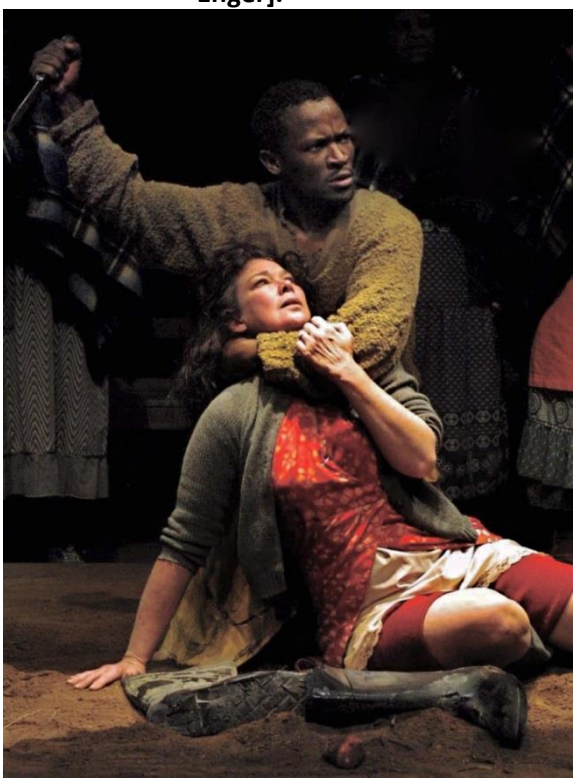
the play with a sense of originality and encode the play with topical specificity. First, Farber revises the basic structure of the original linear narrative, choosing instead to develop her play as a series of memories (that tell the basic story as outlined by Aeschylus) set within a framing piece (the hearings of the TRC). Second, Farber completely revises the ending of the source narrative—which sees Klytemnestra die at the hands of her son—in order to situate the play within the historical significance of the post-apartheid era and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings.

Farber's basic plot structure establishes the piece as a memory play composed of episodic glimpses into a past that details the violent history of the family. The prologue and first scene establish the basic framing structure that illustrates the play takes place during the TRC hearings while the remaining eighteen scenes retell the basic narrative of Aeschylus's *The Libation Bearers*. The play ends with an epilogue that brings the action back into the hearing room and completes the frame. Throughout the play's development, Farber is careful not to hew too carefully to a strict sense of separation between the scenes of memory and the present testimony: characters begin scenes by directly addressing the audience—providing the sense that the audience may be witnessing more of the character's testimony—or by soliloquizing or speaking to an unseen presence (a member of the deceased, the ancestors, etc.). The effect of this device, the blurring of the line between past and present and between audience and character proves to be a particularly useful aesthetic choice in establishing the relationship between the play's narrative and the traumatic moment in which it is situated. Farber's device creates a feeling that the characters are living through their traumatic memories and that these memories continue to influence the individual experience long after the events have taken place. The device establishes the concept that the characters are working through their experience as a result of their testimony, an idea that lies at the very heart of trauma therapy.

This sense of the working through of a traumatic past directly connects with the significant alteration Farber makes to the basic narrative of the play. In the original text, the siblings plot together

to murder Aegisthus and Klytemnestra and eventually carry out their plan, thus inserting themselves into the endless cycle of violence that encircles this family; however, Farber's play sees the children unable to carry out the full extent of their vengeance, allowing Klytemnestra to live and thereby ending the vicious cycle.

Figure 11. Orestes (Lebohang Elephant) is unable to kill Klytemnestra (Dorothy Ann Gould) in a production of *Molora* at the Laokoon Festival, Kampnagel in Hamburg Germany, 2003 [©Christian Enger].



After killing Ayesthus,[32] the leader of the chorus again steps forward and chides Orestes for his vile actions:

> My child! Why do you kill?
> A human being should never be murdered.
> Do you know that human blood will haunt you always?
> What you have done is terrible.
> Never kill again. (76)

[32] Farber uses the more accurate Greek spelling of the name in her play.

With this, she vanishes back into the chorus, leaving Orestes with his shame. Despite Orestes's desire to reestablish his conviction to kill Klytemnestra in the next scene with Elektra, his is a desire with no drive, and he soon finds himself unable to wield the axe that was once used to cut down his father:

> ***ORESTES*** *lifts the axe high over his head, but as he prepares to kill his mother, a* ***WOMAN*** *from the* ***CHORUS*** *starts to sing a haunting song. ORESTES tries to shake off the sound of it.*
>
> **ELEKTRA:** What? Why do you pause?
>
> *He lifts the axe again, but the WOMEN rise and move across the performance area. He tries several times to see the deed through—but cannot.*
>
> **ORESTES:** Even the ancestors know this…
>
> *Throwing down the axe.*
>
> I cannot shed more blood. (83)

While Orestes has discovered his moral center, Elektra remains thirsty for blood and insists on carrying out the plan, arguing that "the Furies demand it" (83). When Orestes's pleas to "rewrite this ancient end" falls on deaf ears, he and the chorus must move swiftly when Elektra decides to take matters—and the axe—into her own hands. Screaming out for "vengeance," Elektra grabs the axe and runs toward her mother (Fig. 12):

> *The* ***WOMEN of the CHORUS*** *move swiftly as one. They grab* ***ELEKTRA*** *and overpower her.*
> ***ELEKTRA*** *screams in rage as they wrestle the axe from her hands. They restrain her and pull her to the ground where they cradle her like a child. She rages against them and finally breaks down, weeping for every injustice of the past. The* ***WOMEN of the CHORUS*** *hold her tightly, whispering encouragements. She slowly finds her stillness. UMASENGWANA (Milking/ Friction Drum) begins its deep, haunting sound. (85)*

With the full support of her community, Elektra is finally assuaged of her deep, violent anger, and finds acceptance in the need to break the cycle of violence that has plagued her house:

> ***ELEKTRA*** *emerges from the knot of* ***WOMEN*** *holding her. She and* ***ORESTES*** *are focused on their mother—still cowering centre stage. They crawl towards her slowly.* ***KLYTEMNESTRA****—uncertain of what they will do to her—draws back in terror.*

As they reach her, they slowly stand together and extend their hands to help her to her feet. She is a broken woman. She backs away, humbled—and leaves the performance platform, resuming her place at the Testimony table.
*The **WOMEN** of the **CHORUS** explode into song, circling brother and sister.*
***ELEKTRA** and **ORESTES** embrace, spent and weeping. (85)*

Farber ends the scene with a prayer from the leader of the chorus that calls for unity in the years to come:

I pray for unity between black and white
We pray for our children
That they may stop crime and killing each other
We ask that the work that we are doing
May we do it with success—and power
And speak the truth. (86)

Figure 12. The chorus stops Elektra (Lindiwe Chibi) from killing Klytemnestra (Dorothy Ann Gould) in a production of *Molora* at the Laokoon Festival, Kampnagel in Hamburg Germany, 2003 [©Christian Enger].

The choice to rewrite the ending of the original narrative arose, according to the author, out of her interactions with the Ngqoko Cultural Group who serve as the play's chorus. During their initial meeting, when Farber recounted the events of *The Oresteia*, the women of the NCG were shocked to hear how Klytemnestra had murdered her husband, though they were receptive to her reasons once they had learned a bit about the character's backstory.[33] Yet Farber notes that, despite their

[33] In Euripides's *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Agamemnon is said to be Klytemnestra's second husband. Her first was Tantalus, a King of Pisa, who was slain by Agamemnon. This version of the story suggests that Agamemnon forced himself on Klytemnestra after killing both Tantalus and her infant son.

understanding, the group remained firm that “murder was never, ever the answer to the pain” (Woods). Farber recounts how, during the process of creating the play, the women would ask her what the children would do in response and, when she would tell them repeatedly that they were going to kill their mother, the women would adamantly argue against this plan: “They made it very clear to me that they were simply not going to allow Elektra or Orestes to kill their mother. They made it clear what would be unacceptable to them as witnesses” (Woods).

The author’s willingness to re-envision the ending reveals the authority she gave to the members of the NCG. Farber relegates her own need for dramaturgical control over her work in favor of establishing a partnership with her chorus, one that echoes the quest for unity sought by the TRC in the wake of apartheid: as a white South African playwright, Farber engages in a discussion of this period with representatives of the black African population most affected by the apartheid system, establishing the resulting play as a microcosm of the national climate of South Africa that saw blacks and whites come together to share in their experiences. In addition, the decision to alter the ending of the play reveals the need of these women to intervene in the narrative being developed in order to offer new possibilities of conceiving the traumatic experience of apartheid. They saw the murder of Klytemnestra as beyond comprehension and insisted on another version of the story, one that allowed room for forgiveness and a sense of peace. In essence, the intervention made reflects the central concern in the treatment of trauma: providing the individual affected with the tools to work through their experiences and reframe the emotional and psychological aspects of their pain.

After breaking the cycle of violence that haunts this family, Farber swiftly moves back to the play’s frame for the epilogue. Back in the hearing room of the TRC, we once again see Klytemnestra who is wrapping up her testimony before the committee and the gathered witnesses:

> It falls softly the residue of revenge…
> Like rain.
> And we who made the sons and daughters of this land, servants in the halls of their forefathers…

We know.
We are still only here by grace alone. (87)

For Klytemnestra to survive the adaptation of such a violent, revenge-laden narrative is surprising, though her comments provide us with insight into the significance of this ending. In recalling the forefathers of the land, Klytemnestra establishes the role memory plays in historical trauma. As a representative of the white oppressor, she recognizes her role in disrupting the moral order and "know(s)" that this crime will never be forgotten despite the "grace" that characterizes the relatively peaceful transformation South Africa experienced out of its dark apartheid years, a transformation that few thought possible. While Farber's play certainly does not end on a happy note, a small measure of hope pervades the final moments as Klytemnestra recognizes the grace with which her children and the larger community have handled the shift in power.

Erasing the Divisions Between Victim, Victimizer, and Witness

As noted earlier, Farber focuses the action of *Molora* on the second play of *The Oresteia* trilogy, *The Libation Bearers*. This section of the story centers on the tension between Elektra and Klytemnestra in the years after the murder of Agamemnon, leading up to Orestes's return and the murder of Klytemnestra. The principle conflict of the narrative originates from Elektra's seething rage over her father's death and her inability to avenge the murder. In *Molora*, Farber expands the rift between Klytemnestra and Elektra by layering a racial divide on top of the original conflict: Klytemnestra is cast as a middle-aged white woman, presumably of Afrikaner (Dutch) or British descent, and her daughter Elektra is a young black Xhosa woman. This racial divide further complicates the strained relationship in the audience's eyes, creating a visual metaphor for the power dynamic in regards to the apartheid-era setting. Farber's alteration to the characters' races solves a fundamental problem of focusing her energies on the second play of the trilogy: while extensive exposition is necessary to intellectually understand the backstory of these two women, a semiotic and emotional understanding instantly accompanies their presence onstage.

Unlike the character of Klytemnestra presented in *The Oresteia*, a layer of shame and remorse regarding her actions toward her children complicates the Klytemnestra we see in Farber's *Molora*. While she maintains her spiteful anger toward her former husband, both for the murder of their daughter and for taking a mistress, her hostility is further fueled by resentment as Agamemnon also stole her away from her first marriage by brutally killing her first husband and their baby. In her testimony at the beginning of the play, she acknowledges the difficulty she has in recounting the tale ["A great ox- / As they say- / Stands on my tongue" (22)]. Throughout the action of the play, which is told in a series of flashbacks sporadically narrated by the individual testifying, we see Klytemnestra carry out her revenge on Agamemnon and engage in horrific treatment toward both Elektra and Orestes, though occasionally her tough and vengeful exterior breaks down and we glimpse the nurturing maternal side of her persona, a side of herself that she mourns the loss of.

In her opening remarks to the committee, Klytemnestra takes complete ownership of her actions ["I did it all. I don't deny it" (22)] and recounts the joy she took in killing her husband. Despite her ownership of the actions, she later reveals the toll they have taken on her unconscious:

> What is guilt?
> What is memory?
> What is pain?
> Things that wake me in the night…
> By day I stand by what I have done
> But at night I dream—
> And dreams don't lie. (34)

Later in the play, Klytemnestra admits as much to her daughter when her maternal fidelity is challenged ["I see your heart. / I know it hurts." (42)]. Klytemnestra responds to her daughter's provocation and admits that she agonizes over her actions ["I am not so exceeding glad at the deeds that I have done…" (43)], though she later justifies these actions in a similar sentiment during her testimony before the committee ["I am not so exceeding glad / at the deeds I have done. But we were a / country at war. / It mattered only that we survived." (51)]. The later remarks demonstrate Klytemnestra's fundamental nature as a pragmatist: she did what was necessary to survive and thrive. This need trumped her

humanity, leading her to participate in the subjugation of her people and, in a more specific sense, led her to abandon her maternal instincts, causing her to subjugate her own child Elektra.

Figure 13. Klytemnestra (Dorothy Ann Gould) torturing Elektra (Lindiwe Chibi[34]) for information about Orestes. From a production of Molora at the Laokoon Festival, Kampnagel in Hamburg Germany, 2003 [©Christian Enger].

The Klytemnestra we see in *Molora* is torn between doing what she feels is right as a mother and maintaining her power, in particular the power she wields over her children. This tension results in a series of actions that place her maternal love in direct conflict with the violent nature of her actions. In one particularly brutal scene just after Elektra has spirited Orestes away from Argos to ensure his safety, Klytemnestra tortures her daughter while interrogating her for information as to her brother's whereabouts (Fig. 13). When Elektra refuses to submit to her mother's wishes, the torture intensifies until Elektra lies despondent and weeping on the ground. In response, Klytemnestra takes her daughter in her arms in a soothing, motherly gesture and issues a final warning ["I'll get it out of you." (33)]. The juxtaposition of the motherly action and the hostile threat serve to demonstrate the war being fought inside her character.

[34] Chibi, a well-known soap opera actress, was shot by her boyfriend in 2005 during a domestic dispute. She remained in a coma for several weeks due to her injuries. In 2007, after many months on the road to recovery, Chibi contracted pneumonia, a complication of her injuries, and died. Farber dedicated the published version of *Molora* to her ["Dedicated to Lindiwe Chibi, Molora's original Elektra / Your light continues to shine for us all" (15)].

Later, after hearing of her son's death—a ruse concocted by the siblings to ease Klytemnestra's suspicion regarding Orestes's arrival in her home—Klytemnestra drowns her sorrows in alcohol and cigarettes while at the same time proclaiming her joyous victory:

> ***KLYTEMNESTRA*** *walks through the* ***WOMEN*** *and crosses the stage. She mutters to herself, smoking with one hand—a bottle of whiskey in the other.*
>
> **KLYTEMNESTRA:** (*To herself*.) …And her—that serpent
> sucking out my heart's red wine. Now at
> last my children are silenced…and peace
> is mine! (65)

Her avowals prove insincere and soon the drunken queen gives in to outright sorrow over the loss of her children:

> First it was my baby he smashed against a rock.
> Then Ephigenia—sacrificed like a goat.
> Nothing…nothing can console me for the loss of that child. My sweet flower.
> And now Orestes—gone! (68-9)

Greif eventually turns to a maudlin sense of despair when Klytemnestra pulls a pair of Orestes's baby shoes from the breast of her dress and openly weeps over the loss of her son (70).

In many ways, the internal conflict present in Klytemnestra is reflected in her daughter Elektra and the two function as foils for each other. Farber's Elektra struggles to balance her anger and bitterness with her longing to enjoy her mother's love, a struggle that eventually leaves her feeling spiteful. She begins her testimony by addressing the "evils" her mother has committed against her and recounts how she has "never ceased to rehearse" her vitriolic account of these crimes (24):

> You were my ruin…
> Yet I had done nothing to you.
> You poisoned me with your deeds.
> You are the shadow that fell on my life
> and made me a child of me through fear.
> I have hated you so long…
> And now you want to look into my heart?
> You who did this to my father will pay.
> For if the dead lie in dust and
> nothingness,
> while the guilty pay not with blood for
> blood—

Then we are nothing but history without
a future. (24-5)

Elektra's testimony reflects the sad truth of her own traumatic suffering, that she is trapped in a past event with no definable future. Klytemnestra's actions have left her fixated on the horrors of the events surrounding her father's death, a death we see in the first memory scene and constantly relived by Elektra in various ways throughout the play, as the recalled actions flood back into her conscious memory. Elektra recognizes the impossibility of her situation and acknowledges the hopelessness of trying to move on without seeking vengeance ["People said I must just move on. / But how? How could I forget? / How can we move on until the debt is / paid?" (36)].

This resentment and animosity is balanced with an equal desire for acceptance and love. When the two women cross paths in front of Agamemnon's grave, Elektra challenges her mother's steely demeanor in hopes of discovering a shred of motherly affection ["Mama, if I speak gently—can I say my truth? / … / I want only to know you. / Who you were before the hurting…who we could have been." (42-3)]. Elektra confronts her mother with an alternate reality where they could be united as a family instead of divided by the violence and retribution that has marred their relationship. Despite her mother's admission that she regrets the costs of her actions, Elektra is unable to quell her anger, and it eventually bubbles over and results in continued threats of physical violence, systemic of the cycle of violence in which the two women are trapped:

Suddenly, ***ELEKTRA*** *grabs the 'sjambok' [a leather whip] from* ***KLYTEMNESTRA's*** *hand.*

ELEKTRA: (*With danger*.)
Take care in making such a law for men,
that you not make trouble for yourself.
For, if we are to take blood for blood,
then by that law…Wena! [YOU]

In an open threat, she points at her with the 'sjambok'.

You would be the first to die. (45-6)

In reality, the women Farber presents are similar to a fault, a theme she carries into the development of the play's central narrative.

As Elektra and Orestes enact their plan of vengeance, Klytemnestra warns her daughter "You know not what you do. / Already the darkness is in your eyes. / You become me. You choose the curse" (80). Farber uses Klytemnestra's protestations to introduce the concept of choice into her narrative: by the end of the play, Klytemnestra seems to acknowledge that she made the wrong choice, though once made, she committed herself and her actions to living up to that choice. For her daughter, however, she wishes a different choice on her. Her warnings continue later in the same scene, "Nothing…nothing is written / Do not choose to be me" (82). Despite the traumatic circumstances inherent in the apartheid system and the desire by some to react with hostility and anger in light of the shift in power that accompanied its fall, Farber reminds her audience that it is these choices that define them as a people. The play argues that historical circumstances do not dictate actions—despite Klytemnestra's justification of being a society at war—and the call for Elektra to make a different choice foregrounds the play's eventual message of peace and forgiveness, symbolized in the sparing of Klytemnestra's life.

While Farber's primary concern is the relationship between mother and daughter, her treatment of Orestes echoes the racial and cultural divisions that plague South Africa. She expands on the idea of Orestes as the natural heir to Agamemnon, who exists in the play as an emblem of South Africa's cultural past, a past that has been placed under erasure by the colonization of the country and the rise of apartheid. While Elektra represents the side of the African population that has been urbanized under the apartheid system, forced into subservience under the white dominate minority, Orestes represents the rural African, squarely situated within the country's rich cultural heritage. Sent away as a child to be raised by tribeswomen, represented in the play by the leader of the chorus, Orestes has been educated as a member of one of the Xhosa tribes. Farber establishes the link between

Agamemnon and Orestes early in the play as the actor who plays the role stands in for Agamemnon's corpse during Klytemnestra's initial testimony.

When we first see Orestes, shortly before he returns to Argos to take revenge on his mother and stepfather, the character is participating in the traditional Xhosa initiation ritual that is given to young men. Dressed in a white and red blanket (Fig. 14), Orestes is greeted by a woman of the chorus, welcoming him home from the ritual (49-50). She is joined by the rest of the chorus and together they encircle Orestes and begin to throw themselves against him in a ritualized dance, testing his strength. This action slowly devolves into a stylized assault against each other, thereby connecting Orestes and the chorus to the violent and primal nature of the land itself (50).

Figure 14. Xhosa initiation into manhood [©James Nachtway].

Farber expands on Orestes's relationship to tradition and cultural heritage consistently throughout the play, coloring his actions with a deep sense of ritual. Shortly after returning home and enacting his revenge plot, Orestes calls on the spirit of his ancestors to guide him in his endeavors:

> *Entering the cemetery is the stranger who brought **ELEKTRA** the ashes of her brother. Throwing off his blanket, he kneels at her father's grave. He spits traditional beer in honour of the Ancestors, and lights Mphepo (the herb that is burnt when communing with the Ancestors).*
>
> **ORESTES:** To you my country and to you my ancestors.
> Receive me with good fortune in this journey.

Halls of my fathers,
I have come here to fulfill an important task.
Send me not dishonoured from the land,
but grant that I take back what is mine,
and restore my house!
Please, work with me.
Now I've come back to this land from
seventeen years of exile—a man. And I
swear on this grave:
I will not return without my revenge. (57-8)

Farber's Orestes is primarily concerned with maintaining his honor, the honor of his family, and especially the honor of his people. His actions toward Klytemnestra and Ayesthus reflect a deep desire to right past wrongs and restore a sense of order to the world. By constructing Orestes in this manner, Farber capitalizes on the original text's relationship to ritual, spiritualism, and a sense of fate by drawing direct parallels between the native culture of the Xhosa people and the ancient Greeks. Fate, for the Greeks, and the relationship between man and the gods is translated into an awareness of the cultural ancestry of the country and its native people. Orestes's presence on stage—semiotically established by his native dress, his stylized movements, and his poetically heightened language—firmly establishes a relationship between the cultural specificity of *Molora* and the historical significance of *The Oresteia.*

Despite the myriad of alterations made to Klytemnestra, Elektra, and Orestes, it is Farber's adaptation of the chorus that reflects her principle alteration to the narrative's characters. As I outlined in the introduction to this chapter, *Molora* is written to be performed using seven members of the Ngqoko Cultural Group, a rural group from the Transkei "committed to the indigenous music, songs and traditions of the rural Xhosa communities" (12). Established in 1980, the group has dedicated itself to keeping alive the ancient traditions of the African people. Farber wrote *Molora* after visiting with these women, telling them the story of *The Oresteia*, and witnessing their reaction to the story. As the narrative unfolded, the group enacted the role of a traditional Greek chorus, both commenting on the action and participating in its development, and thereby suggested itself as the perfect chorus for Farber's vision.

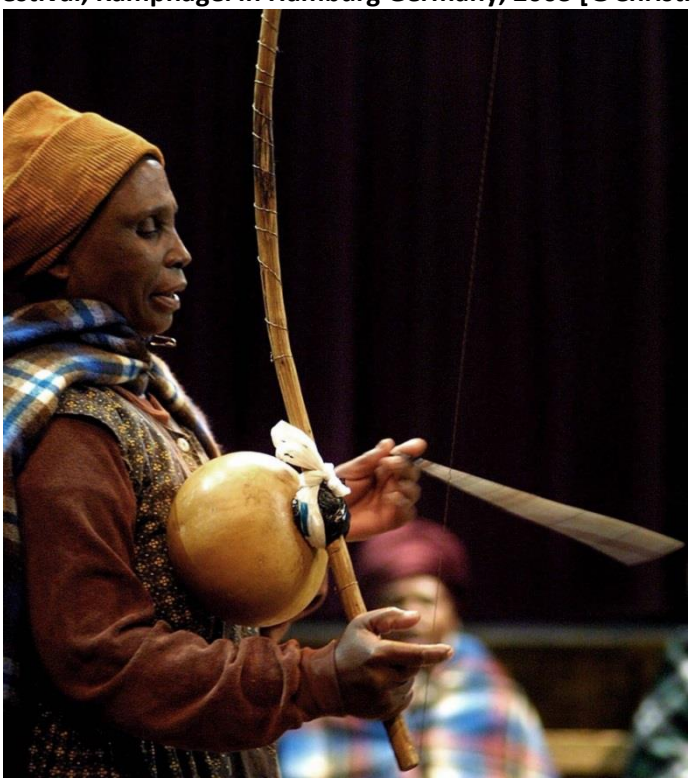
Dressed in customary clothing and painted with clay faces, the six women provide their "sonic wisdom" (Woods) through their traditional form of throat singing called *umngqokolo* that serves to frame each scene. In addition, they beat their hands on the stage floor and hum creating tension and a forward thrust to the action of the play and use calabash and mouth bows, jew harps, milking drums, and harmonicas to provide emotional underscoring to each scene. Farber likens the sound these women produce to the sounds one would hear "within the womb;" it is a kind of primal and primordial sound that recalls an "ancient truth" (Woods).

Figure 15. Members of the Ngqoko Cultural Group in a production of *Molora* at the Laokoon Festival, Kampnagel in Hamburg Germany, 2003 [©Christian Enger].

The chorus of *Molora* functions in the same manner as the chorus of ancient Greece, these women act as members of the larger community and as ideal spectators who represent the larger audience; in addition to underscoring the emotional content of the scenes through their singing and instrument playing, they function as silent witnesses to the testimony of Elektra and Klytemnestra. Farber envisions the group as a representation of the chorus of women that participated in the TRC hearings, the "matriarchs of South Africa, who would sit and stoically listen, and absorb the pain for the community" (Woods). Farber establishes the relationship between her chorus and the women who participated in the hearings early in the play when the chorus leader leaves her position within the

audience to uncover Agamemnon's grave, inciting the principle action of the play and encouraging the testimonies to begin.

Figure 16. The leader of the chorus of the Ngqoko Cultural Group in a production of *Molora* at the Laokoon Festival, Kampnagel in Hamburg Germany, 2003 [©Christian Enger].



At certain moments, Farber draws individual members out of the chorus to take on small roles as necessary to the action of the play (for instance, Ma Nosomething, the woman who takes Orestes in when he is spirited away from Argos, or the midwives who attend to Klytemnestra during her recurring nightmare in which she gives birth to a snake). While their role as the chorus is primarily to observe the action, Farber carefully selects three moments where the chorus interacts directly with the principle characters. The first occurs early in the play during a particularly brutal confrontation between mother and daughter: Elektra dashes behind the protective arms of the chorus to escape her mother's wrath and their communal chanting quells Klytemnestra's anger and soothes the frightened Elektra, foreshadowing the climax of *Molora* when they again intercede and stop Elektra from murdering her mother. Their second interaction occurs at mid-play as Orestes prepares to leave the village he was

raised in and sets out to enact his revenge. As they repeatedly throw themselves against him, they seem to test his strength and resolve (presumably in carrying out his plans); however, as they later intercede on Klytemnestra's behalf—their third and most prominent interaction with the principle characters—hindsight suggests that they were instead testing him in hopes that he would know when to exercise restraint.

The infrequency of their direct involvement in the action of the narrative makes these moments—particularly their decision to intercede on the revenge plan and spare Klytemnestra's life—all the more significant to the play and its themes. By stopping Elektra's hand in the final moments, the women have successfully broken the cycle of violence that plagues this family and their land. In celebration of their victory, the leader of the chorus steps forward with a message of peace and a prayer for South Africa. While Farber notes that the content of this prayer varies at each performance, the published edition of the script suggests the leader calls on the tribe names of the Xhosa people and leads them (and the audience) in a prayer for unity:

> I praise the Mbathanes
> I praise the Matshayas, the Xesibes
> I praise Bhomoyi
> Sophitsho, Ngqolomsila
> Yemyem
> I praise Gcaleka, Tshilo
> Mthi wembotyi
> I'm talking to my mother in particular, when I say that…
> I pray for unity between black and white
> We pray for our children
> That they may stop crime and killing each other
> We ask that the work that we are doing
> May we do it with success—and power
> And speak the truth. (85-6)

Weaving a Linguistic Tapestry of Suffering

In constructing a narrative of historical trauma, Farber utilizes the aesthetic device of a blended language, a mix between Xhosa and English, in crafting the dialogue of all of her principle characters, with the exception Klytemnestra (who speaks only English). The chorus of the NCG speaks in their native

Xhosa[35] and their dialogue is then translated into English by a member of the chorus who acts as an intermediary between them and the other characters as well as the audience. Farber's use of the language honors the NCG, an organization dedicated to maintaining native culture, and connects *Molora* with the rich cultural heritage of the Bantu people. In addition, the choice foregrounds the cultural and linguistic barriers that exist between South Africa's diverse population (both the native people and the descendants of Dutch and British colonial rule) and emphasizes the need for opening the lines of communication between South Africa's people in the wake of apartheid's collapse.

Farber further interrogates the complex meaning behind the choice in her characters of Elektra and Orestes, who move back and forth between Xhosa and English. In doing so, Farber echoes both their separation from their mother (who speaks only English) and the internal conflict each of these characters face: the Xhosa language represents the cultural history to which these characters belong while the English reflects the colonial nature of South Africa in which they were raised. In crafting the dialogue and speeches of Elektra and Orestes, Farber combines the effect of this choice with a heightened, poetic content that emphasizes a sense of responsibility to maintain the cultural heritage of the native populations. This quality is most felt during the reunion scene between Orestes and Elektra, at the site of their father's grave:

> *Entering the cemetery is the stranger who brought **ELEKTRA** the ashes of her brother. Throwing off his blanket, he kneels at her father's grave. He spits traditional beer in honour of the Ancestors, and lights Mphepo (the herb that is burnt when communing with the Ancestors).*
>
> **ORESTES:** Kuwe lizwe lam, nakuni Zinyanya.
> [TO YOU MY COUNTRY AND TO YOU MY ANCESTORS.]
> Receive me with good fortune in this journey.
> Halls of my fathers,
> Kuba ndize apha ukuza kufezekisa isenzo esibalulekileyo.

[35] While it is largely replaced by English as a main language following primary education, Xhosa remains one of the two most widely spoken Bantu languages in South Africa (Zulu being the other).

[I HAVE COME HER TO FULFIL AN IMPORTANT
TASK.]
Send me not dishonoured from the land, but grant that I take
back what is mine, and restore my house!
Ndiyanibongoza, sebenzisanani nam.
[PLEASE, WORK WITH ME.] (57)

When Elektra hears the stranger's prayer, she instantly recognizes him as her brother and claims him as "the pillar of the nation" in her native tongue (59). The siblings rejoice over their reunion and together pledge themselves to their revenge plan:

ORESTES: Ungalibali Tata, ungalibali Thongo lam
[DO NOT FORGET FATHER, DO NOT FORGET MY ANCESTOR]
that night that you were slaughtered.

*The **CHORUS** responds with a chanting refrain.*

CHORUS: Makubenjalo! [LET IT BE SO!]

ELEKTRA: Ungalibali Tata, ungalibali Thongo lam.
[DO NOT FORGET FATHER, DO NOT FORGET MY ANCESTORS.]

…

ELEKTRA: Through these tears I join his call.
In unison, our voices blend as one—hear us.
Yiba nathi xa silwayo neentshaba zethu.
[BE WITH US IN FIGHTING OUR ENEMIES.]
Umthetho mawuvelisa inyaniso.
[LET JUSTICE REVEAL THE TRUTH.] (62-3)

The content of the siblings' speeches, in conjunction with the use of their native tongue, captures a sense of ancient spiritualism and cultural heritage removed from the everyday English they use in most interactions with their mother, yet it also reveals the implications of their culture's colonial history.

The heteroglossia on display in *Molora* simultaneously underscores the sociopolitical circumstances inherent in the narrative and provides the performance of the piece with an interesting aesthetic soundscape. In *Speaking in Tongues: Languages at Play in the Theatre*, theatre scholar Marvin Carlson explores the theatre's history with heteroglossia, citing a vast array of examples from Greek tragedy, medieval theatre, Sanskrit drama, and continuing on into the modern age; he suggests that it is both the product of globalization and of the material conditions that define the theatre as a performed

(spoken) art. In this way, Farber's aesthetic reflects an understanding of the use of language in the ancient texts of the Greeks: the heightened, poetic rhetoric that marks the speeches of the characters in *The Oresteia* and its various versions provides a useful model for her adaptation. Farber capitalizes on this further by directly citing from her source texts, adapting whole lines and passages from translations of Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* and *The Libation Bearers* as well as Sophocles's and Euripides's *Electra* to suit her purposes.

In addition to drawing direct quotations from the original source texts, Farber employs familiar passages from other sources to reinforce the central themes in her play. During a particularly violent exchange between Klytemnestra and Elektra, the author turns to the Book of Genesis and the Curse of Ham to torment her black daughter:

> And Ham saw the nakedness of his father, and told his brethren without. And Shem and Japheth went backward; and their faces were backward, so that they saw not their father's nakedness. And when he awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger child had done unto him. He said…
>
> (*Reaching out for **ELEKTRA's** hand*.)
>
> Cursed be your children.
>
> *She pushes the burning tip of the cigarette into **ELEKTRA's** palm. **ELEKTRA** screams.*
>
> The servants of servants shall they be unto their brethren. The seed of your line shall be the carriers of water and the hewers of wood.
>
> *Straddling **ELEKTRA**, she pushes the burning tip into the side of her daughter's neck.*
> *Screaming, **ELEKTRA** tries to crawl away.*
>
> For the Lord thy God is a jealous God. And your dark descendants shall live in slavery… All the days of their lives. (32-3)

The Curse of Ham has long been used as a biblical justification for racial practices like apartheid. By juxtaposing this passage with the brutal act of violence, Farber establishes a correlation between the

immediate and specific trauma of apartheid on the individual (symbolized by the onstage torture of Elektra) and the long-term physical, emotional, and psychological abuses of slavery in general which have been justified through divine right. The complex image imbues the play with a universalizing sense of trauma whereby its resonance can be read outside the specific historical circumstances of the apartheid era.

Elektra's response to Klytemnestra's assault comes later in the play when Farber turns to Shakespeare in crafting a rhetoric response. Axe in hand, Elektra stands on top of the testimony table hovering over a helpless Klytemnestra and declares:

> If you prick us—do we not bleed?
> If you tickle us—do we not laugh?
> If you poison us—do we not die?
> And if you wrong us…
> Shall we not revenge? (72)

Shylock's speech in *The Merchant of Venice* is arguably one of Shakespeare's most widely known and oft-quoted passages. While the original speech centers on Shylock's hatred of Antonio because of the latter's perceived anti-Semitism, the sentiment holds true for any oppressed population and Farber adapts the meaning to account for Elektra's hatred of Klytemnestra, a hatred that—at least in part—originated from the racial divide that exists between them. In addition, Farber's use of the quote removes the play from its immediate historical circumstances of apartheid and extends the play's traumatic implications. Audience members familiar with Shakespeare's play or with the quote itself infer connections between the trauma endured by Elektra in *Molora* and in the more general trauma of religious persecution.

Aestheticizing Violence and its Remains

Imagery becomes an integral part of Farber's play, especially in constructing a parallel between the stage action and the historical trauma of apartheid. From her very first stage image—the leader of the chorus removing the shroud over Agamemnon's grave—Farber's play is rife with loaded imagery

that suggests thematic relevance. Principle among these themes is the cyclical nature of violence and retribution, a cycle that is only ended by the revision at the end of the play that sees Orestes and Elektra spare Klytemnestra's life. Part of the success of the moment when the chorus intercedes in Elektra's attempt to kill Klytemnestra depends on the audiences' familiarity with previous depictions of brutal violence in the play. The violent imagery is established early in the text just after the initial testimonies of Klytemnestra and Elektra. Scene two, "Murder," depicts the death of Agamemnon in front of young Elektra's eyes:

> ***KLYTEMNESTRA*** *wraps* ***ELEKTRA*** *in a blanket, embraces her as though in farewell, and then rises with determination. She grabs the end of the pickaxe that lies on the ground. She drags it behind her, in a trance. It scrapes audibly along the wooden platform. She head towards her testimony table.*
>
> **ELEKTRA:** Mama…where are you going?
> Mama…mama…?
> Where mama?
>
> ***KLYTEMNESTRA*** *climbs onto the table with the axe raised high above her head. She screams, and slams the axe onto the table. With this blow, she has struck her husband—Agamemnon—dead. She squats on the table and, scooping from an enamel bowl, covers her expressionless face, arms and hands in blood. She jumps from the table, and pulls at the plastic bundle hidden beneath it. The body of Agamemnon—played by the actor who will perform the part of* ***ORESTES****—is revealed.* ***ELEKTRA*** *screams. (26-7)*

The aesthetic choice to have Klytemnestra commit the murder on top of the testimony table and in plain view of her daughter is significant; the moment establishes the keen understanding Elektra has regarding her mother's sins and signals a connection between Klytemnestra's deeds and the atrocities to which she is asked to testify.

This correlation is made plain in a later scene where Elektra demands, in her own testimony, that her mother demonstrate the techniques she used to interrogate and dehumanize her. In addition to the earlier interrogation scene that takes place between the two—where Klytemnestra burns Elektra with cigarettes and quotes passages regarding the Curse of Ham—Elektra has her mother demonstrate the infamous "wet-bag" method of torture, a technique that was widely publicized during the public TRC

hearings following a display of the method during the amnesty hearing for Jeffrey Theodore Benzien, a former senior member of the Terrorist Detection Unit responsible for torturing and killing numerous political prisoners during apartheid:

> ***ELEKTRA*** *turns her back to* ***KLYTEMNESTRA*** *and lies, belly down, in front of her.* ***KLYTEMNESTRA*** *moves to* ***ELEKTRA*** *and straddles her. She takes a plastic bag from her pocket, places it over* ***ELEKTRA's*** *head, and pulls it tightly.* ***ELEKTRA*** *begins to suffocate…. As* ***ELEKTRA*** *starts to lose consciousness, and her desperate kicking fades—****KLYTEMNESTRA*** *suddenly pulls the bag from her head.* ***ELEKTRA*** *gasps for breath. (48)*

The scene continues as though it were really happening in the past, with Elektra responding to her mother's abuse. Farber's scene clarifies the violent nature of the relationship between the two women and directly connects the action of the play with the specific historical moment that engendered it. The integration of the visual representation of the wet-bag method firmly establishes a semiotic connection to the TRC hearings and one of the most widely seen images resulting from these hearings.

Farber continues to develop this violent imagery in a number of interesting ways, occasionally laying new meaning on top of images already established. Just after the siblings commit their loyalty to each other and to the plan of killing their mother, Klytemnestra returns to the testimony table where she killed Agamemnon, but this time she plays the role of victim. Seated on top of Elektra's table, Klytemnestra is carried center stage by the chorus into the next scene where she drunkenly dines with her murderous children before they set their plan into action. She is simultaneously the image of "a drunken Queen in her chariot" and "a sacrificial lamb" on her way to slaughter (66).

During the scene, Elektra continues her chores, which involve laundering Ayesthus's clothing and polishing his boots, while listening to her mother's drunken recollections of the night she killed Agamemnon. When Elektra reveals the clothing and boots to the audience, their "gargantuan" size "indicates the intimidating and enormous physical presence [Ayesthus] holds in the house" (68). Hanging the clothing on a hook, the audience can see how small Elektra looks in her stepfather's presence and the enormous shadow he and his actions cast over the house. During the scene,

Klytemnestra slightly alters the image when she picks up one of the giant boots and begins to playfully conjure Agamemnon's last steps on the night he died. Reliving the joy and relief she felt after the murder, Klytemnestra picks up Ayesthus's clothing and begins to dance, just as they did they night Agamemnon was killed (71).

Eventually, Klytemnestra drinks herself into oblivion and passes out on top of the table. When she stirs, Orestes lovingly carries her to her bed, represented by her own testimony table. In a ritualized gesture signaling the beginning of their plan, Elektra climbs on top of the table with the axe and together the siblings pray to their father and their ancestors and set the plan in motion (72). The image of Elektra on top of the table with the axe in hand is an overt reference to Klytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon which incited the drama; at this point in the play, the action has come full circle and established Elektra in her mother's murderous role.

After the ritual, Orestes sets off to murder his usurping stepfather in an extremely primal and violent scene, though the stylized nature of the murder does little to lessen the effect of the violence for the audience:

> *Out in the field,* ***ORESTES*** *breaks into a run. As the* ***CHORUS*** *sings,* ***ORESTES'*** *feet lift from the ground. Suspended (by stage device) he continues his long strides towards his destiny. He lifts the pickaxe and swings it above his head. His body is carried by the weight of the weapon, in fluid circular motions—until he strikes violently at Ayesthus' boots centre stage. The boots, filled with blood, spill their contents across the stage.* ***ORESTES*** *tears a large heart from one of the boots and stumbles backwards. (76)*

Orestes's actions in this scene are motivated by pure rage and a desperate bloodlust. His are the actions of a long suffering people, and his desire for blood reflects the kind of violent retribution that many expected in the years after the collapse of the apartheid system. Farber uses this image to begin to introduce the central point of her narrative; it is here where Ma Nosomething removes herself from the chorus and chastises Orestes for his actions, instructing him to "never kill again" (76), a warning that will eventually break the cycle of violence that plagues this family.

Farber mixes realistic depictions of violence with specific ties to her subject matter—the wet-bag method, Klytemnestra torturing Elektra with the lit cigarette—with moments of highly stylized, *aestheticized violence* "where stylistic presentation exceeds the narrative economy to such a degree as to become disruptive" (Bruder 4). The choice to aestheticize these significant moments of violence recalls the traditional stage practices of the Greeks—which kept violence off-stage and out of sight—and calls to mind Plato's fear that representations of immoral acts would corrupt the minds of the audience. In these latter moments (such as Klytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon atop the testimony table or Orestes's flying through the air and striking at a pair of blood-filled boots that stand in for the body of Ayesthus), the stylistic nature of the instances exceed the narrative frame in which they are placed and the author privileges the aesthetic form of the action. In essence, these images echo the inscription of traumatic circumstances on the psyche: they are removed from the traditional concerns of narrative storytelling, which favors logical progression and causality, and instead create a self-reflexive image of violence defined by its emotional/psychological basis.

In his essay "The Photographic Message" Roland Barthes interrogates this point, suggesting that images of trauma merely denote events and fail to "communicate how an event is experienced as traumatic" (Meek 115). However, Barthes wrote about photographs of real moments of trauma—"fires, shipwrecks, catastrophes, violent deaths" (30-31)—images that merely serve the purpose of proving an event actually happened; such images are akin to Farber's inclusion of the wet-bag or cigarette scenes, scenes that are included in the narrative to document the physical violence that occurred to individuals during this time. Barthes's discussion of such images does not extend to Farber's inclusion of the aesthetic moments of violence that instead attempt to capture the emotional and psychological experience of the trauma. Rather than *denoting* the existence of specific events, these instances *connote* the internal experience of the characters and suggest how the traumatic circumstances were felt.

Orestes's decision to spare his mother's life and the chorus' role in stopping Elektra from completing the murder give way to Farber's most haunting image: as Klytemnestra completes her testimony before the TRC hearings, "a fine powdery substance"—ash—begins to fall upon the company from above:

KLYTEMNESTRA: It falls softly the residue of revenge…
Like rain.
And we who made the sons and daughters of this land,
servants in halls of their forefathers…
We know.
We are still only here by grace alone.
Look now—dawn is coming.
Great chains on the home are falling off.
This house rises up.
For too long it has lain in ash on the ground. (87)

Farber establishes ash as a recurring motif in the play, first introduced in scene ten, aptly titled "Ash," when Orestes pretends to deliver his own ashes to his mother as a sign her son has died. Upon receiving the ashes, Klytemnestra opens the tin and allows them to pour through her fingers as though she needed further proof of Orestes's death ["Now I know—the stock of our ancient masters is perished, root and branch. And the ancient bloodline is blotted out" (54)]. Angered at the heartless nature of her mother's response, Elektra lunges for the ashes and the women struggle over them. When Elektra wins the battle, she runs away with the ashes to her father's grave to mourn the death of her brother and the death of her hope for the nation ["With these ashes I cry for my nation…. My dream, my hope, / Our future is now ash…. Our future is ash!" (56)].

In the foreword to the play, Farber discusses the creation of ash as the play's central image. As she sees it, ash is the only universal constant; we live and we die and when we do our bodies slowly become ash and are given back to the earth that birthed us:

> *Molora* is an examination of the spirals of violence begat by vengeance, and the breaking of such cycles by the ordinary man.
>
> In the long nights following the devastating attack on the World Trade Centre, amid the grief, recriminations and the Bush administration's indiscriminate wielding of revenge, a fine white powdery substance gently floated down upon heart-broken New York.

> Our story begins with a handful of cremated remains that Orestes delivers to his mother's door…
>
> From the ruins of Hiroshima, Baghdad, Palestine, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Bosnia, the concentration camps of Europe and modern-day Manhattan—to the remains around the fire after the storytelling is done…
>
> *Molora* (the Sesotho word for 'ash') is the truth we must all return to, regardless of what faith, race or clan we hail from. (8)

The ash Farber saw after the attacks of September 11, 2001 was a mix of debris from the collapsing buildings and the residue of burning paper and human remains. Ash was the material end of an extreme act of violence, and it is this image that inspired her work on *Molora.* If fire is one of the four basic elements in classical thought, ash is its legacy. This is the sentiment Elektra expresses at her father's grave:

> Take me as nothing into your nothingness, that I may live with you—
> Emgodnini [IN THE GROUND].
> Kuba emhlabeni besimntu mnye, nasekufeni makube njalo.
> [BECAUSE ON EARTH WE WERE ONE, EVEN IN DEATH LET IT BE SO.] (56-7)

Farber's image questions the end result of meeting violence with violence, "fire with fire" (Woods): in a world where one violent assault is met with the promise of an equal violent reprisal, what can be the result? The play dramatizes this notion and explores the idea of *The Oresteia* as "a metaphor for how we implode as a tribe, and how we destroy ourselves, our own blood from within, when we engage in such acts of violence" (Woods). While Farber's play examines a specific historical moment, its message is far more universal; in essence, Farber's play is rewriting a history, not only of *The Oresteia* or of South African apartheid or even of slavery in general, but the history of violent retribution and vengeance. *Molora* challenges the concept of "eye for eye, tooth for tooth," a concept Farber casts not "as some divinely ordained rate of exchange" but as "a warning that no profit can possibly come from violence" (Woods).

INTEROGATING THE TRAUMA OF APARTHEID THROUGH ADAPTATION

While thematically related to the trauma explored by Rita Dove in the previous chapter, Yael Farber's *Molora* engages with a historical trauma with far more immediate material circumstances. South African apartheid is, itself, a modern trauma originating in the twentieth century: 150 years separate modern audiences from the era of American slavery yet we are barely one generation removed from the final years of apartheid. As a result, for many victims and victimizers, memories of the period have yet to fade and for those who watched or read about the TRC hearings, images connected with the practice of apartheid continue to linger.

In many ways, audiences have gained little distance from the horrors of this trauma and the emotional responses that accompany its memory. As we saw in the previous chapter, representations of this period are infrequent and only in the last five years have such representations moved into the mainstream with films like *District 9* (2009) and *Invictus* (2009), both of which happen to be adaptations. *District 9*, like its short-film source material *Alive in Joburg* (2005), is a science-fiction based allegory to the events that took place in District Six, Cape Town which saw the relocation of over 60,000 black Africans when the district was declared whites-only in 1966. *Invictus*, based on the John Carlin book *Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation* (2008), is a fictionalized account of the events that surround the 1995 Rugby World Cup in South Africa. It should be noted that neither film deals overtly with apartheid or the TRC hearings, choosing instead to frame their discussion of apartheid-related themes in the material circumstances of the science-fiction and sports-film genres.

Like these films, Farber's text avoids tackling this period head-on, choosing instead to adapt the familiar story of *The Oresteia* as a way of addressing the period. In doing so, Farber creates a carefully constructed framework for her audience to experience her message: while the story is steeped in the material circumstances of the TRC hearings in post-apartheid South Africa, the narrative is that of the classic tragedy. The effect of this choice is two-fold: for audiences unfamiliar with the myth, like the

tribal women of the NCG, the play is an allegory for the divided nation with the two women—Elektra and Klytemnestra—representing the racial divide between the black African majority and the white former-ruling minority. However, for those "in the know," as the majority of theatre audiences would be, Farber has written a beautifully moving version of the familiar Greek tragedy and interwoven racially-charged themes into its complicated plot structure.

Given the emotional and psychological immediacy of the trauma of apartheid, Farber's decision to adapt the familiar narrative is prudent. The play's status as an adaptation allows its audience to organize their experience in a familiar framework while still experiencing an empathic connection with the play's central characters. Individuals witnessing the events unfolding on the page or on the stage are asked to draw logical analogies between the known narrative of *The Oresteia* and the events surrounding apartheid, thereby avoiding retraumatization and traumatic transmission (as the events that unfold are easily compartmentalized in line with a basic understanding of the events in *The Oresteia*). In addition, the dramaturgical structure of the play continues to privilege an empathic relationship between the characters and the audience, a relationship that is strengthened by the use of direct address inherent in the characters' individual testimonies about their experiences. Audiences are thereby tasked with working through the themes Farber entwines in her narrative, both on an emotional and logical level, mimicking the therapeutic aims of trauma treatment.

Farber's decision to craft each of her principle characters as simultaneously sympathetic and unsympathetic provides her narrative with the flexibility necessary to avoid traumatic essentialism. The play avoids representing an authentic, essential trauma—for example, that of Elektra who suffered at the hands of her mother—by conceiving of the trauma of this period in broader terms. Instead, the trauma of apartheid reaches victim, victimizer, and witness in equal measure and Farber is careful to show her audience how each of her characters—Elektra, Orestes, Klytemnestra, and the chorus—have been affected. The multiple layers of subjectivity within the play's narrative are further enhanced by the

multiple subjectivities that went into its development and performance. As a white South African playwright, Farber brings a unique point of view to the creation of her playtext and its themes, yet she is only one of many authors involved in the creation of *Molora*. Her decision to afford the members of the NCG with so much agency in crafting the play and the decision to incorporate their presence into its performance adds an entirely different perspective to the piece. The play is truly the product of a complex community and as such it avoids presenting a limited perspective on apartheid.

A subsidiary effect of the adaptive nature of the text is the universalizing aspect it provides the play. While Farber's vision for the story emphasizes it as a product of a particular time and for a particular community, the familiarity of the narrative allows the text to resonate meaning beyond its apartheid themes. This would explain the success of the play outside of South Africa as it toured the globe following its commercial run in Johannesburg in 2007. One of the primary affordances adaptation as a practice provides is an ability to convey meaning between cultures. By altering the material circumstances of a given text—signified through its setting and character relationships—the themes that make up that text take on a fluidity that allows them to cross cultural divides. For example, while not an adaptation as defined in the preceding chapters, Arthur Miller's 1983 production of *Death of a Salesman* in Beijing illustrates this point and has become arguably one of the most significant performances of all time.[36] Performed by Chinese actors in their native language, Miller's play about the complicated relationships between fathers and sons was well received by its audience as the themes it referenced are universal.

While they are materially linked to South Africa's apartheid, the themes of retribution and forgiveness that Farber explores in *Molora* extend beyond the temporal and spatial limitations of this period. Yes, the play serves a role in documenting the historical record of this specific period—inscribing its message of forgiveness and its prayers for peaceful healing in the very fabric of its cultural heritage

[36] As a translation, the production is certainly adaptive.

(through the characterization of the chorus and its connection to the native people of South Africa)—but it also establishes itself as an emblem of peace: the mixing of cultures and languages within its dramaturgy, combined with the audiences' awareness of the adaptive nature of the narrative (and the many playtexts that make up the constellation of *The Oresteia*), both aid in the establishment of the universal quality of the play and its themes.

CONCLUSIONS

By examining the specific moment of apartheid and the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Yael Farber's *Molora* explores the nature of violence and reprisal—themes that exist within the original narrative of *The Oresteia*—and presents an antithetical example to the traditionally held wisdom of "an eye for an eye." In Farber's hands, the play serves as a reminder of the end result when we allow ourselves to forget that we are a global community and that our humanity depends on our ability to treat others with respect. The structural and aesthetic choices Farber makes in crafting her play, particularly those instances where she adapts aspects of the original narrative in unexpected ways, reveals the affordances the constellation image of *The Oresteia* offers to authors engaging with historical trauma.

Farber's setting of the play within the hearing rooms of the TRC—an intimate locale where actors and audience occupy the same space—illustrates a direct connection between the play and the concept of the collective experience of a particular historical trauma. The public TRC hearings were established to give voice to a national pain, where individual experience could be shared in a context that saw it as representative of the communal trauma experienced during the apartheid years. By bringing victim and victimizer together in front of their peers and the cameras that carried their message to the nation, the TRC hearings explored the trauma of apartheid as a historical trauma, one that left no one untouched. Farber integrates actor and audience within just such a frame, creating a physical

metaphor for the unity that the TRC hearings hoped to foster. While the success of the TRC has been widely debated and ultimately many people believe it failed in its mission for reconciliation,[37] Farber's play reflects the idealism and hope that ushered in the end of apartheid in South Africa. The play's final two scenes—the prayer for peace by the leader of the chorus and Klytemnestra's final testimony (her statement about grace and remembering the crimes of the past)—echo the concerns of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: a lofty hope for unity between black and white and a solemn promise that the past will not be forgotten.

The dramaturgy of Farber's play expands on this theme. As the author elects to stage the drama as an episodic memory play within a larger frame that takes place in the context of the TRC hearings, we must consider trauma as not locked away in the past but as an integral part of the present. Klytemnestra and Elektra seethe with anger and bitterness as they recall their experiences to us: as the memories unfold, they become tainted by the traumatic nature of the past and colored by the emotional turmoil each speaker experiences. These memories are often heightened—for instance, the highly stylized representations of violence or Ayesthus's gargantuan yet unseen presence—and the emotions attached to these memories are similarly intensified, leading to even more startling memories. The characters cannot move on from their pain until these memories are worked through and the power they maintain over the individual is relinquished.

While each character struggles with external forces working against them, it is often the internal struggles that cause them the most suffering. Klytemnestra recognizes her own misdeeds and it is this recollection that allows her to testify before the TRC; yet she also acknowledges her own inability to choose a different course: as she sees it, her actions were justified given the circumstances in which she found herself. That is not to say that the justification in any way lessened the emotional toll such actions

[37] See "Submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Survivors' Perceptions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Suggestions for the Final Report."

cause; as a mother, Klytemnestra longs to nurture her children, but finds herself unable to deal with her rage against her husband. Similarly, Elektra finds herself torn between her hatred of Klytemnestra and her desire for a mother's love. Both women struggle to integrate the composite parts of their selves as their desires not only conflict with their individual worldviews but also with each other. Their physical struggles—both internal and with each other--mimic the divide the psyche experiences when confronted with a trauma it cannot fully understand.

Farber expands on the individual experience of Klytemnestra and Elektra in her creation of Orestes, elevating the personal trauma experienced by individuals to the trauma experienced by the nation. Raised by the chorus, Orestes comes to stand for a new imagined nation that reclaims the cultural heritage of the country, a culture that was forcibly and traumatically denied by the apartheid system. His struggle to cope with the imperative that is fated to him—to avenge his father's death—comes in direct opposition to the values of the moral culture in which he was raised (to value life). By revising his own fate and choosing to spare Klytemnestra, Orestes allows himself to rejoin the chorus and to preach their central lesson of peace and forgiveness not only to Elektra but also to the audience.

Conceived in line with ancient Greek tradition, Farber's chorus is envisioned as an extension of the larger community and therefore becomes its representative within the action of the drama. Made up of members from the Ngqoko Cultural Group, the chorus not only fills this need but also carries with them a sense of the cultural history of the country: they are the guardians of the culture that was threatened by apartheid practices, a culture that must be reclaimed and respected. The inclusion of the NCG in both the writing and performance of *Molora* foregrounds this idea and the play becomes a tentative step toward documenting and valuing this culture.[38]

[38] I say tentative as it would be inappropriate to assume that the "culture" on display in *Molora* be treated as authentic to and representative of the Xhosa peoples of South Africa. While the NCG's stated goal is to maintain the indigenous practices of this area, the area is home to over eight million people broken up into hundreds of different tribes, all with their own unique languages and cultural practices. In effect, the play

In discussing her attraction to the source text, Farber points toward Greek tragedy's "eerie ability to show us just how far we haven't come in two and a half millennia" (Woods). In essence, Farber is commenting on *The Oresteia*'s constellatory and adaptive nature: the text provides authors with a blueprint for modern concepts of revenge and retribution fueled by racism, nationalism, and globalization. Believing these concepts to be inherently flawed and ultimately self-destructive, Farber capitalizes on the text's associated meanings by envisioning her adaptation as an allegory to South Africa's apartheid. *Molora* challenges the nature of revenge and retribution by rewriting the play's narrative history and providing a concrete example of a different model: one that ends the cycle of violence and suggests a course that privileges peace and understanding. Drawing on the familiarity of *The Oresteia* and its status as an example of historical trauma—one that addresses issues of violent retribution and internal conflict—Farber crafts a compelling and highly original drama that communicates specific contemporary concerns while situating itself within a long history of adaptations of *The Oresteia.*

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produces an extremely limited idea of this culture, one that has been subsequently meditated to suit the needs of Farber's Western-inspired dramaturgical needs.

CHAPTER SIX
TOO MUCH MEMORY

> The play itself is a timeless story. The drive to fight oppression. The need to sometimes die for a deep belief. I'd love audiences to see this play and ask themselves, is an act of breaking the law ever justified. When does one become a terrorist, a fanatic in fulfilling ones [sic] beliefs. And on the other hand, does the government ever have the right to take away personal liberties for a greater good?
> —Keith Reddin, author of *Too Much Memory* (Talbott)

INTRODUCTION

In March of 2003, actor/director Meg Gibson looked on as her niece and her friends decided to protest the invasion of Iraq in New York City. Not allowed to march, they stood in pens that were patrolled by police and several were arrested when they moved outside the pen. In a December 2008 interview with Daniel Talbott of *nytheatre.com*, Gibson explains that while the charges were dropped, "the experience was so devastating that many of them said they would never protest again. The government had sufficiently silenced them." Gibson goes on to explain that the experience was so dissimilar to her own memory of the protests of the 1960s; in the article, she compares it to her recollection of reading the transcript of Tom Hayden's testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee:[39] "I realized how fragile Democracy was and that a constant dialogue was crucial for our freedoms to be maintained, to guarantee our voice, no matter how severe the crisis."

In response, Gibson and her husband, fellow playwright/actor Keith Reddin, turned toward Jean Anouilh's adaptation of Sophocles's *Antigone* for inspiration: "with the attack of 9/11, the subsequent war, our limited ability to protest [the Bush] administration, The Homeland Security Act, the illegal wiretapping, adapting the play was the only voice I had" (Talbott). Their adaptation, *Too Much Memory*, resets *Antigone* in the present of 2008, in the final years of the Bush administration. More than a simple retelling of Anouilh's adaptation, "the play is a contemporary collage of mythology and modernity

[39] Hayden is an American social and political activist who was at one time married to Jane Fonda. He was called to testify before HUAC for his involvement in organizing the protest at the 1968 Democratic Party National Convention.

incorporating texts [from the Vietnam era] by Richard Nixon, Tom Hayden, Peter Brook, Anne Carson, Pablo Neruda, Susan Sontag, and Hannah Arendt" (Rising Phoenix Repertory and Piece by Piece Productions Press Release).

Too Much Memory premiered in August of 2008 at the New York City Fringe Festival, in the final heated months of the presidential elections that would decide the next chapter in America's history. Following its critically and commercially successful run at the Fringe Festival, which resulted in the play winning the Overall Excellence Award for Outstanding Play, *Too Much Memory* was given a full-scale off-Broadway production at the Fourth Street Theatre. Critics heralded its "decidedly modern and highly inventive take on the classic Greek story" (Sommer) and labeled it "a truly honest, tough but fair, and remarkably intelligent play" (Stanislawski), calling particular attention to the play's resonance to the heavily mediatized landscape of the 2008 presidential elections:

> In an age of being bashed over the head with so-called facts, facts that often overlook the truth of the matter, facts that are given a spin to benefit who is speaking them, it is important that theatre such as [*Too Much Memory*] be seen and discussed by as many people as possible. (Freeman)

In this chapter, I explore *Too Much Memory* and its connections to its source texts in addition to the moment of historical trauma that surrounds the writing of Reddin and Gibson's play. As in previous chapters, I begin the analysis with a short summary of the play's primary source text, Sophocles's *Antigone*. Next, I examine several twentieth century adaptations of *Antigone* to illustrate how Reddin and Gibson's work situates itself within the trend of adapting this narrative with an eye toward moments of historical trauma. In the following section, I examine the social context surrounding the play—including the attacks of 9/11, the signing of the U.S.A. Patriot Act,[40] the far-reaching anti-terrorism policies of the Bush administration, the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the resulting armed conflict, and the

[40] The name U.S.A. Patriot Act is a bacronym standing for Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism.

media landscape that surrounds these events—before finally turning focus to an in-depth analysis of the playtext (its setting, plot and structural alterations, character construction, language, and imagery).

THE ORIGINAL NARRATIVE: *ANTIGONE*

In the wake of King Oedipus's death, his sons Eteocles and Polynices are intended to share the rule of Thebes; however, conflict between the brothers escalates into an all-out civil war leaving both dead on the fields outside the city. The rule of Thebes passes to Creon, Jocasta's brother (Oedipus's uncle and brother-in-law), who decrees that Eteocles deserves a state funeral while Polynices should be treated as a traitor and left to rot on the battlefield. Mourning their brothers' deaths, Antigone and Ismene meet at the palace gates and discuss Creon's ruling and Antigone finally decides that she will ignore the decree and bury her brother despite Ismene's refusal to help.

Antigone sneaks onto the field and symbolically buries Polynices by sprinkling a layer of dirt over his decaying body. When Creon is alerted to the betrayal of his order, he demands that the culprit be found out. Sentries are dispatched to uncover the body and are hidden around the field to catch anyone who attempts to visit the gravesite or rebury the corpse. When Antigone returns, she is captured, brought before Creon, and confesses to disobeying his law. Creon attempts to persuade her to abide by his rule so that she can follow through on her forthcoming marriage to his son Haemon, yet she remains firm in her decision to disobey him. Ismene comes forward and, wishing to die alongside her sister, falsely confesses to aiding in the crime despite Antigone's protestations.

Creon orders the women imprisoned and discusses Antigone's fate with his son who eventually vows to die alongside her. Creon backtracks slightly, ordering her entombed alive, causing Antigone to ask the gods to curse him. Following Antigone's burial, illness breaks out in Thebes and Tiresias, the blind prophet, pleads with Creon to release her and to bury Polynices. According to Tiresias, Haemon will be taken from him should Creon fail. The chorus joins Tiresias in his plea and Creon relents, but these actions come too late. A messenger arrives and reveals that both Antigone had Haemon have

taken their own lives. Upon hearing the news, Creon accepts responsibility for both deaths just before a second messenger arrives and reveals that Eurydice (Creon's wife) has also committed suicide in the wake of her son's death.

HISTORICAL TRAUMA AND THE ADAPTATION OF *ANTIGONE*

As with the other plays discussed in earlier chapters, *Antigone* has enjoyed centuries of adaptations since Sophocles's version appeared around 441 B.C.E. The story thrived particularly in eighteenth century Italian opera: according to the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama, at least thirteen different operatic versions appeared between 1717 and 1799, including versions by Giuseppe Maria Orlandini, Baldassare Galuppi, and Michele Mortellari. In the twentieth century, playwrights across the globe turned to the narrative to discuss moments of localized armed conflict and the ongoing struggle between the individual and the state, beginning with German Expressionist playwright Walter Hasenclever's post-World War I version for which he won the Kleist Prize in 1917.

Hasenclever's play takes on the fractured world of Germany following the Great War and functions as "an opportunity to study fascism as a moral philosophy determining crucial political actions" (Elwood 49). Given Germany's central position in the twentieth century theatre of war, Hasenclever's play serves as a model for other adaptions of the *Antigone* narrative throughout the early and mid-twentieth century. Among the most known of such adaptations are Anouilh's 1942 version, which premiered at the Théâtre de l'Atelier toward the end of the Nazi occupation of Paris, and Brecht's post-World War II version, *Die Antigone des Sophokles* (*The Antigone of Sophocles*, 1947), which premiered in Switzerland. Both Anouilh and Brecht's versions expand upon themes Hasenclever first utilized and function as "a warning to the German people that lusting for power would eventually destroy the state" (Elwood 49).

Perhaps responding to the success Anouilh and Brecht found with their adaptations of the narrative, later twentieth century playwrights began to experiment with the narrative's adaptability to

their own local culture and history. In 2011, Dr. Robert Cardullo published *Antigone Adapted*, an anthology of two previously unpublished plays—*Antigona* (1959) by Dominik Smole and *La Pasión Según Antigona Pérez* (*The Passion of Antigona Pérez,* 1968) by Dr. Luis Rafael "Wico" Sánchez—that revisit the *Antigone* story and explore "the conflicts of idealism versus practicality, of humane values as opposed to human order, and of individual rights versus the rights of the state" but investigate these themes inherent to Sophocles's original through a "prism [of]…the common experience of [their] twentieth-century audience" (Cardullo 4).

Smole, a celebrated Slovenian writer and playwright, revisited the story at the height of his country's socialist period, transforming the characters into "carriers of modern philosophical thought and human values" (*Slovene National Theatre Maribor*). Smole removes Antigone from the main action of the play, turning her journey throughout the narrative into one of self-discovery in the face of the height of socialism and industrialization in Slovenian history. In particular, Smole's play establishes a parallel line of action between the *Antigone* narrative and the politically motivated assassination of 12,000 members of the Slovenian Home Guard, ordered by the Communist authorities, in the summer of 1945 (Cardullo 88). The Koĉevski Rog massacre, as it would come to be called, saw members of the Guard and their families sealed into pits and caves lined with explosives that were then detonated. Given Antigone's politically motivated suicide inside the cave, the narrative provides Smole with an incredibly fertile vehicle for dealing with the massacre.

Set in a fictionalized Latin American nation, Sánchez's play, *La Pasión Según Antigona Pérez*, depicts Antigona and her dead brothers as freedom fighters standing up to the dictator Creon. In the play, Sánchez draws a parallel relationship between the heroine Antigona and Olga Viscal Garriga, an outspoken member of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party and a proponent of Puerto Rican independence. Garriga was arrested in 1950 after participating in a demonstration that turned violent. She failed to cooperate with the United States' prosecution and was imprisoned for contempt of court

after refusing to recognize U.S. authority over Puerto Rico. Perhaps inspired by Sánchez's play, Griselda Gambaro, an Argentine novelist and playwright, created her own version of the narrative in 1986 entitled *Antigona Furiosa* (*Furious Antigona*). Gambaro's play tackles the Argentinian Dirty War, a period of state-sponsored terrorism between 1976 and 1983 that saw the disappearance of thousands of individuals after a military coup d'état in 1975.

Two African versions of the *Antigone* narrative provide a more detailed picture of how the text has been transformed to suit the needs of audiences across the globe. Athol Fugard, along with his fellow writers John Kani and Winston Ntshona, chose the narrative as a reference for his 1972 play *The Island.* Set during apartheid, the play tells the story of two inmates who spend their evenings rehearsing Sophocles's play for an upcoming performance for the inmates at the prison. Modeled after the infamous Robben Island, the prison that housed Nelson Mandela for nearly three decades, Fugard's play examines the relationship between Antigone's story and the fate of the two men, both imprisoned for political reasons.

The second African *Antigone*, *Noces posthumes de Santigone* (*Black Wedding Candles for Blessed Antigone*, 1988) by Congolese writer Sylvain Bembas sets the action of *Antigone* against the backdrop of Amandla, a fictionalized former British colony struggling to cope with the socioeconomic hardships left to many of the African nations. Bembas's play explores Africa's colonial history and the massive influence colonization has had on the indigenous cultures of the continent: "Bemba focuses on the social and political realities of central Africa and how *Antigone* both reflects the horror of living in such a world and provides an example of how to respond [through an individual commitment to justice]" (Wetmore 207-8).

As a vehicle, the *Antigone* narrative has traversed the globe and worked its way into the stories of many different countries and cultures. Each new version of the tale assumes a new position when investigating the relationship between the individual and their state and each play evokes similar

themes to those Sophocles established centuries ago on the Athenian stage. Each of the examples included above, and there are certainly many more that could be included, demonstrate how contemporary playwrights have claimed Antigone as a champion of individual responsibility and re-envisioned the character as a modern heroine, willing to stand against the tide of her society in the name of justice and human rights. Whether dealing with the more localized threat of civil war or the danger of global conflict, each play addresses shared themes of civil disobedience and civic responsibility. Written in part as a response to the signing of the U.S.A. Patriot Act, Keith Reddin and Meg Gibson insert their adaptation, *Too Much Memory*, into the ongoing dialogue about personal responsibility and civic engagement in the post-9/11 sociopolitical climate of the United States.

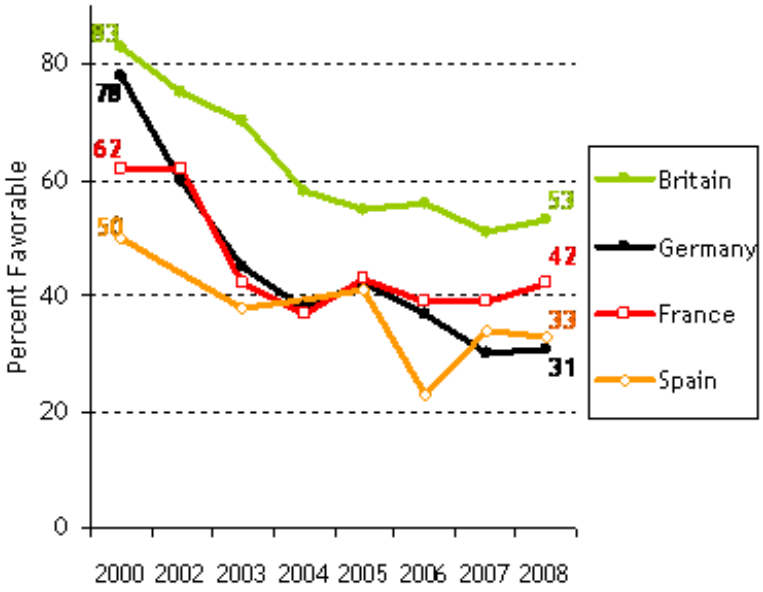
CONTEXTUALIZING *TOO MUCH MEMORY*: U.S. RESPONSE TO 9/11 AND THE WAR ON TERROR

For many people, the twentieth century ended at 8:46 am on September 11, 2001 when American Airline Flight 11, en route from Boston to Los Angeles, crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Over the next hour and seventeen minutes, three other planes were hijacked by members of the Taliban: United Airlines Flight 175 crashed into the South Tower of the World Trade Center at 9:03 am, American Airlines Flight 77 hit the Pentagon at 9:37 am, and United Airlines Flight 93 crash landed in a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania en route to the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.

After the attacks, the United States, under the steerage of the Bush administration, undertook a course of action that would result in a general sense of mistrust in the United States government and its intelligence agencies and massive ill will between the U.S. and many of its former foreign allies. A little over two weeks after the attacks, President Bush formally announced his administration's new attitude toward terrorist activities in a speech given to a joint session of Congress: "Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists." This "with us or against us" mentality became the cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy throughout the remainder of Bush's eight years in office and drastically influenced U.S. favorability across the globe (Fig. 17). In the speech,

Bush also announced the appointment of Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge to the Office of Homeland Security, a new cabinet-level position that was later expanded into the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

Figure 17. Global Public Opinion in the Bush Years according to Pew Global Attitudes in December 2008 (pewglobal.org).



Immediately after the attacks, the administration began crafting the legislation that would provide them the power to investigate and prevent suspected terrorist activity. On September 14, 2001, three days after the attack, a joint resolution in Congress authorized President Bush:

> to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons. (Public Law 107-40)

Just days later, the Department of Justice published an interim regulation allowing individuals suspected of terrorist activities to be detained without charge provided they be non-citizens, a regulation that was used to investigate and imprison individuals prior to the passing of the controversial U.S.A. Patriot Act on October 24, 2001. This act gave new powers to law enforcement to investigate and prevent suspected terrorist activities both domestic and abroad.

Less than a month after the attacks, Bush exercised his power and ordered bombing to commence in Afghanistan, home to Osama bin Laden—the presumptive orchestrator of the attacks—and his Taliban regime. By the end of the year, U.S. forces defeated the Taliban in Afghanistan in the battle of Tora Bora, driving them southward into Pakistan. Despite bin Laden's escape, U.S. attention turned elsewhere in early 2002 and the Bush administration began to build its case to take the War on Terror into Iraq. In his first official[41] State of the Union address, Bush set his sights on Iraq, Iran, and North Korea—"an axis of evil"—and presented a budget to Congress that reflected the "largest increase in defense spending in two decades" (Bush). Later that year, Bush signaled the beginning of his administration's knee-jerk policy in response to terrorism in a speech to the graduating class at West Point:

> We cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best. We cannot put our faith in the word of tyrants, who solemnly sign non-proliferation treaties, and then systemically break them. If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long. Homeland defense and missile defense are part of stronger security, and they're essential priorities for America. Yet the war on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act.

Many felt this preemptive strategy "would be unprecedented—a violation of the U.N. charter and a reversal of nearly 200 years of U.S. policy of acting only in response to an attack or the immediate threat of an attack" (Yang). This so-called "Bush Doctrine" of preemptive action was made into official policy on September 17, 2002, just over a year after the initial terrorist attacks.

Throughout 2002, the Bush administration pushed forward with its plans to expand the War on Terror into Iraq and began suggesting it had intelligence that linked the Iraqi government to Al-Qaeda, a militant Islamist organization founded by Osama bin Laden; they claimed that this evidence indicated that Iraq was pursuing the creation of weapons of mass destruction. Despite the Iraqi government's insistence that it had no such weapons and the ongoing debate and criticism toward U.S. involvement in

[41] Bush had previously given a speech on February 27, 2001 that many people consider the first.

Iraq, the Bush administration did not relent in its pursuit of establishing a military presence in the country, nor did it agree to reveal the source of the intelligence that linked the Iraqi government to the terrorist cells. Tensions between the U.S. and the United Nations Security Council escalated toward the end of the year when the White House presented Congress with a draft of a resolution that gave the President the power:

> to use all means that he determines to be appropriate, including force, in order to enforce the United Nations Security Council Resolutions referenced above, defend the national security interests of the United States against the threat posed by Iraq, and restore international peace and security in the region. (France-Presse)

By the end of the year, Congress had approved of Bush's new powers and Saddam Hussein, Iraq's President, had invited U.N. inspectors into the country to investigate the allegations that they were hiding weapons of mass destruction. In November of 2002, U.N. inspectors arrived in Baghdad and began to investigate the claims.

Over the next four months, the tensions grew between the U.S. and the United Nations after frequent requests from the U.N. to share the intelligence regarding Iraq and the alleged weapons of mass destruction were refused by the U.S. government. As time passed, more and more reports emerged indicating no connection between Iraq and Al-Qaeda could be found by the U.N. Security Council or their investigators. In January of 2003, Germany and France jumped into the fray, indicating their intensions to oppose U.S. action in Iraq and signaling a definitive break with the goodwill the U.S. had maintained with its former allies; seen as a betrayal by many Americans, this action gave birth to significant anti-French sentiments within the United States, most prominently exemplified by an order within the cafeterias of the House of Representatives to remove all references to french fries and french toast from their menus.[42]

[42] The March 2003 order was designed by Representatives Robert W. Ney (R-Ohio), Chairman of the Committee on House Administration, which oversees restaurant operations for the chamber.

On February 5, 2003, the State Department finally relented and turned over the now infamous Niger Documents to the United Nation's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The documents, which were later proved to be forgeries, indicated that Saddam Hussein had attempted to purchase uranium ore from Niger in opposition of U.N. sanctions. That same day, Secretary of State Colin Powell appeared before the U.N. Security Council to justify the United States' position that military force was needed to ensure that Iraq comply with Resolution 1441, a resolution that provided Hussein's Iraqi government a final chance to comply with the disarmament obligations previously set forward in earlier resolutions. Powell's remarks were predicated on misleading information—such as the Niger Documents—and his speech was later regarded as an attempt to mislead the U.N. into supporting the invasion of Iraq.[43]

Over the next few weeks, military action began to seem inevitable leading to massive dissent and anti-war sentiments across the globe. On February 15, 2003, a coordinated protest saw as many as thirty million people gather in major cities across the globe to protest the war. Despite the growing opposition, the United States continued to push for war with Iraq. In a televised speech on March 17, 2003, President Bush acknowledged that, while many of the governments within the U.N. "share our assessment of the danger" posed by Iraq, they do not share "our resolve to meet it." In the speech, the President declared "the United Nations Security Council has not lived up to its responsibilities, so we will rise to ours" and proceeded to level an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein: leave Iraq within forty-eight hours or a military conflict would ensue. Less than two hours after the deadline passed, bombing began in Baghdad and the war with Iraq had officially begun.

[43] Powell later referred to the speech as a "blot on his record" (Weisman).

THE TRAUMA OF 9/11 AND THE WAR ON TERROR

The trauma of September 11, 2001 and the resulting War on Terror are, in many respects, boundless and indefinite. In addition to those individuals who lost their lives during the initial terrorist attacks and their loved ones who mourned them, thousands of rescue workers and first-hand witnesses to the attacks were left to continue to live their lives in the aftermath of what they had seen. Millions of people across the country and around the world bore witness to the attacks on live television and then continued to watch as they were played over and over again on news channels in the days and weeks after the attacks. In addition, there were the soldiers who were sent off to Afghanistan and Iraq to hunt down those responsible, many of whom lost their lives in battle, while others returned to their families and loved ones drastically changed from their former selves.

While the immediate objectives of the war were accomplished quickly—Hussein was captured in December of 2003 and was sentenced to death and executed in late 2006—the eight-and-a-half year war would become one of the most controversial actions in which the United States had ever been involved. Over the course of the war, many saw America's position as a moral leader stained by the dubious actions of the administration and its endless quest for retribution; for those who saw these actions as a betrayal of American idealism, this awareness of the corruption of the government and its leaders, who are sworn to act in the best interest of the country and its people, left many questioning their faith in America's identity as a proponent of liberty and a force of good in the world.

While the attacks themselves were horrifying, in many ways it was the aftermath of the attacks that left lasting scars on the people of the United States. In an essay entitled "On That Day," literary theorist Geoffrey Hartman wisely cites Freud's essay "On Transience" that suggested that World War I "had robbed the world of its beauties,…shattered pride in the achievements of our civilization, our admiration for many philosophers and artists and our hopes of a final triumph over the differences between nations and races" (6). The events of the day signaled a massive turning point for the United

States: rather than deal with the senseless violence that transpired and the grief that followed, the country's leaders focused their efforts on lashing out at those responsible, leaving the citizens vulnerable to misguided attacks and misplaced hostility. When the dust settled and America as a country could step back and evaluate its reaction to the events, many felt they had been misled in attacking Iraq and felt let down by an administration charged with preserving the American reputation as a moral leader in the world (CNN/ORC Poll). As individuals, we mourned the dead and those forever changed by the events of September 11, 2001 and the resulting War on Terror; as a nation, however, we mourned the loss of our national identity.

ANALYZING THE PLAY: *TOO MUCH MEMORY*

Keith Reddin and Meg Gibson's *Too Much Memory* is written in response to the relationship between the individual citizen and the corrupt state experiencing the aftermath of a historical trauma. The authors' use of the *Antigone* narrative provides fertile ground on which to undertake such themes within the modern context of the attacks of September 11, 2001 and the resulting War on Terror. Alterations to the source text's setting, plot and structural alterations, character construction, language, and imagery provides Reddin and Gibson with the ability to establish their text as a response to the traumatic moment of 9/11 and the War on Terror. In the next section, I will explore *Too Much Memory* as an adaptation of the *Antigone* narrative and address how alterations to the structural and thematic elements of the narrative create new resonance for contemporary audiences.

The Communal Sphere of Traumatic Suffering

While *Too Much Memory* takes place in a non-descript setting, coded with minimal properties and set pieces (Reddin and Gibson 7), the text explicitly calls for a setting in the present (10) and makes reference to certain factors that imply a society that closely resembles the United States in the years following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. For example, the chorus enters holding a current

newspaper and makes reference to *Law and Order* and Actor's Equity (10); in addition, in the following scene between Antigone and Ismene, the sisters discuss all manner of modern topics including leg waxing, Richard Gere's performance in *An Officer and a Gentleman*, and daytime television programs featuring stories about diet tips and face lifts (10-11).

Similar to Yael Farber's *Molora,* Reddin and Gibson envision a space where the actors never fully leave the stage; they remain integrated in the fluid relationship between performer and audience and continue to bear witness to the events as they unfold. The playwrights use this device to encapsulate a larger sense of community in their play; the continual presence of the actors points toward those individuals on the periphery of the events that are shaped by them. Seated around the playing area, the actors are tasked with playing a double-layered role: on the surface, they embody the individual characters they play within the narrative of the story (Creon, Antigone, Eurydice, etc.); however, as the chorus indicates in its prologue, the performers are always meant to be seen as actors playing a role. In its opening speech, the chorus draws attention to the individual performer and their role as an actor within a fictional narrative by discussing the quality of their training ["She's a really good actress, went to one of the prestigious graduate programs" (9)] and their resume ["that good-looking young actor, the one you probably recognize from that television series" (9)].

As a result of this decision, the playing space takes on significant role as both a theatrical space, where the trappings of live performance are kept in full view, and a politicized sphere, where the themes of spectatorship, witnessing, and individual responsibility can be interrogated through the play's narrative. So much of the narrative of *Antigone* is dependent on the idea that it is unjust for a person to sit idly by as injustice runs rampant. The authors' decision to reject strict verisimilitude and embrace Brechtian principles (undermining a strict mimesis) creates a space on stage that puts this theme into relief: all the individuals in the theatre—actors, ushers, audience—are spectators to the events on stage and share responsibility as part of a civic order. The actors become an extension of the audience:

Antigone suffers the same trauma and witnesses the same events as the audience, yet she has taken the next step and become an activist, a model of good civic behavior.

While little change is made to the basic setting of *Too Much Memory* throughout the course of the play, one scene in particular introduces an additional layer of meaning that further emphasizes themes of spectatorship and civic responsibility. After Antigone is apprehended for attempting to bury her brother, she is brought before Creon and demands to speak on her own behalf on camera, in front of the nation. The chorus adopts the persona of the press, wheeling on television cameras and conference tables equipped with microphones in preparation for Antigone's public appeal/testimony:

> ANTIGONE. Let everyone hear what I have to say.
> CREON. I'm not a monster. I don't approve of what happened here. I respect the laws. And I'm willing to listen to you.
> ANTIGONE. Then let everyone hear. (*Guards wheel on two long conference tables, each has a microphone. Eurydice comes forward for a photo op with her husband. Antigone sits at one table, Creon at another. Broadcast lights snap on.*) (23)

In the scene that follows, Antigone presents her case before Creon and the media, suggesting she had the right to bury her brother and that the laws as established by Creon and his administration are unjust. Eventually, Creon begins to press Antigone on her political motives, believing she intends to start a revolution; she counters his attack with a carefully suggestive stance ["I'm responsible for my actions. They're mine alone. If others choose to act because of that, so be it," (26)] at which point Creon sends the camera crew away. Bowing to Creon's power, the media crew reduces Antigone's remaining time on screen to just twelve seconds, barely long enough for her to craft the scaffolding of an idea ["Irony is dead. Anarchy. Freedom. My father" (26)] before the cameras are removed.

Too Much Memory quickly establishes its society as one in transition: once a bastion of democratic values, a recent terrorist action has plunged the nation into turmoil, shifting power away from the populace toward an autocracy with Creon at the helm. Reddin and Gibson clearly envision their society as an extreme version of the United States in the post-9/11 period. Creon maintains his power through a mediatized show of democracy, outwardly presenting an air of openness and accountability,

but removing the press when their presence threatens his power. Reddin and Gibson integrate specific properties coded with meaning—cameras, microphones, broadcast lights—into the sparse set to draw attention to the media's role in this society. The addition of these properties allows them to explore the idea that those in power can manipulate the ideal of democracy.

Metatheatrical Interventions

Reddin and Gibson retain much of the *Antigone* narrative in their adaptation of the play. While the authors make subtle alterations to the story, their only major addition is the inclusion of the framing piece that establishes the double-layered role of the actors (the spoken introduction of the chorus). However, the chorus' opening monologue does more than point toward the actors in discussing the artifice of the production; it calls attention to the narrative itself as a product of adaptation:

> CHORUS: So it's the Greeks tonight.
> The old stories that never die.
> And what you're about to see is an adaptation of an adaptation of a re-translation. We don't know exactly what you call that. (9)

As its poetic title implies, *Too Much Memory* is bursting at the seams with historical detail and fragments of cultural memory; its narrative carries the weight of thousands of years of associations, collected images and meanings from hundreds of adaptations and translations of the original text. While this relationship between adaptation and source text is central to all the texts explored in this study, *Too Much Memory* places this relationship front and center for the audience and clearly establishes the idea of a constellation of adaptations for the audience. By highlighting the history of the text in the first few lines of their dialogue, the authors establish a firm foundation for one of their central concerns, the idea that history is not a dead thing: our actions may recede into the past but their consequences remain with us and these actions continue to inform and color the ever-present present. The struggle between Creon and Antigone in *Too Much Memory* is not localized to a specific time; it is emblematic of the ongoing struggle between the individual and the state, a point that is reflected later in the chorus' speech:

> You pick up a newspaper, or you go online,
> you read a story with interest.
> Then suddenly you wonder how much of it is true. Or, is any of it
> based on fact.
> But the classic stories? They were written by a poet.
> They present something more important than supposed facts.
> Hopefully they present something deeper, a truth. (9)

The authors introduce this language early in the text to draw focus to the "truth" of their narrative; by signaling the long history of the text and its status as part of a canon of classic works, *Too Much Memory* announces itself as an important piece, one with a message that goes deeper than simple journalistic facts.

The addition of the framing piece to the narrative establishes the metatheatrical style that pervades the remainder of the text and puts the audience in a mindset to accept the conventions inherent to classical Greek tragedy, including the presence of the messenger, the use of double casting, and the offstage violence ["One of the soldiers, he's got to come back as the Messenger at the end. The Messenger is the one who always brings bad news in these plays. He hates that, but what are you going to do?" (10)]. Reddin and Gibson elect to retain many of these familiar conventions to strengthen the implied relationship between the present moment about which they write and the nature and function of tragedy.

While the addition of the framing piece is certainly the authors' largest alteration to the basic narrative of *Antigone*, *Too Much Memory* includes several smaller adjustments to the basic plot that help the authors craft a more modern take on the tragic story. In particular, Reddin and Gibson give more attention and detail to nuances in their characters in order to suit modern tastes that privilege character development over plot elements. Unlike their source text, Reddin and Gibson begin *Too Much Memory* with Antigone already having buried her brother. This small alteration allows the authors to include a scene between Antigone and Haemon that demonstrates the sacrifice Antigone has made to her own personal happiness. As the scene develops, we discover that she spent the evening with Haemon the night before so that she could feel "one" with him, "married in a way" (16) before they

were separated forever as a result of her actions. By centralizing the Antigone-Haemon subplot, *Too Much Memory* places emphasis on the life Antigone has given up in protest of her corrupt government. The scene motivates the moment later in the narrative when Haemon confronts his father over the decision to put Antigone to death. Following the model of the source text, Reddin and Gibson retain the scene that shows Haemon vowing to die alongside his lover:

> HAEMON. You think I keep going without her?
> Wake up each morning, knowing that she's…?
> I can't…I can't do that.
> CREON. Of course you can. Look at me. (*Creon grabs Haemon.)*
> Listen to me, a man, he can survive anything.
> Anything.
> This is nothing.
> You'll survive this and much more.
> Please, just go home. (32)

The addition of the earlier scene provides Haemon, a tertiary character in the source text, with a suitable arc to follow. It also establishes the background necessary for the authors to capitalize on a modern reference that further explores Creon's corruption and the lengths he would go to in order to maintain his power: in his confrontation with Haemon, Creon suggests that Haemon's desire to die alongside Antigone is misguided given the fact that she does not actually love him. In the course of the scene, it is revealed that Creon has ordered every room in the palace to be secretly videotaped, providing the authors with an analogue to the warrantless wiretapping taking place under the U.S.A. Patriot Act:

> And Antigone, I'm sorry to say, she doesn't love you.
> Just because she sleeps with you doesn't make it love.
> HAEMON. How would you know that we—
> CREON. I know what happened last night.
> There are cameras in every room. For security, you understand. (33)

Enraged over the invasion of his privacy, Haemon "*moves angrily towards Creon"* but is intercepted by soldiers who "*beat him savagely*" (33). Despite witnessing the brutal attack, Creon does nothing to save his son and the beating continues until Jones, an affable soldier introduced earlier in the play, breaks up the attack.

Following Haemon's beating, Reddin and Gibson remove Tiresias's appeal to Creon, all mention of the plague threatening the city, and Creon's eventual relent. Instead, he remains steadfast in his commitment to putting Antigone to death. In place of this scene, the authors add two scenes that further develop the themes they establish over the course of the play. First, they expand the role of Eurydice in a long speech that explores her role as the always-silent and obedient wife of a politician (the content and character of the speech will be addressed in a later section); second, they introduce a scene that depicts Antigone being brought back onstage following her sentencing because a crowd has gathered outside the palace and it blocks the soldiers from carrying out their orders.

Figure 18. After her sentencing, Antigone (Laura Heisler) is taken into military custody (from left to right: Ray Anthony Thomas, MacLeod Andrews, Jamel Rodriguez), in a production of *Too Much Memory* at the New York International Fringe Festival, New York City, 2008 [©Paula Court].

When Creon and two of the soldiers exit to deal with the crowd, Antigone is left onstage with Jones and they begin to talk, primarily about Jones's attitude regarding his role as an obedient soldier. In the scene, Antigone asks Jones to borrow his phone so that she can record a farewell message to Haemon ["I'm sorry but I've no choice. Live your life. Remember, what we were to each other, that will never die" (41)]. Unfortunately, the message never gets to Haemon because Antigone is dragged off to die before she can tell Jones to whom the message should be sent. Both added scenes provide the authors with an opportunity to explore the voices of those usually depicted without a voice or an

opinion (the politician's wife, the obedient soldier), expanding on themes of spectatorship and witnessing and introducing new ideas about the seductive nature of ignorance to the questionable nature of politics.

Reddin and Gibson end their play with one final alteration: unlike the Creon of the source text, the Creon of *Too Much Memory* never fully accepts responsibility for the death of Antigone, Haemon, and Eurydice. During the Messenger's speech, it is revealed that Creon orders the tomb opened just in time to see Haemon ignite an explosive that rips him apart, splattering his remains all over his father's face, an explicit reference to the regular suicide bombings happening in Iraq during the war.[44] When Creon enters the acting area, still covered in his son's flesh, he is told of his wife's suicide. He stoically shrugs off his guilt and pain and resumes the mantle of leadership:

> CREON. And my wife as well. Now it's complete.
> CHORUS. There's no one left.
> CREON. Everyone dead. (*A chime is heard).*
> What time is it? The time! (*Creon looks at Barnes.)*
> BARNES. Nearly six.
> CREON. And do I have anything at six?
> BARNES. Sir?
> CREON. Any meetings, an appointment?
> BARNES. A conference call. With the head of Treasury.
> CREON. Well, I suppose…Yes, I better…I…(*Pause. Creon looks about him. Only Ismene is left. They move off in opposite directions but remain onstage.)* (45)

By not accepting responsibility for the deceased, Creon signals a return to business as usual for the politician, indicating that nothing has changed in this society. Despite the personal cost, he privileges the welfare of the state and firmly believes his actions are in the best interest of the populace. He turns a blind eye to the human costs of his actions and ignores the truth of the situation: his rule is unjust.

Trauma's Actors: Martyr, Ideologue, and Media

In crafting their version of the *Antigone* narrative, Reddin and Gibson make few changes to the way they depict their characters. As in the original text, Antigone is established as a martyr who, unlike

[44] Antigone hangs herself with a scarf her mother gave her just as she does in the original text.

her easily distracted and self-interested sister Ismene, is not “afraid to die for something [she] believe[s] in” (13). The authors go to great lengths to explore Antigone's sense of morality and her deep-seated belief that she honors both herself and her ancestors in choosing to defy the state, a concept Creon uses against her during her testimony:

> For your father too, the day-to-day struggle isn’t enough, you have to have death, but it’s a supreme death in which you are sacrificed.
> Sleep with your mother and murder your father and then rip out your eyes. What a high, to have that in your blood, a drug that nobody else can ever know.
> And you take that drug, over and over, live out your tragic end. But is must be in public. Otherwise it doesn’t count. (24-25)

Creon paints Antigone’s actions as selfish as she is willing to ignore what he believes to be in the best interest of the society—having her brother remain a scapegoat for tyranny—in favor of her personal interest in honoring his death. Antigone acknowledges this moments later when Creon presses her regarding her motivations:

> CREON. Do you think this will change others? Set the people against me, what I represent?
> ANTIGONE. Who knows?
> CREON. So it’s for yourself?
> ANTIGONE. That’s the only person I can be responsible for. (27)

In many ways, Reddin and Gibson model their Antigone after Cindy Sheehan, a Californian woman who gained national attention in August of 2005 when she camped outside President Bush's Texas ranch, protesting the ongoing war in Iraq and demanding a face-to-face meeting with the president to make him answer for her son's death. While Sheehan's actions originated from a place of personal grief, she became a symbol for the antiwar movement as the media picked up on her story, labeling her the "Peace Mom."[45]

While the authors do little to change the depiction of their central character, they craft Creon, her foil, in such a way that makes her struggle far more compelling and instantly places it within the framework of the United States’ response to the attacks of 9/11 and the War on Terror. As a

[45] Sheehan documents her experiences in her 2006 autobiography entitled *Peace Mom: A Mother's Journey through Heartache to Activism*.

consummate politician, the Creon of *Too Much Memory* recognizes the power of democratic ideals and cultivates a public image of fairness and accountability despite his often-tyrannical actions. During their confrontation, Creon reveals his understanding of their roles to Antigone in an attempt to reason with her:

> CREON. I realize that you are the heroine and I'm the villain, I understand the roles we have to play.
> But there's some things I won't accept.
> I'm not going to play the ordinary tyrant. I let you have your say. Didn't shut you up, kept things public, just as you asked. Would a tyrant act that way? (27)

However, Antigone sees through the artifice and suggests his words sound more like an attempt to convince himself. Responding to his claim that that she is free to say whatever she wants, Antigone replies "Is it freedom to sit here knowing you think my point of view is naive, that it'll have no effect on you? Not change a thing? If that's freedom, it's a very inadequate definition" (27). She goes on to challenge his moral authority, painting a very clear picture of the character as merely a cipher of democratic ideals:

> You exist only formally, you exist officially, but you have lost your authority, and when someone in your position loses authority, then you have lost everything.
> ...
> Only you could stop the breakdown of society. And you tell me that I have an inflated sense of myself. Saving me has nothing to do with justice or the right thing, it's about how you're viewed by the populace. You're in charge, poor leader, with his plain suit and his plain words. But you live in fear. (28)

In reality, Antigone's words ring true: Reddin and Gibson depict their character as a desperate leader struggling to maintain his control. When word first reaches him about Antigone's attempted burial of her brother, he openly threatens the soldier who brings him the news, fearing the public will align against him ["If word of this does get out, I don't care how, you and your two friends will be fucked beyond reason. You understand me, Jones?" (19)]. Creon derives his power from an elaborate system of political posturing and outright misinformation that is severely threatened by Antigone's act of rebellion.

Figure 19. Antigone (Laura Heisler) publically confronts Creon (Peter Jay Fernandez) in a production of *Too Much Memory* at the New York International Fringe Festival, New York City, 2008 [©Paula Court].

Creon clearly believes in the correctness of his actions. In crafting the character in such a way, the authors draw parallels between their play and the Bush administration. Despite the animosity many people felt toward President Bush's policies in the years following the invasion of Iraq, he cultivated a reputation built on an air of earnestness and "likeability" that helped him win reelection in 2004 (Benedetto). Creon's willingness to accept his own lies and political double-speak as truth makes the character a far more compelling depiction of a politician. In a conversation with the chorus following his decision to have her killed, Creon demonstrates ambivalence toward the concepts of truth and morality:

> CHORUS. What are you doing?
> CREON. Carrying out the law.
> CHORUS. You know her death will dishonor you.
> CREON. She gave me no choice.
> CHORUS. You're a leader, you have other choices.
> CREON. You heard her, she wants to die, the fool.
> Burying her brother, that's her justification.
> But the myth she wants to create of herself, that's the real reason.
> CHORUS. You could tell everyone the truth.
> CREON. I believe that's just what I've already done. (31-32)

Creon remains self-assured in response to Antigone's actions because he truly believes he is acting the part of the responsible leader and that his decisions are in the best interest of the community. "Like the most fiendish of political monsters, he commits the most heinous acts for the most understandable of

reasons" (Murray). However, as the chorus points out, his is a blind leadership and he remains unwilling or perhaps unable to see an alternative. Like the Bush administration and their black-and-white response to the War on Terror ("Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists"), Creon sees Antigone's actions as a political liability and a threat to the sanctity of his rule. While the chorus is able to see through the veil of politics to an underlying truth, it is unable to convince Creon to see the alternative.

Figure 20. Creon (Peter Jay Fernandez) exercises his power over Antigone (Laura Heisler) in a production of *Too Much Memory* at the New York International Fringe Festival, New York City, 2008 [©Paula Court].

While Reddin and Gibson reduce the role of the chorus in *Too Much Memory*, choosing instead to focus their efforts on developing the central characters of Antigone and Creon, it remains an important part of the action of the play. As previously discussed, the authors' craft an elaborate framing piece that shows the chorus interacting with the audience and gesturing toward the metatheatrical nature of the narrative. This framing piece is coded through the lens of the popular media as the chorus enters "*hold[ing] a current newspaper*" (9). As the character speaks, the audience learns all the basic

information about the characters and the actors playing them, but the chorus stops short of revealing the basic conflict at hand, actively ignoring one of the traditional chorus' main functions in classical Greek tragedy. Reddin and Gibson use the device of the newspaper to suggest the press as a modern analogue to the traditional chorus; however, as the version they present fails to live up to the expectations of its traditional role, the suggestion seems to be that the media likewise fails in this role.

This point is further strengthened by the chorus' presence during Antigone's testimony. The character is brought onstage as a witness to her confession/narration of her actions. In the scene, the chorus is again coded through the lens of the media as s/he enters alongside video cameras and broadcast lighting brought on to televise the proceedings. When Creon becomes enraged over Antigone's testimony, he orders the cameras removed but allows the chorus one final interview with Antigone:

> CHORUS. Antigone, any comments on your testimony?
> ANTIGONE. There is no way to keep anything true,
> The way we are.
> Our will is not some sort of science project, is it?
> Today we are here, tomorrow, fill in the blank.
> CHORUS. Are you being ironic?
> ANTIGONE. Ironic? No, that died with my father.
> But, anarchy, it's like a great wind pushing me forward.
> At any moment, any one of us, we can seize it, embrace it.
> It's our freedom.
> Politicians use God to fight anarchy, but then fight God when he defies the politician.
> CHORUS. Sorry, because of time constraints we have to cut your responses from forty-two seconds to twelve.
> ANTIGONE. Irony is dead. Anarchy. Freedom. My father.
> CHORUS. Thank you. (*Antigone moves away*.)
> Well, there you have it. Thank you so much for your time, Antigone. (26)

Antigone's ability to address the nation directly is severely limited, forcing her to speak in sweeping terms to a media only interested in a sound bite ["Irony is dead. Anarchy. Freedom. My father."]. It is clear that Antigone is being tried not before the court of public opinion—as she had hoped by insisting on the presence of the cameras—but before Creon who has cultivated control over a media who bends to his will.

Refusing to Suffer in Silence

Discourse itself becomes a principle theme in *Too Much Memory*, particularly the discourse that pervades politics. Reddin and Gibson immerse the audience in the struggle between Antigone, whose social idealism comes into direct conflict with Creon's pragmatic utilitarian authority, a power he wields as a weapon against all who oppose his will. The authors exploit the language of *Too Much Memory* to draw a line in the sand between the discourses of these two powerful characters. While Creon's speech emphasizes a strict adherence to the intellectual qualities of order, necessity, and decisiveness, Antigone's speech reflects an apprehension towards anything that assumes itself a certainty; whereas Creon trades in absolutes, Antigone recognizes that humanity originates out of uncertainty. This dilemma culminates in their public confrontation where the two characters directly challenge each other's personal beliefs:

> CREON. You know nothing about life. Nothing.
> ANTIGONE. I know quite a lot. You just don't want to think I might understand.
> You know, I'm trying to imagine you at my age.
> When you actually might have believed in something.
> Can you think that far back?
> To a time when you had ideals?
> Before pragmatism became your religion?
> CREON. When I was your age I came to believe in the Law. It's flawed but without it we're lost. I found there was no happiness, it didn't exist, but there could be contentment in a way things were.
> That was quite enough.
> ANTIGONE. Excuse me, but fuck that.
> If that's all you have to offer, I don't want it. Living out my life in little spoonfuls of satisfaction.
> I need to embrace everything untidy and terrifying, otherwise I'd rather die. (30)

Unlike Creon, Antigone is not satisfied with an abstracted understanding of the world, one that ignores difference and complication. Her language is plain, direct, and often biting, particularly in those scenes where people remain silent or use their words to deflect or distract themselves or others from what is truly important.

The authors' treatment of language in *Too Much Memory* reflects a major concern during the years surrounding the War on Terror. Politicians on both sides of the political aisle employed language

that emphasized strict division between just and unjust, right and wrong, ally and terrorist; such language was indicative of the black-and-white mentality that undermined U.S. diplomacy during this period and tarnished its reputation as a global leader and keeper of the peace. For Antigone, such language has lost its meaning in the world where men in power have become so accustomed to their lies that they cease to even realize they are misleading. Creon is the epitome of this failure of the power system; his rhetoric regarding right and wrong, just and unjust, means little when his actions betray the sentiment behind his words. Where is justice to be found, Antigone asks, in denying one brother a proper burial and glorifying the other despite the similarity of their actions? Creon acknowledges her point, informing her that both brothers in fact were traitorous toward her father and both had threatened his life, suggesting that "power was the only thing they understood" (29). Of course, power is perception and, in the world of *Too Much Memory,* perception is dictated by the rhetoric of those in power.

Antigone's suspicion of language leads to an interesting exchange with Haemon where she challenges him to define his love for her. The authors draw attention to Antigone's distrust of language by writing the scene's dialogue in French:

> ANTIGONE. Haemon, *dis moi la verité.*
> HAEMON. *Quelle verité?*
> ANTIGONE. *Je veux sonder ton amour.*
> HAEMON. *Qu'est-ce que tu veux dire?*
> ANTIGONE. *Tu ressens quoi exactement pour moi?*
> HAEMON. *Mais, je t'aime.*
> ANTIGONE. *Ah, bon. Ça veut dire quoi?* (15)

As one of the perceived languages of love, the use of French in this moment suggests that the characters are enjoying a particularly romantic moment; this idea is then undermined as the content of the dialogue becomes clear.[46] Antigone has little value for the vague idea of love—the use of French in this

[46] Antigone asks Haemon to tell her the truth and he replies "what truth." She goes on to demand he tell her how he feels about her. When he answers with a simple "I love you," she shrugs it off, saying "of course, but what does that mean?"

scene implies it is merely the show of love—instead, she wants to test Haemon's commitment to her and uncover what the unspecific term means to him and how far he is willing to go because of the way he feels ["I want to believe you. But they're just words you understand?...Because men have lied for centuries. They've lied for so long they've forgotten not to. They lie and they lie and they lie" (15)]. In reality, Antigone has already decided to end the relationship because she knows her actions regarding her brother's burial will result in her death; what she wants from Haemon is that he understand and respect her choice and not try to stand in her way ["I'm going to tell you something. And after I say it, you can't talk, you just…have to leave." (16)].

The scenes between Antigone, Creon, and Haemon suggest that what Antigone really yearns for is a world where words continue to have value and where people can speak plainly and stand behind their ideals. This desire is concretized in her interactions with her sister, Ismene. Ismene assumes the role of a member of the complacent, uninvolved populace early in the play: she is content to ignore the injustices set against her family ["I don't want to suffer for your story" (11)] and even defends Creon for his decisions ["He's trying to keep order. He's in charge. He has to make tough decisions. Of course, people will disagree with some of his choices" (12)]. This complacency frustrates Antigone to no end and she chastises her sister for not living up to her high standards ["You're afraid to die for something you believe in….And you can live with being so compromised?" (13)]. Comically unprepared to deal with Antigone's activism, Ismene retorts by attempting to draw her sister's attention to the effect her proposed actions would have on Haemon:

> ISMENE. Stop it. You're too young to throw your life away because of some…belief.
> ANTIGONE. Young? When was I ever young?
> ISMENE. You're smart and beautiful—
> ANTIGONE. And that's the most important thing in life.
> ISMENE. Haemon. He loves you. I've seen him, sitting across from you, staring at you, aching to lean forward and kiss you. (13)

Angered at her sister's attempt to distract her, Antigone lashes out, calling attention to Ismene's superficiality ["Go back inside, Ismene. Watch television. The morning programs about diets and face lifts. Or go back to sleep. You look like shit." (13)].

Figure 21. Ismene (Aria Alpert, right) attempts to intercede in Antigone's (Laura Heisler, left) sentencing in a production of *Too Much Memory* at the New York International Fringe Festival, New York City, 2008 [©Paula Court].

When Antigone is sentenced later in the play, Ismene tries to join her sister in death in a show of loyalty (Fig. 21), but Antigone sets her on a new path:

> ANTIGONE. It's too late, Ismene. I've made my choice, and it doesn't include anyone else.
> You weren't even willing to look at our brother. That's what you'll have to live with.
> ISMENE. There's still time.
> ANTIGONE. No, the play's progressed too far for that.
> But you can tell others what I've done.
> That's your role, Ismene.
> To fill my silence. (31)

Antigone challenges her sister to embrace her civic consciousness and stand up for those silenced by Creon. Antigone foresees her death and knows that Creon will use it to his advantage. Ismene is her only hope of alerting people to the true nature of his ruthlessness.

As Ismene processes Antigone's plea to her, a new and surprising ally—in the form of Eurydice—emerges from the margins of the stage and Antigone's desire for a world where words mean something is, for a fleeting moment, fulfilled. In the original text of *Antigone,* Eurydice is a nearly-voiceless character who appears only briefly at the end of play and speaks a single line:

> People of Thebes, I heard your words as I was going forth, to salute the goddess Pallas with my prayers. Even as I was loosing the fastenings of the gate, to open it, the message of a household woe smote on mine ear: I sank back, terror-stricken, into the arms of my handmaids, and my senses fled. But say again what the tidings were; I shall hear them as one who is no stranger to sorrow.

After learning the fate of her son, Eurydice retires into the palace where she dies at her own hands, overcome by grief. In the original text, Eurydice functions as a member of the silent masses, unseen and unheard until the action of the play has resolved itself in the deaths of both Antigone and Haemon. Reddin and Gibson retain this image at the beginning of *Too Much Memory*, calling for Eurydice to stand silently at her husband's side as the chorus introduces the cast:

> I should point out the woman on the side, doing the crossword, that's Eurydice, Creon's wife. The most important job for a politician's wife is to be silent. She doesn't have any lines. (10)

Here, Eurydice watches from the margins, silenced by her role as the politician's wife, a symbol of female subservience to male power (and therefore separate from the image of Antigone) and "a reminder of family, and home" (33). Reddin and Gibson play off the traditional image of the First Lady, leading critics to draw parallels between the character and political wives like Laura Bush (Gates).

Despite her persistent silence throughout the text, it is clear that she is uncomfortable in her silent role. After Antigone is sentenced during her altercation with Creon, Eurydice stands to object to Creon's will, yet she quietly sits back down on his order. She continues to remain silent throughout the play until witnessing her son, Haemon, being beaten by soldiers as Creon himself looks on. Finally, in a

moment designed to appear as though it is the actress herself who can no longer bite her tongue, she erupts in a passionate monologue demanding that her voice be heard:

> EURYDICE. I'm sorry
> I have to say something.
> *(Creon, the Chorus, and the Guards look at her as do all the other actors.)*
> I know my character
> is supposed to be silent.
> But I can't just
> sit here
> night after night,
> year after year
> and not speak,
> doing the goddamn
> crossword. (33)

As her monologue progresses, it veers back and forth between the personal and the political, simultaneously calling Creon out for his selfish inability to see her as an individual because he is "just too busy running the state" and his blind judgments about morality in the face of controversy ["But for you there's certainty. The laws are black and white. How can anyone really live that way?" (37)]. Part confession and part lament, Eurydice's monologue reveals a deep-seated anguish that connects the power of her voice ["I watch it all never having an opinion…. 'Til this moment when I can't bear the silence anymore." (37)] with her rediscovery of herself as a sexual being ["Night after night, in bed, staring at the ceiling, years since we touched, the numbness, 'til one day I teach myself how to feel something, hands under the covers, slowly touching between my legs, feeling the numbness melt away" (36)].

By constructing the monologue as an imagined intervention on behalf of the actress playing the role, the authors gesture toward the development of the trauma narrative and its role in the healing process. The actress can no longer contain her emotional response to the silencing of Eurydice and what comes out is an extended testimony about the past disappointments and personal tragedies the character has endured in her relationship with her husband. As she speaks, the actress slips back in to her role and the content of the speech recalls the events and experiences that shape Eurydice's life. In

essence, she has found a way to voice her trauma: the examples she testifies to paint Eurydice as an anonymous cypher at Creon's side; her role was to be accommodating in regards to his needs as a husband and a politician and her own identity as an individual was placed under erasure.

Eurydice's stand provides the authors with a mode of responding to past trauma; however, her central point is a newfound unwillingness to continue to sit idly by as these traumas continue to occur. The actress playing the role refuses to sit in silence "night after night, year after year." She temporarily removes herself from the narrative—acknowledging her double role ["I know my character is supposed to be silent. But I can't just sit here" (33)]—and devises a new narrative for her character. She reveals remorse at not having the strength to stand up sooner and question the power of her husband and refuses to be complacent any longer; as a result, the play provides its most cogent analysis of Creon's character ["to keep your power you must silence everyone." (38)].

While Eurydice speaks about her personal experience, the loss of self she feels is representative of the loss of identity many Americans experienced following the terrorist attacks and the misguided war efforts. During this period, fear and a desire for vengeance opened the door for the country to revert to the blind patriotism of the 1940s and 1950s, a period where loyalty to one's government was necessarily unquestioning and all encompassing. Eurydice's awakening is meant to illustrate to the audience the complacency that has plagued the contemporary political landscape and the kind of civic engagement that is needed to do away with the past. She challenges Creon and his convictions ["So, now I'm stepping forward and asking you, how can you know? Know with such certainty that her death is the answer?" (38)] and confronts him with the personal lies that have plagued their relationship ["All these years of waiting 'til you handed things over. That was the plan. When they come of age, then I can step down, you said." (38)]. Unfortunately, Eurydice realizes that her battle is unwinnable as Creon has "grown too used to the cameras" and that he enjoys the power he finds in the status quo (38-39); she recognizes that her personal plea to her husband will not be strong enough to affect change for she is

only one voice and he loves his power more than his wife. She reluctantly shrinks back into the background, once again silenced by her husband ["I wonder how soon it will be before you forget I was ever here." (39)].

While Eurydice once again recedes into silence, one that becomes permanent as the character commits suicide following the death of her son, her words haunt the stage until the final moments of the play. Ismene and Creon are left on stage, circling the playing space in opposing directions as Jones mops the stage and replays Antigone's cell-phone recording to Haemon. The chorus steps forward and speaks its metatheatrical epilogue:

> CHORUS. The lights will dim, and after a moment, we can gather our coats, our umbrellas and bags, and go home.
> And after a few months, a few years, we'll forget what they looked like.
> As if they were never here.
> So now, a silence descends on the city.
> A silence that will follow you home tonight.
> In a bit, they'll go off for a drink.
> Maybe more than one.
> They did their job. Tomorrow they'll show up as they always do.
> But for now, they just want to forget. (45)

Despite the failure of the chorus to live up to the traditional role at the beginning of the play, by the final curtain the character has stepped up to this role and, using the metatheatrical themes previously established, points out the audience's own apathy toward the events of the past, almost daring it to embrace a more active civil consciousness.

Ghosted Images of the War on Terror

The imagery of *Too Much Memory* is rooted in the contemporary world surrounding the trauma of 9/11 and the resulting War on Terror. As the play emphasizes the media's role in constructing the mythology surround these events, Reddin and Gibson employ a number of images that directly correspond to the American media's handling of specific events surrounding the War on Terror. When Antigone is brought onstage by Creon's men after she is captured, she is sexually humiliated and tortured by way of waterboarding for no other reason than to provide them with amusement:

JONES. Look, I ain't got nothing against you, I'm just doing my job.
ANTIGONE. Just following orders?
JONES. I'm a soldier, what do you want from me? I'm sure you got your reasons, everybody's got their reasons, that's not my fucking concern.
ANTIGONE. Stop grabbing at me.
JONES. Hey, don't tell them how to do their job. You're the one breaking the fucking law. (19-20)

Jones justifies his rough treatment of the prisoner in light of both his orders and her actions against the state. He asserts that she deserves the ill-treatment because she broke the social contract which dictates blind loyalty to her nation. In an effort to assert her patriotism, Antigone informs the guards of her paternity, which they scoff at:

ANTIGONE. Do you know who I am?
BARNES. A fucking troublemaker.
ANTIGONE. I'm Antigone. Oedipus' daughter.
BARNES. His daughter, huh? Every cunt we pick up say we better back off because they know some politician. *(The Guards laugh.)*
JONES. Or she's fucking him! *(They laugh again loudly.)* (20)

As the altercation becomes more heated, the authors' use of strong language gives the scene a threatening, sexualized undercurrent. Jones and the guards begin to egg each other on, ridiculing Antigone and laughing at her feeble attempts to stand up to them:

ANTIGONE. Get your hands off!
STUART. Oh, we should get our hands off her, we're nothing but scum, but she can crawl around in the dirt.
BARNES. You got a lot of nerve.
JONES. I take a second to take a piss, and before I can stick my dick back in my pants, there's the princess throwing dirt on the body.
STUART. She's an animal.
…
JONES. Last week, that demonstration, I had to wrestle with another just like her.
STUART. I remember.
BARNES. Tried to throw a bottle at you.
JONES. I made her quiet.
STUART. You sure did.
JONES. Bet we get a citation for bringing this bitch in. *(The Guards laugh again.)* (20)

As the scene progresses, the strong language gives way to violent imagery as the guards discuss a previous encounter where they silenced a woman with a show of force. Antigone incorrectly assumes that the guards are merely trying to intimidate her and have no intention of following through on their threats; however, when she challenges them, they respond with violence:

ANTIGONE. Are you finished?
JONES. No, but you are. *(The soldiers hold down Antigone's head in a bucket of water, then pull it out.)* (20)

The guards continue to torture and ridicule Antigone until Creon arrives to question her directly. In this scene, Reddin and Gibson play off of the audience's awareness of the Abu Grhaib prison assaults, where prisoners were sexually humiliated and tortured at the hands of American troops. Beginning in 2004, photos of prisoner cruelty began circulating through the American media, drawing widespread attention to the abuses of power in the U.S. military. Many publications used the story to call for more accountability within the Bush administration and even suggested that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and others within the administration should resign. Politicians on both sides of the political aisle joined in the debate, focusing their ire on Rumsfeld who eventually did resign his post in 2006.

By placing Antigone at the center of such abuse, the authors foreground the memory of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal and the national uproar it caused. American citizens had been sold on the war in Iraq as a necessary measure in order to intercede on the human rights violations happening under Saddam Hussein's control. The revelation of the abuse at Abu Ghraib demonstrated that the U.S. had little right to hold itself up as a model given its treatment of those captured. In his interview with *60 Minutes II,* Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, deputy director of operations for the U.S. military in Iraq, expressed his embarrassment and regret for what had happened: "if we can't hold ourselves up as an example of how to treat people with dignity and respect…We can't ask that other nations do that to our soldiers" (qtd. in Leung).

Further courting connections to the War on Terror and the media's role in reporting these events, Reddin and Gibson add a contemporary twist to their *Antigone* narrative in the form of the cellphone recording Antigone makes just prior to her death. In the scene, Antigone pleads with Jones to deliver a message to Haemon and begs the use of his cellphone to record her final message to him. After some protestation for fear of being caught, Jones agrees and Antigone films a short message to her former lover ["I'm sorry but I've no choice. Live your life. Remember, what we were to each other, that

will never die….I love you." (41)]. Unfortunately, she is dragged off the playing area by Barnes and Stuart before she can tell Jones whom to send the message to, indicating that it fails to reach Haemon before he decides to entomb himself with her with an explosive strapped to his chest. The authors' inclusion of this scene and their description of Haemon's death draws strong parallels to the suicide bombings and hostage videos that became commonplace in response to U.S. involvement in Iraq. One such video, released shortly after the report on the prisoner abuses taking place at Abu Ghraib aired, shows Nicholas Berg, an American businessman looking for contract work in Iraq, decapitated by his terrorist captors. Berg's death and portions of the video were widely reported within the U.S.; it was among the first of a long string of such hostage videos showing the final moments of the lives of America civilians captured by terrorist cells.

The authors end their play with one final striking image: following her death in the cave, Antigone watches the remainder of the story unfold from the margins of the stage, looking on as the details of her death and the deaths of Haemon and Eurydice are revealed to the audience. Her presence in this scene suggests a self-consciousness toward the events of the play: the memory of Antigone haunts the stage in the aftermath of her death; she is visual reminder of the victims of trauma and the loss of American idealism in the face of tragedy. She is joined by Haemon and Eurydice, who together sit in judgment over Creon and Ismene, the only characters left onstage for the chorus' revelations at the end of the play. The two still-living characters circle the stage "*in opposite directions"* (45), a juxtaposition that demands the audience consider the aftermath of such a tragedy, where the complacent self-involved public (in the form of Ismene) must come to terms with an administration built on blind vengeance (in the form of Creon).

INTEROGATING THE TRAUMA OF THE WAR ON TERROR THROUGH ADAPTATION

Of the three cases under review in this study, Keith Reddin and Meg Gibson's *Too Much Memory* examines the most recent historical trauma. While the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 occurred

over a decade ago, the resulting War on Terror is, in many ways, an endless and unwinnable war that keeps the trauma of this period and the emotional and psychological wounds it created from scarring over. Unlike the authors of *The Darker Face of the Earth* and *Molora*, who embraced historical traumas rooted in the past and capitalized on the emotional distance time created between the theatrical audience and the circumstances about which they write, the authors of *Too Much Memory* were confronted with a seemingly impossible task: how do you represent trauma that persists and remains a central concern to audiences still dealing with its occurrence.

The choice to adapt *Antigone* functions in the same way as Dove's decision to adapt *Oedipus Tyrannos* or Farber's decision to adapt *The Oresteia*: by layering contemporary circumstance on the scaffolding of the ancient Greek narrative, the authors create a framework through which the audience can organize the critical and emotional experience of the text (thereby avoiding retraumatization and traumatic transmission). The source material of *Antigone* provides audiences with familiar ground and its celebrity within the canon gives the play enough gravitas to engage with such weighty themes. Additionally, the narrative provides the authors with flexibility to explore their subject material from a number of different critical perspectives (avoiding traumatic essentialism), and provides the play with the ability to parcel out the often-subtle differences between right and wrong, good and evil, justice and vengeance.

What is most interesting and effective about *Too Much Memory*, however, is the authors' decision to call direct attention to the artifice of the piece and its nature as an adaptation. This metatheatrical aesthetic is established in the opening moments of the play, as the chorus speaks its prologue:

> CHORUS: So it's the Greeks tonight.
> The old stories that never die.
> And what you're about to see is an adaptation of an adaptation of a re-translation. We don't know exactly what you call that.
> You pick up a newspaper, or you go online,
> you read a story with interest.

> Then suddenly you wonder how much of it is true. Or, is any of it based on fact?
> But the classic stories? They were written by a poet.
> They present something more important than supposed facts.
> Hopefully they present something deeper, a truth. (9)

The authors use the speech to tie conceptions of events, particularly as the media presents them, with the idea of the artifice created in the theatre, suggesting that the political landscape is little more than an elaborate stage inhabited by politicians rather than actors. The chorus expands on this point later in the play by suggesting that, unlike the world of the theatre which serves up its narratives in easily understood and resolved ways, our politicized and mediatized culture challenges us to grapple with issues that cannot be bracketed away so easily:

> Plays. Stories. We like them tidy. Like them to make sense of things. We like to know exactly who the hero is, who's the villain. Wrongs are righted. The scales are evened. Justice. You want justice? I think in this world there is no justice, only the law. And the law serves power.
> In this play there is no hope for a happy ending. And all these characters can do is scream out to the end of their lives, scream into the void.
> Nice, huh? Why do we find it so beautiful? Because we think we just watch safely from our seats? (19)

Resolution is almost never the outcome in this world; rather, the wound remains open even though the victims try to forget, leaving them lamenting their suffering to the "void" of a memory long forgotten. Here, the authors connect the stage to cultural memory, suggesting that one function of the theatre should be to prolong these memories and remind or incite the audience to deal with the past in meaningful ways rather than "sit safely [in their] seats" holding it at a distance. In essence, Reddin and Gibson point toward the central affordance adaptation provides: the ability to perpetuate cultural memory and draw new critical associations between the past and the sociopolitical climate of the present.

This point is further enforced in the final moments of the play as the chorus speaks its epilogue, suggesting that the silence that remains onstage—the silence that exists between Ismene (in her new role as active participant in the culture) and Creon (in his continued role as political leader)—draws its power from the fact that all the characters want to do is forget (45). While the play concludes on an

inherently pessimistic note, the chorus ends with an implied challenge to the audience: to speak up, as they had mentioned in the prologue:

> This play is presented in the present.
> But I think there's a difference between the present and the contemporary. A director can take a Greek play and have people come on riding motorcycles, come in on motorized scenery. We don't have that kind of room. There's a hundred ways in which you can bring something into the present. We have the freedom, but like I said in today's world, things being the way they are, I think we also have an obligation. To speak up. (10)

The aesthetic that Reddin and Gibson utilize capitalizes on its metatheatrical nature to continually remind the audience of both the play's artifice and its nature as an adaptation. By continually breaking up the action of the narrative with these metatheatrical interludes, the authors guide the audience to experience the play from a critical, intellectual position, in line with the subject positioning Brecht sought through his epic theatre devices. This choice places distance between the audience and the historical trauma about which the authors write, leaving the audience able to work through their thoughts and feelings surrounding these events. While both *The Darker Face of the Earth* and *Molora* take a self-reflexive position in regards to the adaptive nature of the text, neither play integrates its metatheatricality to the degree Reddin and Gibson's text does, simultaneously integrating itself into the play's performance aesthetic (in the bare bones setting, the ever-present actors) and becoming the guiding force to the play's narrative development.

CONCLUSIONS

Taking place in the present of 2008, in the years following the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the resulting War on Terror, Reddin and Gibson's *Too Much Memory* challenges its readers and audience members to face an uncomfortable and disquieting truth: vengeance lurks in all of us and it has the power to overwhelm and blind even the most moral of societies. If unchecked, vengeance can lead us to forget that it is our actions that define us and it can often cause us to act in ways antithetical to those beliefs that shape who we are as individuals but also who we are as a community. The authors remind

us that a given society is no greater than the sum of its individuals and that those individuals share a set of common responsibilities to the public good: this is citizenship.

In adapting the narrative of *Antigone*, the authors make alterations to the setting, narrative structure, character construction, language, and imagery to draw a firm connection between Sophocles's original source text and the contemporary world of post-9/11 America. By creating a space onstage where the divisions between actor, character, and audience bleed together, the authors of *Too Much Memory* challenge their audience to rethink conceptions of citizenship in the wake of traumatic events. The authors devise this setting to help establish a principle theme: social morality depends on the moral values of the individual. Antigone's very personal trauma is played out on the national scale and has deep connections to the general populace. This allows the authors to explore the collective experience of trauma. They further cement this idea by coding their space through the lens of the popular media, using specific properties and set pieces to suggest this relationship. Reddin and Gibson call into question the media's problematic role in reporting on trauma and suggest how this role can be manipulated or even placed under erasure by those in positions of authority.

In re-envisioning the basic plot structure of the *Antigone* narrative, the authors add a metatheatrical framing piece to the play that enables them to draw attention to the flexibility of language, particularly of political discourse. The chorus' opening speech firmly establishes the theatrical (artificial) nature of the play, and the authors continually remind the audience of this point in an attempt to establish the critical distance necessary to evaluate society's relationship to the story they are telling. In addition, the authors add scenes to the basic narrative in order to flesh out the personal resonance of historical trauma, implicitly courting a connection between their fictional characters and real-life individuals such as Cindy Sheehan and the Bush family. This implied relationship between the action of the play and the real-life War on Terror is further established by language and imagery that

references specific incidents surrounding U.S. involvement in Iraq, including the Abu Ghraib prison scandal and the video footage of the execution of American civilian hostages.

In an interview about her impetus to write *Too Much Memory*, Gibson discusses her attraction to the *Antigone* narrative, indicating, "The play is about the danger of extremity. Both Creon and Antigone so deeply believe they are each right that they and everyone around them suffers as a result of their choices" (Talbott). Echoing the concern, Reddin suggests that the play tackles a fundamental question, one that is extremely relevant in regards to the U.S. response to the attacks of 9/11: "When does one become a terrorist, a fanatic in fulfilling ones beliefs?" (Talbott). The authors suggests that in the aftermath of the historical tragedy that occurred, the United States as a nation lost something greater than the 3,000 or so lives of individuals killed in the attacks; driven by vengeance, the U.S. embraced an attitude of fear and anger, resulting in a series of actions that led it into what many consider an unjust war. *Too Much Memory* asks its audience to look backward over the communal experience of the trauma and the collective reaction to both the attacks and the resulting War on Terror. Capitalizing on the *Antigone* mythology and the source text's long history as a discourse on citizenship, Reddin and Gibson craft an original play that examines a defining moment in the American experience of historical trauma.

CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSIONS

The night sky is only a sort of carbon paper,
Blueblack, with the much-poked periods of stars
Letting in the light, peephole after peephole---
A bonewhite light, like death, behind all things.
—Sylvia Plath, "Insomniac"

Just above our terror, the stars painted this story
in perfect silver calligraphy. And our souls, too often
abused by ignorance, covered our eyes with mercy.
—Aberjhani, "Crossing The Bridge of Bones" *I Made My Boy Out of Poetry*

In chapter two, I examine how trauma as a concept has developed over the course of the last two centuries, when the early debates that suggested trauma as a physical ailment gave way to a discussion of trauma's effect on the psyche. A major thrust within this chapter is an analysis of how traumatic circumstances derail the way memories of such events are encoded in the brain, causing the individual to suffer from an inability to construct a comprehensive, linear narrative of their experience. In such cases, the victim is, in a sense, split into two selves: first, the frightened and angry self who permanently exists in the moment of trauma, locked within the individual's subconscious mind and triggered by external cues that, through conditioning, have become associated with the fragmented memories of their trauma; and second, the helpless and confused self that struggles to come to terms with what has happened to them, to find meaning in their experience, and ultimately to work through the avoidance behavior and the deep-seated emotions that have become entangled with their traumatic past.

The chapter ends with a discussion of representation's role in treating traumatic suffering. As trauma derives much of its emotional and psychological power from the victim's inability to recall their experience, treatment protocols seek to facilitate the reintegration of traumatic memories into the conscious mind and allow victims an opportunity to process the emotions attached to these memories. Therapists work with patients to recover and even re-live their experiences in order to bring these memories to the surface and thereby make them accessible to declarative memory and conscious recall.

Once successful, patients can piece together a narrative of their experience that fills in the gaps in their memory of events. This narrative then becomes the foundation of their treatment as victims work in tandem with therapists to derive meaning from and make sense of their recovered experiences.

Taking their cues off of the many historical traumas on display in the twentieth century, contemporary scholars and mental health professionals have begun to theorize how contemporary culture now orients itself in relation to widespread traumatic events, suggesting that the concept of trauma has evolved past an understanding that privileges the individual over the collective. We are, as Roger Luckhurst would have us believe, a *traumaculture*, defined by the scars that result from the horrors that plague modern life. As individual treatment relies not only on the reconstruction and documentation of traumatic memories but also the ability of the victim to control and reshape the meaning associated with these experiences, representation (in the form of literature, art, and performance) serves a powerful role in the processing of community-based trauma. Representational forms perform a dual purpose in our culture: they document events and explore those themes and ideas that exist between people. In regards to historical traumas, which unite individuals through a shared traumatic experience, such representations become sites where the culture at large can begin to process their collective experience and reshape the meaning associated with these experiences in order to combat the "unresolved ethical, philosophical or political issues" (Meek 32) that they create.

I begin chapter three with an introduction to the various modes of engagement that define representational forms and suggest that the performance medium—particularly the theatre—proves quite valuable to representations of historical trauma for several reasons: first, because the aesthetic concerns of this medium (in the form of the actors, directors, and designers associated with its creation) create distance between the subject matter and its audience, thereby fostering the critical processes necessary to work through traumatic circumstances; second, subjectivity in this mode is not wholly determined by the victim's personal experience, it remains open to multiple subject positions and can

therefore address the issues at hand from a multitude of angles; finally, because of the relationship between performance artists and audience, this mode fosters community engagement with the material.

While the theatre in general is well suited to the handling of historical trauma, I suggest that the adaptation of classical Greek tragedy offers playwrights with unique affordances when dealing with this complicated subject matter. Addressing the ethical concerns of trauma representations, I demonstrate how the adaptation of these texts stands up to these concerns by furthering the spatial and temporal distance between the traumatic circumstances these works depict and their intended audiences. These adaptations function as a linguistic and imagistic intermediary, an organizational schema through which traumatic events can be both narrativized and worked through. This process of adaptation feeds into an innate drive within the individual to draw analogies between those things we fail to understand and the knowledge and experience we have integrated into our conscious minds.

Epic in scope, these plays signal to their audience the central importance of their narratives: for the Greeks, these plays were the documents of history and the playwrights of the age were among the keepers of that history. These texts reveal the traumas of the classical age and the effect these traumas had on Greek civilization. However, while their thematic significance is of key importance to authors addressing contemporary traumatic events, these plays also lend themselves to traumatic representations on a dramaturgical level through the complex subjectivity they create within the play's narrative. This subjectivity is established in the debates between protagonist, antagonist, and the chorus, as well as in the relationship between the performers and the audience; it is further complicated by the relationship formed between the individual adaptation and the constellation of other adaptations to which it belongs. Authors working with these texts add their work's meaning into the collection of related meanings that surround the narrative and its many iterations, vastly expanding the scope of each individual narrative. Like the "much-poked periods of stars" of Plath's poem at the beginning of

this chapter, these adaptations let in the light which helps to illuminate the sky blackened by traumatic events.

The dramaturgy of these plays becomes key to an analysis of their relationship to historical trauma; therefore, chapters four through six engage with a detailed analysis of the dramaturgical choices of each of the authors of the three plays under review in this study—Rita Dove's *The Darker Face of the Earth*, Yael Farber's *Molora*, and Keith Reddin and Meg Gibson's *Too Much Memory*. While each of the plays is unique in terms of its general aesthetic, some interesting comparisons exist between the works that bear further discussion.

TRAUMATIC SPACES

To begin, each of the authors privilege a theatricalized sense of space that leaves their narrative open to simultaneously representing many locations; space, in these plays, becomes loaded with meaning. Dove's play juxtaposes scenes in the cotton house, big house, and the swamp, creating an elaborate microcosm of the overall power dynamics that shape the traumatic circumstances of slavery. Similarly, Farber's stage is made up to resemble the Truth and Reconciliation Commission meeting rooms that saw victim, victimizer, and witness join together as a singular community to work through the horrors of the apartheid system. While Dove's work emphasizes division among her cast of characters, Farber's seems to seek balance where all three players in the trauma (including the audience of witnesses) find equal footing. Reddin and Gibson's play picks up on this last point and their play calls for an integrated community space where the divisions between actor and audience are erased.

In addition, all three plays occasionally rely on an aesthetic choice to detach their space from a strictly linear narrative. Dove's prologue, which is set twenty years before the main action of her play, along with her "Dream Sequence," which opens act two and depicts a poeticized look at the interior monologues of many of her central characters, both challenge a strictly linear narrative development. The latter juxtaposes nicely with Farber's memory platform, a space where the imagined lines that

separate traumatic memory from reality are blurred beyond recognition and characters slip in and out of their traumatic pasts; the platform exists outside the narrative of her play and becomes representative of the fluidity of trauma's effect on the individual. Her narrative jumps back and forth between past and present, emphasizing memory's role in relation to trauma and gesturing toward the healing power of testimony. For Reddin and Gibson, their mostly bare stage retains its status as an icon of theatrical artifice and becomes symbolic of the mediatized political arena that is central to the play's themes. The stage derives its meaning not from the way it is used by the characters but the perception it creates within the minds of the audience. In all three cases, stage spaces are imbued with specific significance to the traumas they address and the space is used to tease out the relationships between those spaces and the key players in the trauma, including the audience's role in bearing witness to the events.

NARRATIVIZING TRAUMATIC INTERVENTIONS

In terms of their plot and structural alterations, the authors of these texts tend to leave the general narratives intact—retaining their adaptation's relationship to its source text and the constellation of adaptations to which it belongs—and instead focus their efforts on altering the smaller details of their narratives in order to update each story and connect it to the historical trauma about which they write. In the case of *The Darker Face of the Earth* and *Molora,* the authors alter the family heritage of the central characters, reworking Augustus, Elektra, and Orestes's lineage so that they are the children of a union between a white woman and her black lover. This change provides both plays with their principle conflicts as the characters engage in a power struggle between the races and within themselves as they struggle to resolve their identity issues within the complicated social structure. For Dove and Farber, this change mimics the effect trauma has on the individual, splitting the characters into component selves at war with each other, constantly struggling to come together as a unified whole.

For their part, Reddin and Gibson change very little of their play's general narrative though they elect to place greater emphasis on their peripheral characters than the original source texts do, a trend also visible in both Dove and Farber's plays. In all three plays, the authors expand the role of the chorus, crafting it into a tragic figure in *The Darker Face of the Earth* (represented by Phebe and her symbolic nature as Augustus's heir), an emblem of traumatic healing in *Molora* (as it is the chorus that intercedes on the narrative and changes the action of the play to favor an ending of forgiveness), and as a critical commentator and dramaturgical device in *Too Much Memory* (as it is principally the chorus' presence that provides the play with its metatheatrical aesthetic). In addition, each of the plays give new insight into characters who are nearly absent from the original narratives including Hector and Amalia in *The Darker Face of the Earth*; Klytemnestra in *Molora*; and Eurydice, Haemon, and Jones in *Too Much Memory*. In all three cases, the authors use these characters to provide their trauma narratives with a more complicated subjectivity, opening the trauma at the core of these texts up to new perspectives and providing these characters with an opportunity to give voice to their unspoken pain.

EXPANDING NOTIONS OF TRAUMATIC SUBJECTIVITY

The authors' alterations to their characters stem primarily from the complicated subjectivity they provide their play as a result of their plot and structural changes. By expanding on the peripheral roles, the authors create the circumstances where their historical traumas can be presented from multiple angles. In *The Darker Face of the Earth*, Dove creates a scenario where the audience is confronted with Amalia's suffering over her decision to cast her son aside and the helplessness she feels as a victim of her society's patriarchy; in addition, the inclusion of Hector and Louis along with Phebe and the other slaves fleshes out how slavery's traumatic resonance spreads among various different subjects. Farber capitalizes on a similar affordance in *Molora* by allowing Klytemnestra to bear witness to her own experience rather than just serve as the play's central villain. The character reveals her grief and anguish at not living up to her role as mother to Elektra and Orestes and simultaneously justifies her

actions in light of her traumatic circumstances, an internal struggle that is mirrored in both her children in unique ways. In *Too Much Memory*, not only do authors Reddin and Gibson provide their central characters of Antigone and Creon with more opportunity to explore their unique positions (and their relationship to the trauma) but they also open the narrative up to many other figures within this society who are affected in deeply personal ways. All three works greatly expand the notion of trauma's subjects to include victim, victimizer, and witness.

In altering the given circumstances of each play, the authors provide their characters with opportunities to embrace motivations and character arcs grounded in the traumatic realities of their social worlds. As a slave owner and a victim of her society's patriarchy, Amalia both enjoys subjugating others and empathizes with the plight of her slaves who are forced to bend to the power of their oppressors. As a slave, Augustus advocates for freedom but allows his desire for Amalia to compromise his rebellious attitude. In Farber's *Molora*, the emotional arc of Elektra, Orestes, and Klytemnestra is rooted in each of the characters' backgrounds. Elektra and Klytemnestra each long for a traditional mother-daughter relationship but their circumstances and the color of their skin denies them this right. Instead, the women are locked in an endless cycle of violence and betrayal, each compromising a little part of their soul in service of the social expectations placed on them. As for Orestes, he is caught in the net of circumstance: duty has bound him to avenge his father's death but his upbringing, under the guidance of the chorus, has instilled in him a higher allegiance to the community and to the land itself. He sees the need for unity in South Africa and comes to realize the futility of personal revenge. In *Too Much Memory*, the authors call on familiar players within the War on Terror—the double-speaking politician, his faithful and silent wife, the protestor of war, the obedient soldier—and use their stage equivalents to establish a connection between Antigone's story and the nations' history during this period. Each of the three plays vastly expands their tragic characters (who experience a generalized

sense of suffering in the original source texts) into traumatic subjects, who exemplify physical and/or psychological suffering in response to specific historical traumas.

TRAUMATIC UTTERANCES AND ECHOES: THE TESTIMONY OF SUFFERING

The linguistic character of the three plays establishes an aesthetic that keeps each work's traumatic resonance firmly at center. In both *The Darker Face of the Earth* and *Molora*, the authors employ a blended language—mixing elements from the cultural history of their subjects with English—to create a sense of the divisions between the characters depicted and to demonstrate the culture that was threatened in light of the traumatic circumstance of each of the plays. In addition, the musicality created by Dove's choral chanting during the ring shout and Farber's integration of the traditional Xhosa songs and instruments, played by members of the NCG, reimagine the traditional function of the Greek chorus while simultaneously grounding each of the plays within their colonial roots. While Reddin and Gibson's subject matter does not lend itself to a similar aesthetic, the authors nevertheless attempt to imbue their play with rhetoric reminiscent of the era in which they write: the debates between Creon and Antigone call to mind the highly politicized and mediated speeches that surround the War on Terror, rhetoric that established the general us-versus-them mentality that became commonplace following the attacks of September 11, 2001 and which exemplified the loss of the United States' position as a bastion of social morality.

Furthermore, each of these authors enhances the adaptive quality of their works by integrating direct quotation and citation into their narratives. In Dove's play, the author integrates metatheatrical references to Greek mythology in order for foreground her narrative's literary history. Farber carries this one step further by drawing many of her lines directly from her source text and mixing these with passages from scripture and Shakespeare, signaling the idea that her text not only exists within a constellation of adaptations but that it is, itself, made up of a collage of texts. Reddin and Gibson carry this trend through to its logical end, weaving pieces of their text together from many sources from the

Vietnam era, creating a bridge between the historical trauma about which they write—the ongoing War on Terror—and other historical examples that share a questionable moral basis. The decision to echo external sources into their plays continually reminds their audiences of the adaptive nature of these texts and serves to remove the individual narratives from their historical origins and allows them to be situated within contemporary instances of historical trauma.

TRAUMATIC SCARING

In terms of their use of visual imagery, the authors introduce their traumatic themes through the implementation of stage images which signal the specific trauma about which they write; all three plays rely on specific images coded in the traumatic circumstances of their respective traumas. In Dove's play, Augustus wears the scars of years of abuse at the hands of his masters, the slaves stamp cotton in the fields to the rhythm of traditional African songs, and both Hector and Augustus have visions of the violence and cruelty set upon black Africans forced into bondage. In Farber's *Molora*, graphic depictions of torture—including burning the skin with cigarettes and the wet bag method made notorious during the TRC hearings—are interwoven within the stage action connecting Farber's work with the testimony of individuals subjugated under the apartheid system. Similarly, Reddin and Gibson pull references directly from the headlines of newspaper and media outlets and devise a scene where Antigone is waterboarded and sexually humiliated just as prisoners at Abu Ghraib were. In addition, they invent new circumstances surrounding Antigone and Haemon's death that directly connects their play with several notorious cellphone recordings of American prisoners of war being tortured and killed at the hands of Taliban operatives.

In all three cases, the authors utilize a heavily aestheticized depiction of the violence and pain not only to demonstrate the physical effect trauma has but to get to the emotional and psychological scars that pervades these historical traumas. While such familiar and historically coded images work their way in to each of the three plays, the authors also incorporate imagistic references to the Grecian

history of these plays and invent new images which correspond to their traumatic themes. In *The Darker Face of the Earth*, Dove includes references to snakes, roses, and the net of fate to connect the play to its source texts. In *Molora,* Farber relies heavily on the metaphor of the net of fate, common to Greek mythology, while simultaneously developing the symbol of ash—an image she derives from her own experience watching the Twin Towers collapse in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks—as the only remnant following a trauma of this magnitude and the cyclical nature of revenge which often accompanies it. In *Too Much Memory*, Antigone herself becomes a visual symbol as she watches from the margins of the stage as the details of her own death are revealed to the audience, establishing the character as a ghost that forever haunts the politicized world Creon has established.

ADAPTATION'S ROLE IN THE REPRESENTATION OF HISTORICAL TRAUMA

In adapting classical source texts, the authors of *The Darker Face of the Earth, Molora,* and *Too Much Memory* evade the crisis of representation that plagues trauma studies by avoiding many of the ethical dilemmas that face traumatic representations. In veiling their discussion of historical traumas in the guise of adapted tragedy, the authors simultaneously create spatial and temporal distance between the subject matter of their work and their audience (establishing the critical distance necessary for individuals to process and work through such psychologically and emotionally taxing material) and provide audiences confronted with complicated traumatic experiences with a critical framework that enables them to process the subject matter with less risk of re-traumatization and without fear of passing these traumas on to secondhand witnesses.

On a dramaturgical level, these texts offer their authors unique affordances that enable them to address complex traumatic issues outside of this crisis. First, the basic structure of classical tragedy—which privileges a dialogic examination of a social problem—allows for a multilayered accounting of historical trauma and the reactions it caused. This structure enables the authors to approach their traumatic circumstances from various angles and perspectives, ensuring that their adaptation does not

imply an essentialized look at the specific trauma under review. Furthermore, as the adaptive quality of these texts is foregrounded in their creation—both through their retention of many aspects of the familiar storyline and the continual appearance of a metatheatrical aesthetic—audiences are primed to recognize the history behind these texts and to trace their lineage from the ancient tragedies they originally depicted through to the modern traumas with which the authors currently engage, emphasizing the idea of historical trauma as a universalizing theme.

Aesthetically, these adaptations tend to invite the audience into the work, making them a part of the process either formally—as actors, directors, and designers within a theatrical community (as in the case of the NCG)—or, more typically, as complicit spectators whose presence is not only felt but foregrounded in the performance of the adaptation. These plays call for theatre spaces that break down the barriers between actor and audience, highlighting the communal aspect of these stories and underscoring the idea of a community collectively dealing with traumatic circumstances. In acknowledging the audience's role within the narrative and aesthetic character of each play, the authors avoid the sense of voyeurism that often accompanies traumatic representations which rely on a more passive relationship between audience and actor. The linguistic character of these plays often reinforces this point, suggesting a mixing of cultures, ideas, and perspectives in regards to the traumas being depicted while the central images of each play serve a dual role: grounding each narrative in the traumatic circumstances with which the author is engaging while simultaneously connecting the work in adaptation to its historical roots.

IMPLICATIONS WITHIN THE FIELD, LIMITATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A subsidiary goal of this study has been to expand adaptations' role within the field of theatre. While scholars and critics have long recognized the process as an important part of individual artists' dramaturgy—most notably, Shakespeare and Brecht—the processes' overall status within the field has remained secondary to considerations about the merits of individual works in adaptation. As an

example, while Shakespeare's status as an adaptor is acknowledged and some even laud his ability to elevate his sourcematerial to the level of "genius" within his plays, neglected are the centuries of adaptations that followed his writings, many of which were favored above the Shakespearean "originals" in their own time. While commercially popular, theatre scholars have essentially ignored these works and labeled them merely as poor-quality derivations of Shakespeare's far superior work; comparatively little attention has been paid to understanding what about these adaptations made them successful in their own time and what contemporary students of the theatre can learn from their existence within the theatrical landscape.

While certain individual adaptations are praised for their ingenuity and for their contributions to the theatrical landscape, these works are rarely if ever seen as a part of a larger whole. For every "success" like O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* or Racine's *Phaedra,* there are countless other adaptations—each with their own unique perspectives and aesthetic merits—that remain largely inconsequential to the theatrical canon and the study of theatre. Much of this is, of course, due to the illusive nature of taste as well as considerations of commercial and critical success; however, one of the questions I hoped to raise with this dissertation is "what happens when we consider adaptation across a broad spectrum of texts and think of it as a specific and unique genre of dramatic creation?"

Of the thousands of theatrical adaptations written, only a small fraction are adaptations of classic tragedy and even less are developed in such a way that they address historical trauma, the central concern of this study. However, as this analysis demonstrates, the plays selected share certain conventionalized aspects both in terms of their content and thematic resonance as well as their overall style and form; by evaluating these qualities and looking at these plays as a set of a larger whole, certain affordances begin to immerge that suggest resonance to this study and its interest in representing historical trauma. If these plays were limited by other standards—adaptations of the plays of Shakespeare, Henrik Ibsen, or perhaps comedy of manners plays—other affordances might be revealed

that would have relevance to different concerns within the larger culture. The central idea here is that authors have long felt compelled to utilize the process of adaptation in their dramatic creation and that these works both have meaning on the individual level of each adaptation (as their narrative relates to the specific social environment in which they are written) and as a set of works that lend themselves to larger concerns within the culture.

Unlike other genres within the field, adaptation privileges the idea of the constellation image as each iteration of the narrative encompasses and expands on the meaning and significance of that text. While these texts can be appreciated as innovative individual dramas, it is the relationship between these adaptations, their source texts, and the myriad of other related adaptations that proves the most compelling. In other words, while the individual texts may or may not possess the qualities that will elevate them to the fame and cultural longevity of Shakespeare's masterpieces, their meaning as a set of related works does provide an engaging and invaluable look at one aspect of contemporary culture.

Many scholars within adaptation studies suggest that fidelity criticism has long plagued the field and have argued that this kind of criticism is most often responsible for denigrating the individual merits of a given work in adaptation (in favor of the "superior" source text). While I find this argument sound, I question the implication that scholars of adaptation need to turn a blind eye toward the relationship between the source text and its resulting adaptations. Should adapted texts be evaluated solely on their ability to stay true to an original source? Absolutely not, but as scholars and critics we also cannot divorce these texts entirely from their literary heritage. As I have outlined, adaptations are texts written with intention: intention to change and alter aspects of an original source in order to suit contemporary tastes and communicate contemporary themes. These works are easily dismissed as secondary if we fail to acknowledge both the reasons behind the decision to adapt and the care and concern that went into the production of the work.

In addition, as adaptation as a process does not have a clear ending point and authors continue to return to these texts and reinvent them in new ways, it is essential that this process be studied as an evolutionary entity with each component work occupying a privileged space within the genetic timeline of the adapted narrative. As adaptation and genetic mutation have become central to the study of science over the past two centuries—with biologists and geneticists endeavoring to uncover the connections behind adaptive traits and examine the sociocultural implications of these evolutionary mutations—so too must scholars within the arts and humanities examine adaptations' role in shaping the culture and its artistic products. With adaptation occupying so much cultural capital in contemporary society, and with its central role in the history of the performance medium, how can we not study these works in ways that privilege a similar evolutionary curiosity, one that recognizes the constellation to which these texts belong?

I believe this idea, that adaptation as a process creates a constellation image of thematically and stylistically related works, is key to future work in the field. Too much emphasis has been placed on the individual merits of a given work in adaptation; such work furthers a hierarchical way of thinking about adaptation that always tends to elevate source material above adapted work, a hierarchy that ultimately produces little original thinking or theoretical resonance. Instead, I support more recent attempts to refocus the field and its central concerns, such as Linda Hutcheon's call to evaluate adaptation simultaneously as 1) a *formal entity or product*, 2) a *process of creation*, and 3) a *process of reception*. I suggest the elegance of my constellation metaphor accomplishes Hutcheon's aims—equally privileging all three criteria—while simultaneously stressing the idea that adaptation is not a finite process where source material and the product of adaptation exist in a one-to-one relationship. Instead, the constellation image grows and becomes more detailed with every subsequent adaptation added into its imagined space, "Letting in the light, peephole after peephole." This way of thinking about adaptation

encourages scholars and critics to explore not only the relationships between texts but also the relationship formed between the constellation of adaptations and the society to which it belongs.

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