

CLASSICAL RECEPTION IN CONTEMPORARY WOMEN'S WRITING:
EMERGING STRATEGIES FROM RESISTANCE TO INDETERMINACY

by

POLLY STOKER

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Department of Classics, Ancient History, and Archaeology
School of History and Cultures
College of Arts and Law
University of Birmingham
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ABSTRACT

The reader who rewrites remains a vital interlocutor between the classical past and the modern classicist. However, the neglect of the female reader in classical reception studies is an omission that becomes ever more conspicuous, and surely less sustainable, as women writers continue to dominate the contemporary creative field. This thesis makes the first steps towards fashioning a new aesthetic model for the female reader based on irony, ambivalence, and indeterminacy. I consider works by Virginia Woolf, Alice Oswald, Elizabeth Cook, and Yael Farber, all of whom largely abandon 'resistance' as a strategy of rereading and demand a new theoretical framework that can engage with and recognize the multivalence of women's reading and rewriting. The interactions between the works of Roland Barthes, Hélène Cixous, and Jane Gallop help to spotlight what is at stake for the contemporary female reader who rewrites and manage the tension between rescue, rehabilitation, and post-structuralist play that the ironic, ambivalent, and/or indeterminate female reader negotiates.

This work is dedicated to my mam, with love and gratitude.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis takes part in and reflects on the growth of classical reception, a sub-discipline within the broader academic field of Classics, and its turn to the reader and her role as ‘co-creator’ of meaning.¹ The veritable explosion in recent decades of women readers who rewrite classical literature as poets, prose writers, and playwrights is arguably one of the most significant recent developments in the afterlives of the texts of Greek and Roman antiquity. In my new interpretations of modern trends in the reception of Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*, Alice Oswald’s *Memorial* (2011), Elizabeth Cook’s *Achilles* (2001), and Yael Farber’s *Molara* (2008), I add my voice to the significant number of classicists attentive to the persistence of classical myth, literature, and thought across several millennia, though with an especial connection to the relatively smaller group for whom women’s return to and reinvigoration of the classical past merit particular attention.²

While the academic project of attending to the reception of classical literature can now boast almost three decades’ worth of sustained activity, due attention to women’s writing does not enjoy an equivalent heritage. In *the* agenda-setting monograph for classical reception studies, Charles Martindale fails to draw on a single female writer as he re-examines the texts of Virgil, Ovid, Horace, and Lucan through the readings and rewritings of Shakespeare,

¹ Iser (1978).

² For bibliographic references, see Oswald (2011a); E. Cook (2002); Farber (2008a).

Milton, Eliot and others.³ Martindale is typically credited with bringing Hans Robert Jauss's aesthetic of reception, which Jauss formulated from the late 1960s with his inaugural lecture at the University of Konstanz, to the attention of the discipline.⁴ Jauss's 'provocation' set out his new approach to literary history and broadcast the radicalism of the new university and the Konstanz school of literary studies.⁵ However, Jauss and his peers did not consider that the burgeoning second wave feminist movement, and its mobilization of the female reader and rewriter to challenge positivism and the canon, might come to have a meaningful role to play in their re-vision of the academic humanities.⁶ Classical reception studies not only inherits its

³ Martindale (1993). See also, Martindale (1991), (2001), (2006), (2007), (2010), (2013a), (2013b). For critical reflections on Martindale's formulation of reception theory, see Batstone (2006); De Pourcq (2012); Easterling (2013); J. I. Porter (2008).

⁴ Jauss (1982, 3-45) [1967]. The title of the lecture - 'Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory' - gestures to Jauss's challenge to traditional literary criticism (in German: '*Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft*'). Iser (1978) is another member of the Konstanz school and Martindale's recent work that takes Walter Pater's classicism as an aesthetic model brushes up against Iser's interest in Pater (1987) [1960], see e.g., Martindale (2005); Martindale et al. (2017).

⁵ For Jauss's shifting relationship with literary traditions, see Wagner (1984). For the Konstanz school, see Holub (1995).

⁶ For context, the emergence of second wave feminism as part of the social and political movements that culminated in 1968 means that the omission of feminism and the female reader from the early formulations of reception theory is not for want of profile, material, or relevance. For subsequent attempts to marry reader-response with feminist literary criticism, see Shweickart (1986);

theoretical model from Jauss and the Konstanz school but also its remarkable neglect of women as readers and rewriters.⁷

also the review essay on gender and reading in Caughie (1988), as well as Flynn (1986). The feminist approaches to gender and reading mirror the shifts in feminist literary criticism that I will trace in this chapter, focusing on the female reader of male-authored texts, see e.g., Davies et al. (1987); or the female reader of female writers, see e.g., Pearce (1992). There is also a body of post-structuralist work that considers gendered reading as a strategy of literary criticism, see e.g., the male critic Jonathan Culler's work on 'reading as a woman' (1982); and the surrounding debate in Fuss (1989); S. Mills (1994, 32-34); Modleski (1986). For the female reader and feminism, see Flynn and Schweickart (1986); S. Mills (1994a), (1994b). The female reader who rewrites obviously predates the second wave, with the likes of Virginia Woolf or, even earlier, Christine de Pisan offering insight into the impact of gender on, to borrow Jauss's term, the 'horizon of expectation' out of which the reader makes meaning. There are clear overlaps between the works that emerged alongside, or even before, the publications of the Konstanz school and the early works of feminist criticism that prioritized the (female) reader, even if they did not explicitly engage with reception theory. For instance, Simone De Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949), translated into English as *The Second Sex* in 1953 [1988]; Mary Ellmann's *Thinking About Women* (1968); and Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970), based on her Ph.D dissertation. I would also include Carolyn Heilbrun's re-vision of Shakespeare's Gertrude in 'The Character of Hamlet's Mother' (1957).

⁷ In the collection of Jauss's work in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (1982), translated by Timothy Bahti, Mme. de La Fayette is the only woman included in the index. There is no sustained treatment of her work in the text, as she appears only in an aside in a sentence on page 93, referring to the 'multi-faceted casuistry of Mme de at Fayette'. Iser, whose field is English literature, spends two pages on Virginia Woolf in *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (1978, 168-69).

Martindale's gendered myopia set the tone for the following decades, with female writers overshadowed by their male counterparts in critical discussion.⁸ The move to redress the balance is gathering steam, with growing recognition that the abundance and quality of contemporary women's writing position these texts at the forefront of the ongoing dialogue with the classical past in English literature.⁹ However, the impact of classical reception

⁸ See e.g., Theodorakopoulos (2012, 152 n. 16); F. M. Cox and Theodorakopoulos (2013b); as well as the surveys in the introductions to the Ph.D theses of MacDonald (2017) and Ranger (2016).

⁹ For the emergence of 'classical reception in contemporary women's writing' as a sub-field within classical reception studies, see e.g., F. M. Cox (2011), (2018); F. M. Cox and Theodorakopoulos (2012b), (2013b), (2013c); MacDonald (2017); Ranger (2016). The OUP series, 'Classical Presences', includes monographs dedicated to women's receptions, see e.g., F. M. Cox (2011); F. M. Cox (2018); F. M. Cox and Theodorakopoulos (forthcoming b); Hurst (2006); Roynon (2013); Wyles and Hall (2017). However, only Roynon's work on Toni Morrison and Balmer (2013) give book-length attention to individual female writers, in comparison with ten works that focus on individual male writers, see e.g., Gibson (2015) for Robert Graves; Kilgour (2012) for Milton's reception of Ovid; Leonard (2010) for Jacques Derrida; Lifschitz and Squire (2017) for Gotthold Ephraim Lessing; Martindale et al. (2017) for Walter Pater; Pop (2015) for Henry Fuseli; Rees (2009) for Ted Hughes; Riddiford (2013) for Michael Madhusudan Datta; Rosenblitt (2016) for E. E. Cummings; Wrigley and S. J. Harrison (2013) for Louis MacNeice. The new Bloomsbury series, 'Classical Receptions in Twentieth-Century Writing', has so far published a monograph on Virginia Woolf's engagement with tragedy, see Worman (2018). However, with a monograph on Federico Fellini already published, see Carrera (2018), and works on George Seferis, Michel Foucault, Derek Walcott, T. S. Eliot, Tony Harrison, C. D. Lewis, and James Joyce to follow, plans for the series seem

studies' androcentric origins is not limited to, and cannot be solved by simply addressing, the issue of representation. The dominance of men's creative writing in the early formation of the sub-discipline has inevitably shaped how classicists *do* classical reception.¹⁰ To shift the focus to the abundance of women's writing in contemporary classical reception demands a new set of creative reference points, as well as a new theoretical framework, attentive to the modern female reader and rewriter.

1.1 The (Male) Reader in the Text

Classical reception describes the relationship between the texts of antiquity and their postclassical echoes *and* the critical practice that goes in to drawing out their interrelations. This distinctive self-referentiality calls attention to the connection between classical reception's theory and practice realized by the reader who engages with texts both critically

to be disproportionately weighted towards male writers. The one female voice that will join Woolf in the series is Sylvia Plath, see Ranger (forthcoming). On a more positive note, the forthcoming collection on Modernist classical translation, as part of the Bloomsbury Series in Classical Reception, dedicates an entire section, made up of four chapters and a response paper, to H. D., see Hickman and Kozak (forthcoming).

¹⁰ At the risk of over-generalizing: the mid-2000s saw a proliferation of edited volumes that advertised the breadth of classical reception studies, see e.g., Martindale and Thomas (2006); Kallendorf (2007); Hardwick and Gillespie (2007); Hardwick and Stray (2008). From around the 2010s, there has been more work on specific approaches, authors, or trends in classical reception, e.g., the 'democratic turn' in Hardwick and S. J. Harrison (2013b); or 'deep Classics' in S. Butler (2016b).

and creatively. Martindale has been the leading voice in classical reception since the emergence of the sub-discipline in the early-nineties and the application of reception theory to the study of what had been known as ‘the classical tradition’.¹¹ His *Redeeming the Text: Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception* set the standard against which subsequent attempts to theorize the relationships of influence and exchange between classical texts and their successors inevitably respond.¹² And while Martindale’s early statement that ‘[m]eaning ... is always realized at the point of reception’ has become the aphorism that underpins classical reception studies, his early observations on the reader in classical reception, to which I have already gestured, warrant further, and closer, attention.¹³

¹¹ The use of ‘reception’ to describe the relationship between past and present marks a turn from, though not complete abandonment of, the earlier work on the classical ‘tradition’, see e.g., Hight (1949); Jenkyns (1980). For the ideological positions that underpin ‘tradition’ versus ‘reception’, see Hardwick (2003, 1-11); Martindale (2007, 298). The apparent difference between the two approaches is the active involvement of the reader in reception, in contrast with the imposing influence of classical authors in the tradition. However, as Martindale notes, the distinction between ‘tradition’ and ‘reception’ is neither clear cut nor fixed and the essays in Brockliss et al. (2012b), for example, set out newer, dynamic approaches to ‘tradition’ as something to which the reader can appeal and activate, see discussion at Brockliss et al. (2012a, 7). See also the earlier discussion in Hinds (1998, 52-98, 123-44) for the relationship between literary history/tradition and allusion. This thesis will demonstrate that the classical tradition retains its usefulness to describe the literary history of a particular classical text with which women readers can engage, resist, or rework in their rewritings.

¹² Martindale (1993).

¹³ Martindale (1993, 3), emphasis in the original.

In the second chapter of *Redeeming the Text*, Martindale turns to Virgilian criticism to skewer the pose of scholarly disinterest and its attendant distinction between the creative artist and the critic or reader.¹⁴ He contextualizes Adam Parry's famous article: 'The Two Voices of Virgil's *Aeneid*' to expose its entanglement with mid-century American politics, in which Parry's reading of Augustan epic emerges out of, reflects, and takes part in contemporary debates on imperialism.¹⁵ Martindale turns to Dante and Lucan to propose equivalence between their explicitly creative engagements with Virgil and Parry's implicitly situated response to and critical creation of an epic of Empire.¹⁶ The significance of placing the modern critic and earlier writers side-by-side in their respective responses to another, classical writer is two-fold and neatly summarized by the sub-headings that bookend the chapter: 'the critic as artist' and 'the artist as critic'. Martindale insists that criticism is a creative, generative, and interested activity, while the practice of literary allusion in writing is a critical art. And, crucially, what marries the critical and the creative is the act of reading:

[F]irst, ... all readings of texts are *situated*, contingent upon their historical moment, and thus that *to understand is always to understand historically*; and secondly, that one useful approach to certain great 'imitative' texts is to see them as rereadings of the works imitated.¹⁷

¹⁴ Martindale (1993, 35-54).

¹⁵ Martindale (1993, 40-43), with reference to A. Parry (1963).

¹⁶ Martindale (1993, 43-53).

¹⁷ Martindale (1993, 35), emphasis in the original.

Reading is an activity that does not negate but mediates the historical or geographical distances between, in this instance, Lucan, Dante, and Parry, and carves out a space in which they can ‘speak’ and respond, each to the other, across millennia.

From this perspective, the practice of classical reception is characterized by readers who rewrite and whose rewritings are, in turn, read and rewritten in scholarly and creative contexts. Martindale’s final provocation of the chapter is to suggest that creative writers are not only engaged in practices of reading comparable to criticism but that their readings can be just as, if not more, insightful than those of their academic counterparts.¹⁸ Literary treatments of classical material lack the positivism of the philological tradition in classical scholarship and call attention not only to their own readings but to the myriad potential of others. The dynamic of reception relies on just this kind of contingency, in which the interplay between the text and the reader generates new meaning.¹⁹ In turn, the accretions of a classical text in reception are irresistible to each subsequent reader, so that ‘the reception of a text, including the poetic revisions it engenders, is inseparable, in ways that are often ignored, from our current readings of it’.²⁰ However, while Martindale dignifies literary reception as critical

¹⁸ Martindale (1993, 53). This approach is exemplified in the collection of essays in S. J. Harrison (2009), which brings together pieces written by poets on their classical reception practice with academic responses to works of classical reception.

¹⁹ Martindale (1993, 54).

²⁰ Martindale (1993, 54).

practice, the glaring absence of women readers and rewriters from his frame of reference is a remarkable blind spot in his vision for reception as hermeneutic.

1.2 Classical Reception in Contemporary Women's Writing

The work to identify the influence of women's writing of classical literature on the shape of the discipline continues apace, with the first clear statement of intent appearing in 2012 in a special issue of *Classical Receptions Journal* dedicated to women's writing and the classical tradition.²¹ The contributions from the volume's editors, Fiona Cox and Elena Theodorakopoulos, set out what is at stake in the study of women's classical reception, positioning the sub-field at the intersection of feminist literary criticism and classical reception studies.²² Theodorakopoulos examines the relative neglect of women's classical reception in the context of wider trends in literary prize-giving and book reviewing.²³ She spotlights translation as a key site for the expression of female classicism, in which the traditional denigration of translation-work as feminine and secondary is upended by strategies that call attention to translation as intervention.²⁴ Theodorakopoulos revisits Catullus 101 via

²¹ See the essays in *Classical Receptions Journal* 4 (2).

²² F. M. Cox (2012); Theodorakopoulos (2012).

²³ Theodorakopoulos (2012, 151-52).

²⁴ For 'intervention' as a mode of reception, see Hardwick (2000b, 31-42); and in relation to women's classical reception in Theodorakopoulos (2012, 155). The emergence of translation studies saw an increasing recognition of translation as intervention, see e.g., Venuti (1995). For difference/*différance* in translation as creative and meaningful intervention, see the essays in the

Anne Carson's poetic translation *Nox* (2010), in which her reading of Carson's reading of Catullus extricates poem 101 from the knot of its extensive male reception history.²⁵ Carson's *Nox* enriches Catullus 101 to suggest that women may 'transgress' the classical tradition to open up the ancient text to new interpretations and to expose the particular interests of earlier receptions.²⁶

volume J. F. Graham (1985), especially Johnson (1985). For feminist treatments of the interplay of gender, translation, agency, and visibility/invisibility, see e.g., Theodorakopoulos (2012), who cites the work of Barbara Godard (1990). For more on gender and translation, see especially Bassnett (1992); Von Flotow (1997). For women's translation of classical texts in the nineteenth century as 'empowerment', see Hardwick (2000a). The collection of essays in Lianeri and Zajko (2008a) consider the translation of ancient texts as cultural and political activities that engage with and contribute to the ideology of 'Classics'. Stuart Gillespie's extensive work on English translations of Greek and Latin texts is almost entirely focused on male authors. See e.g. Gillespie (2011, 20-32) for discussion of Modernist translation, in which H. D. is featured sparingly. The gap is not attributable to lack of material; the eleventh chapter, which takes us up to Ted Hughes, omits the significant work of post-1960s modern female translators, such as Josephine Balmer, Anne Carson, and Sylvia Plath. See also Gillespie (1988).

²⁵ Theodorakopoulos (2012, 157-59).

²⁶ The term 'transgression' is from Balmer (2004b), (2012), (2013), who uses the term to distinguish between translations that aim for faithfulness and creative responses that revision, rework, and 'transgress'. For Balmer's translations in the context of feminist translation theory, see F. M. Cox (2018, 175-200); Ranger (2016, 182-247).

The act of translation remains an especially potent form of reading and rewriting for women that calls attention to the boundaries – between old and new, and imitation and creativity – that the work of classical reception studies renders visible. Emily Wilson’s recent translation of Homer’s *Odyssey* (2018) is an excellent case in point; this is the first version of Homer’s epic by a female translator working in English and arrives just three years after Caroline Alexander’s similarly ground-breaking rendering of the *Iliad* (2015). Wilson is explicit in her feminist treatment of the material. She explicitly works to expose the structures of power inscribed in the Greek with an urgency that links representation (how texts describe the world) with reality (how texts shape the world), as well as drawing on a longstanding tradition of reading the epic as social history.²⁷ Her decision to approach the *Odyssey* as a

²⁷ See E. Wilson (2017). For discussion of her treatment of πολύτροπος in the poem’s first line, which she translates as ‘complicated’, see Mason and E. Wilson (2017). For a rereading of Penelope and πολύτροπος in one of the early works of feminist criticism on the *Odyssey*, see Marquardt (1985). Moses Finley’s *The World of Odysseus* (1964) [1954] famously ‘excavates’ Homeric epic for the light the works can shed on the social conditions in which they were composed. Moreover, as Bowra’s introduction to the 1964 edition points out, Finley reads the societies that Homer constructs in his poems as receptions of an earlier, Mycenaean past that Homer translates for his present (pp. 9-11). The influence of Finley reappears in feminist treatments of the *Odyssey*. For instance, J. J. Winkler (1990a) reshapes the assumptions of Samuel Butler in his *The Authoress of the Odyssey* (1897) via ‘modern feminist anthropology’ (p. 130) and the theme of women and resourcefulness. Winkler combines the provocation of Butler, that the *Odyssey* is a feminine poem, with an ‘anthropology of cunning (μητις)’ (pp. 133-37) to uncover Penelope’s integral role in the deceptions that enable the success of Odysseus’ homecoming. Finley’s historical approach to Homer interacts with linguistic and archaeological approaches to Homeric scholarship in the mid-twentieth century. For an early overview to the Homeric Question, that centres on the nature of the poems’

feminist reader and her practice of making herself visible in the text contrasts with Alexander's work with the *Iliad*, which does not foreground the translator's gender or politics, and helps to make the point that the female reader and feminist readings are not one and the same.²⁸

Wilson's attentiveness to gender and class - her translation rejects euphemistic terms that obfuscate women's servitude to insist that the women in the palace are 'slaves' – invites comparison with Margaret Atwood's creative response to Homer in *The Penelopiad* (2005).²⁹ Atwood's interest in the maids/slaves and their slaughter at *Od.* 22.465-72 exposes Penelope's complicity with Ithaca's male-dominated social hierarchy, something that an attentive reader

composition (how and by whom), see Davison (1962). The key text is M. Parry (1971), whose work is developed by Lord (1995). The work of Gregory Nagy dominates the Homeric Question for contemporary scholars, see e.g., Nagy (1996a). For Homer and archaeology, see e.g., Osborne (2004), with bibliography. For an approach that marries the findings of archaeological approaches and oral poetics, see Sherratt (1990).

²⁸ For women's writing/feminist writing, see e.g., Coward (1980). See E. Wilson (forthcoming) for her work as a feminist, resisting reader who works to 'create an English Homer that invites a critical response to its own dominant ideology'. For resisting reading, see Fetterley (1978). In the same piece, Wilson also explores the discourse of 'visibility' in translation.

²⁹ Atwood's reception, as part of the Canongate Myth Series of retellings, has attracted a great deal of critical interest. For some of the latest pieces on her work, see e.g., Hauser (2018); J. Richards (forthcoming). For female slaves in the *Odyssey*, with an eye to the intersections of gender and class, see Thalmann (1998a), and more broadly in Thalmann (1998b, 49-113).

of Wilson's translation will also notice.³⁰ Wilson deliberately underplays the distinction that the Greek makes between the types of women in the service of Penelope, by flattening the difference between ἀμφίπολοι and δμωαί (the latter word referring specifically to female captives of war) to a matter of age:

‘... And call
Penelope, her **slaves**, and all the **slave girls**
inside the house.’

‘... σὺ δὲ Πηνελόπειαν
ἐλθεῖν ἐνθάδ’ ἄνωχθι σὺν ἀμφιπόλοισι γυναιξί:
πάσας δ’ ὄτρυνον **δμῶας** κατὰ δῶμα νέεσθαι.’ (*Od.* 22.482-84)³¹

³⁰ The question of the guilt of the maids/slaves centres on their freedom (or lack of) to chose to sleep with the suitors, which is complicated by the shifts in the way that the women's relationships with the suitors are described in the epic, e.g., compare *Od.* 20.6-8 with 22.37. Wilson's approach to Penelope vis-à-vis her slave women recalls the work of Lillian Doherty, especially her feminist narratological treatment of identification and storytelling in the epic. Doherty (2001) suggests that the slave women may fare badly with regard to audience sympathy due to the work of the poet in inducing (female) audience identification with Penelope (p. 133), see also Doherty (1991), (1992), (1995).

³¹ E. V. Rieu's translation, for instance, does mark the distinction between the women in terms of status, using 'ladies-in-waiting' at 22.483 and 'maids' at 22.484. However, he clearly does not engage with the issue of slavery and renders both terms so that Penelope's household resembles a genteel, European royal court. Wilson seems to add feminist urgency to the matter-of-fact treatment of female servitude in Finley (1964, 56-57, 62-63). Finley notes that '[t]he heroes as a rule killed the males and carried off the females, *regardless of rank*' (p. 56, emphasis my own). Euripides' *Trojan Women*, a 'reception' of the *Iliad* in the tradition of the Trojan War, presents the experience of servitude for the likes of Hecabe as a flattening of earlier hierarchies (cf. Eur., *Tro.* 234). For the relationship between Homer and Euripides, see e.g., Goldhill (1986, 165-66). Perhaps Wilson, who translated *Trojan Women* in 2016, is making a similar point with her translation? See also Rabinowitz

Wilson recasts Homer in the light of intersectional feminism and the points of contact with Atwood's reception evidence the creativity that translation affords to women writers.³² In addition to rereading Homer, Wilson and Atwood also complicate the place of Penelope in second wave feminist scholarship, in which she has served as a beacon for women's creativity.³³ Moreover, Wilson's emphasis on historical context reverberates across both epics to demand equivalent treatment for the women in the *Iliad*. My second and third chapters on receptions of *Lysistrata* and Alice Oswald's *Memorial* respectively respond to the relationship

(1998, 60-61) for the importance of age in the type of servitude that women endure in *Trojan Women*. Pat Barker's recent work of fiction, *The Silence of the Girls* (2018), turns to the Greek camp at Troy and the character of Briseis to expose and draw out women's experiences of servitude that hover at the margins of the epic text.

³² E. Wilson (2017) describes Penelope's status using the contemporary language of social justice, referring to her as 'a woman of privilege' who silences others: 'All this may make Penelope seem like an innocent victim, but she is also a woman of privilege, who colludes in, indeed insists on, the silencing of more vulnerable women. Penelope clutches desperately at whatever shards of autonomy are available in her husband's house'.

³³ See e.g., Clayton (2004); Felson-Rubin (1994); Foley (1978), (1995). For women's identification with Penelope in scholarship, see Zajko (2008, 196-98). For American women poets and their engagement with Penelope, see e.g., Hurst (2009). Doherty (1995) sets out how the poet appears to make space for and empower women as internal and external audiences of epic, but she concludes that the poem's apparent inclusiveness belies, and even helps to impose, the limits that the poem establishes with regard to women as creators of epic.

between Andromache and the women with whom she laments at *Iliad* 6.497-502 and at the end of book twenty-two in terms of women's communal resistance to epic κλέος. However, Wilson's cultural materialist intervention, linked to her visibility as a translator, exposes the power relations that underpin the antiphonal exchanges in the γόοι between Andromache and the women (identified as ἀμφίπολοι at 6.499 and 22.442, and δμωαί at 22.449).³⁴ From this perspective, readings that infer sorority between the women or that underplay the freewoman-slave dynamic seem at best naïve and, at worst, complicit in obscuring historical injustice.

Cox's contribution to the special issue considers the influence of feminist theory on the shape of women's creative engagements with classical literature.³⁵ She positions women's writing at the centre of longstanding discussions concerning the application of feminist theory to classical texts, as well as the potential contribution of feminist theory to reception studies.³⁶ Cox examines the receptions of Ovid in the poetry of Jo Shapcott and suggests metamorphosis as an apt paradigm for third wave reception. She notes the general, though not complete, shift from models of reading that focus on excavating female experience from male-authored texts to the growing emphasis on the multiplicity (even 'mutability' as her title suggests) of femininities: 'The concern to give a voice to the silenced women of the past is

³⁴ Alexander translates ἀμφίπολοι as 'handmaids' at 6.499 and 'attendants' at 22.442 and δμωαί at 22.449 as 'maids'.

³⁵ F. M. Cox (2012).

³⁶ See also Theodorakopoulos (2012, 160). For feminist theory and Classics, see e.g. Richlin and Rabinowitz (1993); McManus (1997). For feminist theory and classical reception, see Liveley (2006b); Zajko (2008).

still present, but it is now just one in a whole range of issues that women writers are addressing'.³⁷

Wilson and Alexander's interventions into epic mark a widening in the purview of female translators that reflects the broadening in subject matter and approach that Cox identifies in women's classical reception more generally. However, the rich history of feminist engagements with epic in scholarship means that it is perhaps surprising that it has taken until the twenty-first century for women to translate classical epic into English (Sarah Ruden's *Aeneid* appeared in 2008).³⁸ Helene Foley and Marilyn Katz, for the *Odyssey* and the

³⁷ F. M. Cox (2012, 165).

³⁸ See discussion of Ruden and women's translations in F. M. Cox and Theodorakopoulos (2012a). The history of women's translation in English in the twentieth century is remarkable for the tendency of women translators to turn away from figures like Homer and Aeschylus, both targets for rewriting in this thesis, to foreground lyric poetry and the ancient female voice (as well as Euripides, who is perhaps a kind of anti-Aeschylus). For feminist classical scholarship that focuses on ancient women's literary production, see e.g., Balmer (1995); Snyder (1989). For discussion, see Balmer (2013, 103-40). See also the collections of women's poetry that combine academic 'rescue' with the practice of reading and rewriting/translating ancient women, e.g., Lefkowitz and Fant (1982); Plant (2004); Rayor (1991). For translations of Sappho, see e.g., Balmer (1984); Barnard (1958); Carson (2002); Rayor (2014). See also H. D.'s 'Hymen' (1919). For points of contact between the Modernist/Imagist poetics of H. D. and Mary Barnard and their engagements with Sappho, see Barnsley (2013, 57-71, 80-113). For H. D.'s Hellenism as 'sapphic' in its attentiveness to questions of gender, sex, and sexuality, see Collecott (1999); also Rohrbach (1996). See also Gregory (1986), especially (1997, 148-61), which contrasts with Collecott to focus more on H. D.'s engagement with

Iliad respectively, began the process of returning to Homer to uncover points of tension – and areas ripe for feminist intervention – in the epic narrative, and both critics emphasize the interdependence of men and women in the poems.³⁹ Foley examines the preponderance of similes in the *Odyssey* that invert sex roles (e.g., 19.108-14 and 23.233-40) to explore the space that opens up in Odysseus’ absence for Penelope to demonstrate her own excellence and the interdependence of the male and female spheres for the prosperity of Ithaca.⁴⁰ Katz returns to *Iliad* 6 and the relationship between Hector and Andromache, which is a key site for creative expression for the women in this thesis, to call attention to the crucial moment at which the male and female spheres are at their least distinct during the war.⁴¹

the male-centred tradition of reading and rewriting Sappho. Carson splices together Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides for her *An Oresteia* (2009), and translates Euripides’ *Herakles*, *Hekabe*, *Hippolytos*, and *Alkestis* (2008). For Balmer’s engagements with Catullus, see Balmer (2004a), (2004b).

³⁹ Foley (1978); Katz (1981). Katz’s chapter appears as part of Foley (1981), which the editor describes as a kind of ‘sequel’ to the two issues of the classical journal *Arethusa* 6 and 11 dedicated to ‘women in antiquity’ and an extension of the double issue of the journal *Women’s Studies* 8 (1-2), which was the ‘first special issue on “Women in Antiquity” in a major women’s studies journal’ (p. xi).

⁴⁰ Foley (1978).

⁴¹ Katz (1981, 19) makes the point that the clear separation between men and women that we see reflected in the literature of the classical period, and that is explored from a feminist perspective in Zeitlin (1978), is not apparent in Homeric epic: ‘We find in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* a certain plasticity in the conception of male and female sex roles’. See also Katz (1973).

This thesis testifies to the significant interest in Homer's *Iliad* among contemporary women writers, in addition to the persistent influence of the *Odyssey* from its emergence as the focal point for the Modernist aesthetic and its popularity among feminist classicists.⁴² Moreover, the connection between femininity and ambiguity or indeterminacy that reappears across scholarly treatments of the *Odyssey*, which further complicates the interdependence between male-and-female that Foley describes, is redirected through the works in this thesis to the world of the *Iliad*.⁴³ Elizabeth Cook's *Achilles* shares an erotic approach to her themes of war with H. D.'s *Helen in Egypt* (1961) and she similarly considers the eponymous hero

⁴² F. M. Cox and Theodorakopoulos (forthcoming b) will be the first volume dedicated to receptions of Homer in contemporary women's writing, following Hurst (2006) for Victorian women writers. For women's receptions of the *Odyssey*, see e.g., Hurst (2009); Murnaghan and Roberts (2002). There is a wealth of material on postclassical receptions of Homer. For dedicated volumes, see e.g., Graziosi and Greenwood (2007); Hall (2008c); Haywood and MacSweeney (2018); McConnell (2013); Schein (2015a). Zajko (2004, 312) traces the shift from the Victorian Homer of Matthew Arnold for whom 'the Homeric is the *Iliad*' to the twentieth century in which '[f]or the modernists...Homer was the *Odyssey*'. See Flack (2015) for Modernism and Homer, although the focus is largely on male writers, with the exception of H. D.. For the pervasive influence of the *Odyssey*, see Hall (2008c).

⁴³ For 'indeterminacy' and the *Odyssey*, see especially Katz (1991). See also McManus's 'transvestite' reading of Virgil's *Aeneid* that looks for instances in the epic in which gender distinctions are blurred rather than inverted (1997, 91-118). I look forward to reading Hauser (forthcoming) for the relationship between Homeric scholarship and women's creative responses to epic, which was not published during the writing of this thesis.

‘before he was anyone’s soldier’.⁴⁴ However, Cook’s reception is less a turn away from and more a return to the epic to reveal moments that complicate Homeric masculinity. The relationship between Achilles and Hector forms the climax of Cook’s re-vision of the battlefield as she makes the longing (ποθή) that both men claim others will feel or do feel for them explicitly erotic (cf. *Il.* 1.240, 6.362).⁴⁵

Even Alice Oswald’s *Memorial*, the most apparently straightforward treatment of the *Iliad* under examination, rereads Homer with an eye to sites of tension within the epic narrative that centre on women’s lament. Her poem uses the mass casualties of the First World War and their remembrance to communicate her distaste for the Homeric economy of κλέος to her twenty-first century readership. However, her lament for the war dead remains

⁴⁴ The phrase comes from Ostriker (1983, 37) who uses it to describe H. D.’s approach to Achilles. Ostriker considers H. D. ‘the first poet in our history to create poetic myths centered [sic] on a feminine principle, in which male figures play the kinds of roles females have always played in male myths’ (p. 40).

⁴⁵ Cook’s treatment of homoerotic desire between warriors on the battlefield identifies a popular motif for contemporary women writers, from Josephine Balmer’s ‘Fresh Meat: A Perversion of *Iliad* 22’ (2004) to Madeleine Miller’s *The Song of Achilles* (2011), the latter for whom the focus is Achilles and Patroclus. However, there is an important difference between the treatments of Achilles-Hector and Achilles-Patroclus in that Cook and Balmer have to read eroticism into (and excavate it out of) the text, while Miller engages with a tradition of reading Achilles and Patroclus as lovers. For homosexual/homoerotic receptions of Achilles and Patroclus in the epic tradition, with a focus on Virgil, Ovid, and Statius, see Fantuzzi (2012, 187-266).

sensitive to the contortions of contemporary pacifism, as she considers whether it is possible to reject war without rejecting the dead. She uses this modern dilemma to think back to the ways in which the γόος resists but also reinforces the warrior's pursuit of κλέος. Like the soldier poets to whom her poem gestures, Homer's epic now seems to offer contemporary women writers 'a field of expression "to think with"', while Homer's female characters complicate, rather than simply attract, the identification of the female reader.⁴⁶

1.3 Between Critical and Creative Practice

The female reader who rewrites occupies a crucial space in feminist criticism at the intersection of feminist theory and practice from which she can intervene to challenge and correct the male dominance of the Western tradition and its entanglement in ongoing inequalities. An early task for the feminist literary critic was to address the contribution that men's writing about women had made to women's oppression, while women's writing could create communities of female readers and mobilize women for the feminist movement.⁴⁷ The

⁴⁶ Vandiver (2010, xi).

⁴⁷ The classic example of 'images of women' criticism is Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1977) [1970]. See also Ellmann (1968), as well as the collection of essays in Cornillon (1973), and the discussion in Moi (1985, 42-49). See S. M. Gilbert and Gubar (1979), (1989), (1994) for the connection between women's writing, its reception by male critics, and the female experience under patriarchy across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For a selection of other additions to and critical engagements with 'representations of women' criticism, see e.g., G. Greene (1991); Heilbrun (1979), (1990); Heilbrun and Higgonet (1983); Kolodny (1980a), (1980b). The movement to foreground the issue of gender in writing begs the question: 'Do Women Write Differently?', which

exposure of literary misogyny and renewed interest in women's writing coincided with an aesthetic revaluation that imbued representation with extra-literary significance, marking a departure from the key strategies of literary Modernism.⁴⁸ The female reader and the female writer, so the argument goes, enjoy an immutable connection based on lived experience around which they can organize politically, and the female character enables and conditions the encounter and identification between reader and writer.⁴⁹

the collection of essays in Eagleton (1986) use for a section heading; see also DuPlessis (1986). The difference of the female writer also demands an alternative theoretical framework for feminist literary criticism, see especially the 'gynocriticism' in Showalter (1977), (1986); and the 'feminist aesthetic' in Battersby (1989). For feminist politics, women's creativity, and feminist criticism, see Coward (1980); De Lauretis (1987); Humm (1991); Ronney (2006).

⁴⁸ Two of the classic early texts of the women's movement are Betty Friedan's work of non-fiction *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and Marilyn French's novel *The Women's Room* (1977). French's novel even takes the women's liberation movement and consciousness-raising as part of its subject matter. The reception of this realist novel, and those like it, prioritised the ability of the female reader to see their own experiences reflected back to them. This also contrasts sharply with the, albeit slightly earlier, turn from traditional fiction with the French Nouveau Roman from the mid-1950s. The contrast is perhaps less one of gender, although male writers did dominate the nouveau roman group, and instead anticipates the differences that will emerge between French and Anglo-American feminisms. However, Sarah Barbour (1993) reads the writings of Nathalie Sarraute in the context of Sarraute's engagement with the nouveau roman group as a female – and feminist – reader to excavate the issues of gender and identity that Sarraute's work obfuscates.

⁴⁹ See Zajko (2006a), (2006b) for psychoanalytic literary criticism and identification. Zajko (2006a) makes the case for the application of renewed scrutiny to the concept of identification in

The work of feminist literary critic Judith Fetterley marries the ‘images of women’ criticism familiar to American feminism exemplified by the work of Kate Millett with a more European focus on language and subjectivity to expose not only the workings but the psychological effects of textual politics for women readers.⁵⁰ Fetterley’s opening statement: ‘Literature is political’, sets the tone for her excoriating assault on the façade of universal value in literature and how appeals to timelessness conceal and perpetuate the sexism inscribed in male-authored texts.⁵¹ She positions her intervention alongside the earlier writing of feminist critics to imagine a method of resisting reading that leads from the exposure of

classical reception studies to better engage with the subjectivity of the reader and the interiority of reading. For instance, in the co-edited volume on classical myth and psychoanalysis, Zajko and Ellen O’Gorman (2013a) underline the interdependence of the classical and the psychoanalytical in terms of Freud’s engagement with Oedipus: ‘his observations of children are “confirmed” by the myth, but the potency of that myth “can only be understood” from a psychoanalytical perspective’ (p. 4). Zajko’s work calls attention to the potency of psychoanalysis for classical reception, especially with regard to the relationship between classical myth and feminist reading and rewriting. See Zajko (2006a), (2006b), (2017); Zajko and O’Gorman (2013b). For gender and myth, see also Doherty (2003).

⁵⁰ Fetterley (1978).

⁵¹ Fetterley (1978, xi). For resisting reading as a step towards political awakening: ‘... the first act of the feminist critic must be to become a resisting rather than an assenting reader and, by this refusal to assent, to begin the process of exorcizing the male mind that has been implanted in us’ (p. xii).

inequality, to discussion, and to change.⁵² She combines Elaine Showalter's assessment of the 'immascultation' of the female reader of male-authored texts with Adrienne Rich's strategy of 're-vision' to propose a method of reading-*cum*-activism that deliberately resists identification with the male hero to read instead from the feminine subject position.⁵³

The latent promise of the female writer of classical reception is that she is first and foremost a (resisting) reader, performing the work that Fetterley envisages and more, and the androcentrism of the classical tradition makes Fetterley's model of feminine resistance especially pertinent for classical reception.⁵⁴ However, as the growing body of scholarship that surrounds women's classical reception attests, appetite for strictly oppositional responses to the classical tradition is diminished among women readers who rewrite. Genevieve Liveley and Vanda Zajko's work on the relationship between feminism and classical reception studies helps to map the turn away from resistance in women's receptions and to identify the issues that a new model of classical reception based on the female reader will need to address.⁵⁵

Genevieve Liveley looks back to the mid-1980s to the interactions between the field of literary criticism and its coming to terms with post-feminism and the attempts to strategize

⁵² Fetterley (1978, xx).

⁵³ Fetterley (1978, xix-xxiii), referring to Rich (1972); Showalter (1971).

⁵⁴ See e.g., the formulation of 're-vision' in Adrienne Rich (1972), the 'revisionist mythmaking' in Ostriker (1982), and the invocation to write 'beyond the ending' in DuPlessis (1985).

⁵⁵ Liveley (2006b); Zajko (2008).

and demarcate the work and field of feminist Classics. Her piece centres on the publication of Alice Jardine's *Gynesis* (1985) and the panel of the Women's Classical Caucus: 'Re-appropriating the Text: The Case of Ovid' (1985).⁵⁶ Liveley suggests that Jardine's formulation of post-feminism is distinct for its acute reflexivity. Jardine is conscious not only of her situation within a particular time and place, but also of her position of belatedness as an inheritor of earlier feminisms which are themselves often inheritors of male engendered theories.⁵⁷ Liveley identifies similar methodological scrutiny at the WCC, especially the exchange between Mary-Kay Gamel and Phyllis Culham, which centres on the place of male-authored literary texts, their representation of women, and the relationship between these representations and the real lives of ancient women.⁵⁸ Liveley suggests that reception as an

⁵⁶ The papers from the panel were published in a special issue of *Helios* in 1990 (*Helios* 17.2). Liveley (2006b) also examines Rachel Blau DuPlessis's 'For the Etruscans' (1986) [1985] and its reception in the special issue of *Helios*, 'Rescuing Creusa: New Methodological Approaches to Women in Antiquity' (1986). For the context of the WCC panel at the APA and its significance as part of wider feminist challenges to the field and the profession, see McManus (1997, 37-45).

⁵⁷ Liveley (2006b, 56-60).

⁵⁸ Liveley (2006b, 62-64). See Culham (1990); Gamel (1990). Note Gamel's provocatively titled: 'Reading Reality'. The publication of Sarah Pomeroy's *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (1975) marks the formation of 'women in antiquity' as an area of study in ancient history and builds on her survey of articles on women in antiquity published in *Arethusa* in 1973, see Pomeroy (1973), (1995), also (1991). See also the collection in Peradotto and Sullivan (1984). See also Murnaghan (2015) for a measured take on the debate from the perspective of women's classical reception. Kathy L. Gaca has produced a body of work that calls attention to the experience of war for women and girls, emphasizing the role of sexual violence in ancient warfare

interpretive strategy may offer a compromise between Gamel's textuality and Culham's empiricism, in which '[t]he "reality" of women's lives is "realized" – made real – retrospectively from the point of reception'.⁵⁹

Liveley reflects on how these disciplinary struggles continue to shape and reshape the practice of feminist classical reception, and she identifies emerging critical areas that demand attention; namely, how to come to terms with and appreciate the historicity of each moment of reception, in which each reading will meet with another set of readers and so on. Similarly, Zajko traces the shift from the clear, political goals of earlier feminist criticism to the multivalency of the third wave, in which the prevailing rhetoric of heterogeneity prioritizes opening up rather than pinning down literary meaning. The turn from woman-centred analysis that exposes and redresses misogyny prompts her to ask the crucial question of the 'difference made' by feminist reception in this mode: 'The question of how a feminist reception of, say, a literary text, differs from other kinds of receptions is crucial here'.⁶⁰

with reference to classical literature, see e.g., Gaca (2008), (2011a), (2011b), (2014), (2015), (2018). For a forerunner to her approach, see e.g., Schaps (1983). Gaca's work is strikingly feminist in the connection it draws between the representation of sexual violence in literature, especially Homeric epic and Greek tragedy, and the historical experiences of women and girls, and her publications (2011a) and (2018) appear in political/social science volumes.

⁵⁹ Liveley (2006b, 64).

⁶⁰ Zajko (2008, 200). Zajko (2008) reapplies the question 'what difference was made?' from Lorna Hardwick's introductory book on reception (2003, 112).

The works of Liveley, Zajko, and Theodorakopoulos all strike notes of caution regarding the attractive multi-valency of post-structuralist and postmodern feminist reception and demand that feminist classicists not completely abandon the earlier, more explicitly political modes of feminist engagement while the work to address and redress inequality remains incomplete.⁶¹ The project of re-imagining classical reception studies for the female reader who rewrites needs to foreground this tension between representation and textuality. The male reader of classical reception in the Martindale mode is characterized by the rather genteel language of the ‘encounter’ to describe relationships of influence between writers.⁶² And although Martindale characterizes the textual ‘encounter’ in ethical terms, in which dialogue between the text and the reader is enlivened by *différance* (or the deferral of meaning), there is little room to consider readers for whom the text and its meaning remain sites of urgent, political struggle.⁶³ The divide between Martindale’s reception and its

⁶¹ See especially Theodorakopoulos (2012, 149-55); Zajko (2008, 200-4).

⁶² Martindale (1993, 32). The imprecision of ‘encounter’ may also come down to the fact that Martindale seems less interested in defining the methodology of classical reception studies. The work of Lorna Hardwick offers an invaluable corrective. Hardwick engages with the nuts and bolts of what doing classical reception involves and suggests vocabulary and frameworks through which to describe and categorize the work of classical reception. See e.g., her vocabulary for classical reception studies at Hardwick (2003, 9-10). See also Hardwick (2000b), (2006), (2007a), (2007b), (2008), (2010b), (2013a), (2016a), (2018).

⁶³ Martindale (1993, 32-33). For *différance*, see Derrida (1982), (2001) [1967]. Martindale’s concept of ‘dialogue’ borrows from the ‘conversation’ and ‘dialogue’ that underpins Hans-Georg

(implicit) focus on the male inheritor of classical literature and the self-consciously spikier relationships that characterize feminist and post-colonial readings is apparent through the wealth of critical metaphors that surround the latter group.⁶⁴ The receptions of female writers, like those of their post-colonial counterparts (who obviously may also be women), demand an alternative critical framework that recognizes the cultural weight that underpins their engagement with the classical tradition.⁶⁵

However, the existing model of post-colonial classical reception exhibits the same push and pull between politics and poetics that complicate the study of women's receptions. In my fifth chapter on Yael Farber's *Molora*, a version of the *Oresteia* and its receptions that looks back to apartheid-era South Africa, I spotlight the effect of (over-)reading cultural context into works of reception. The importance of Classics to the ideology and execution of colonialism complicates creative engagements with classical texts pursued by African

Gadamer's approach to interpretation in *Truth and Method* (1960), see Gadamer (1989). And for discussion, see e.g., Marshall (2004).

⁶⁴ See e.g., Greenwood (2013); Hardwick (2011). See especially, McConnell (2016) for *sparagmos* ('tearing apart') for post-colonial receptions; see also Grant Parker's collection on South African classical reception, which describes the 'confrontation' between antiquity and South Africa, (2017b).

⁶⁵ For instance, Herrmann (1989) [1976] and Ostriker (1982) both borrow Cixous's play on the double-meaning of *voler* in French to describe women who 'steal' language, see Cixous (1976, 887-88). Or women's 'treason' in Robinson (1983).

writers.⁶⁶ Astrid Van Weyenberg's attentiveness to the political weight of her critical terminology – preferring ante-text to source text and adaptation to reception – foregrounds what is at stake with writing and reading (South) African classical reception.⁶⁷ However, the critical reception of Farber's play evidences over-attentiveness to historical context and hybridity across all the existing secondary literature – locating points of contact between Greek and South African theatrical traditions – that entirely neglects Farber's classicism and especially her textual engagement with classical literature. Farber's real contribution to the classical tradition does not emerge out of points of contact but out of points of tension between her play and the tragedies. She invites her reader/audience to reflect on how the institutionalization of reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa both does and does not achieve the kind of resolution that characterizes the end of Aeschylus' trilogy, while using the irresolution that continues to hamper South Africa's transition to democracy to expose the fissures that threaten to collapse Athena's settlement at the end of the *Eumenides*.

1.4 Virginia Woolf and the Female Reader

In T. S. Eliot's 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919), the poet and critic famously outlines his vision for the creative tension between the new work of art and the

⁶⁶ See Goff (2005).

⁶⁷ Van Weyenberg (2013, xxii). For African classicism, see Dominik (2007); Goff (2016); and South Africa, see Lambert (2011); G. Parker (2017b). Fanon (2004, 11) [1961] articulates the politics of opposition to Eurocentrism, in which the intellectual/cultural effects of colonization on the 'colonized intellectual' are evidenced by an attentiveness to the 'Greco-Latin pedestal'.

tradition that precedes it, in which ‘the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past’.⁶⁸ Eliot is a frequent reference point for Martindale, and Eliot’s self-conception of the poet-critic is a clear model for Martindale’s emphasis on creative-critical reading, recalling the ‘historical sense’ by which the poet recognizes the tradition that both precedes and envelops him.⁶⁹ However, new, appropriately female models are needed for classical reception to fully engage with women’s reading and rewriting of classical literature, to redress classical reception’s gender bias, and to imagine new strategies to better appreciate and respond to what is now arguably the female face of Classics in contemporary writing in English.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Eliot (1982, 37).

⁶⁹ Eliot (1982, 37). Martindale’s especial interest in Eliot is also noted in De Pourcq (2012, 221 n.6), see also Martindale (1988), (1993, xiii-xiv, 24-27). Martindale (1993, 27): ‘In Eliot’s sense of tradition past and present exist in a changing dialectical relationship, in which the present illuminates the literature of the past as well as vice versa’.

⁷⁰ The publication of *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil* (1997) edited by Martindale, which was the first of the collections dedicated to a single classical author, arguably marks the moment at which reception theory went mainstream in Classics. See the introduction of Martindale (1997a) for the sense that reception is the guiding principle through which the essays in the volume engage with Virgil’s work. Relatedly, the early field of classical reception studies is dominated by Latinists, such as (and in addition to Martindale) Philip Hardie and Stephen Hinds, also Duncan Kennedy. The early theorization of classical reception emerges out of a context in which Latin literature, and especially the works of Ovid and Virgil, dominate. See especially Hardie (1993) and Hinds (1998). Would a turn to

Eliot's contemporary, Virginia Woolf, looms large over the project of recognizing classical reception in women's writing. It is remarkable that Eliot's pronouncements on Classics have been so much more influential to the formation of classical reception than Woolf's, whose engagement with classical literature is only just beginning to receive the attention it deserves.⁷¹ I suggest that Woolf's reading and rewriting offers the ideal starting point from which to imagine the reorientation of classical reception studies to the female reader and her model of literary Modernism suggests a new way to conceptualize women writers' relationships with the classical past (and its prior dominance by male readers) beyond resistance.

For instance, Woolf's engagement with the myth of Procne and Philomela in *Between the Acts* (1941) evidences a poetics of ambivalence, irony, and indeterminacy that complicates the relationship between the female reader and the classical tradition and reworks the kind of feminist resolution that typifies resistance in reception.⁷² Woolf's reception suggests the

Virginia Woolf as the model reader mark a concurrent critical turn to Greek literature, and would this make a difference to how classical reception is theorized?

⁷¹ See e.g., F. M. Cox and Theodorakopoulos (forthcoming a); R. Fowler (1983), (1999); Koulouris (2011); J. Mills (2014) Pillinger (2017); Prins (2017, 35-56); Worman (2018).

⁷² For the bibliographic reference, see V. Woolf (1992b). For Woolf and Procne/Philomela across her fiction, albeit with no mention of *Between the Acts*, see Pillinger (2017). The main Greek text missing from my analysis, with which Woolf does engage in her writing, is Aristophanes' *Birds*, which Woolf saw in the Cambridge Greek Play production in 1903. I do consider Woolf and

difference that her displacement of Eliot will make for classical reception studies, not least in light of the male poet's own treatment of Philomel, which foregrounds the inarticulacy of the rape victim and transforms the mournful song of the nightingale to "‘Jug Jug’ to dirty ears' (l. 103).⁷³ Woolf's rereading of the myth across the classical tradition does not follow the feminist invocation to listen to 'the voice of the shuttle' either.⁷⁴ The rape of Philomela and

Aristophanes in chapter two and the comic reception of the myth of Procne/Philomela is something that I would like to draw out in an extended piece on Woolf, *Between the Acts*, and classical reception. My reading of *Between the Acts* in this chapter does not engage with the wider comic themes in the novel. For *Between the Acts*, comedy, and politics, see Cuddy-Keane (1990). Cuddy-Keane suggests that Woolf blunts her satire with 'amiable comedy' (p. 278), though perhaps foregrounding Woolf's engagement with Procne/Philomela across its tragic, erotic, and comic retellings might offer a new perspective.

⁷³ Eliot (2001, l. 97-103) [1922-23]. The second version of the poem was published in England by Leonard and Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press. See discussion in S. M. Gilbert and Gubar (1989, 312; 338-41). There is a compelling reference that I would like to follow up in one of Woolf's forewords to her sister's paintings in which she compares Vanessa's art to the song of a nightingale and Jane Goldman (1998, 153-54) suggests that Woolf reads Vanessa's paintings via the tradition of the myth and by way of Eliot's reception in *The Wasteland*.

⁷⁴ For Sophocles, see (fr. 595). For text and discussion, see Sommerstein et al. (2006, 183-84). For Ovid, see (*Met.* 6.412-74). 'The voice of the shuttle' (ἡ τῆς κερκίδος φωνή), a phrase taken from a fragment of Sophocles' lost play *Tereus* and preserved in Aristotle (*Poetics* 1454b), has become a potent metaphor for the female writer and her feminine poetics. The phrase evokes the tapestry woven by Philomela to make up for her mutilation and to communicate her rape to her sister. To Patricia Joplin (2002) [1984], the metaphor works in two interrelated ways to incite a feminine model of

the revenge her violation inspires in Procne establishes for Woolf a mythic model of male-female violence and antagonism which women (and men) seem unable to resist.⁷⁵

Between the Acts (1941) is Woolf's final and posthumously published novel and the work is heavy with historical resonance as the spectre of war looms over the events that take place on a day in June 1939. Woolf's reception of the rape is integral to her examination of that last summer of peace, replaying the equivalence familiar to her writing between the

signification that will enable the recovery of female experience. In Joplin's essay, the violence that Philomela suffers and the subsequent triumph of her art appear to illustrate the historic experience of female writers, testifying to the dogged persistence of women's creative endeavours in the face of their erasure from history and the literary tradition (p. 263). In turn, 'the voice of the shuttle' not only evokes the female writer but also *invokes* the female reader, as Joplin's exhortation to 'listen' makes clear. In Ovid, Philomela weaves words into the tapestry to relay her violation to her sister (*Met.* 6.576-79). In Sophocles, it is unclear whether the tapestry communicates the rape pictorially or with words. For discussion see Dobrov (2001, 113); Fitzpatrick (2001, 97-98).

⁷⁵ Beer (1992, xxv) points out that Woolf was reading Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) [1933] at the time of writing *Between the Acts*. Perhaps the dynamic between Tereus, Philomela, and Procne suggests to Woolf an origin story for male-female relations? For an analysis of *Between the Acts* from the perspective of Woolf's engagement with Freud, see Abel (1989, 108-30). Joplin (2002, 263), who wrote her doctoral dissertation on the writing of Virginia Woolf, elucidates her feminine poetics with reference to Woolf's metaphor of female difference with the Manx cat in *A Room of One's Own* (1945) [1929].

patriarchal family and the aggressions of the militarized state.⁷⁶ The malaise of the novel reflects on the failures of the pacifist project to resist the destructive dynamic between masculinity and femininity that, in war, is transposed from the domestic sphere to the international stage. Isa Oliver reads from a newspaper report detailing the rape of a girl by a group of soldiers. Woolf writes Isa reading an account of a ‘real’ event and Isa responds in a way that enlivens the report, as her empathy traverses the boundary between the act, its experience, and its description in writing. The narrative of the assault provokes a visceral reaction in Isa the female reader, with the sense that women’s shared experience of victimization permeates the boundary between an event and its later narrativization:

‘The troopers told her the horse had a green tail; but she found he was just an ordinary horse. And they dragged her up to the barrack room where she was thrown upon a bed. Then one of the troopers removed part of her clothing, and she screamed and hit him about the face...’

That was real; so real that on the mahogany door panels she saw the Arch in Whitehall; through the Arch the barrack room; in the barrack room the bed, and on the bed the girl was screaming and hitting him about the face, when the door (for in fact it was a door) opened and in came Mrs Swithin carrying a hammer.

...

The same chime followed the same chime, only this year beneath the chime she heard: ‘The girl screamed and hit him about the face with a hammer’ (pp. 15-16).

Woolf transposes her oblique reference to the mythical rape of Philomela (which will become clearer as the novel goes on) to 1930s Britain to examine representation, reality, and the space in between. The incident is set in motion by an initial act of deception, as the soldiers conceal their intentions with the lie about the horse with the green tail. Woolf likewise smuggles extradiegetic resonance into the sequence, as the case refers to a real report

⁷⁶ See especially Woolf’s *Three Guineas* (1992a) [1938].

that she read about in *The Times* newspaper.⁷⁷ While the historical account records the unarmed girl fruitlessly pushing and punching one of the men, Isa equips her with a hammer, in a detail that is transposed to the narrative via the interruption of Mrs Swithin.⁷⁸ Woolf, via Isa, reads and reacts to the girl's rape, making two Procnes to the rape victim's Philomela from inside and outside the text. However, their textual intervention with the hammer is ultimately redundant and makes no difference to the real rape victim, appearing as little more than revisionist fantasy that is unable to reach the reality behind the story.

While Isa's (and Woolf's) intervention on behalf of the rape victim is an attempt to challenge male power, Isa is unable (or unwilling) to practise her politics in her private life.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Beer (1992, xxiii-xxiv).

⁷⁸ Beer (1992, xxiv).

⁷⁹ The relationship between reality and representation that underpins the politicization of women's writing within feminist literary criticism is perhaps nowhere more keenly felt than with regard to sexual violence. Joplin (2002, 259-61) takes the myth personally and reacts to the earlier critical reception of the metaphor by Geoffrey Hartman (1970), who responds to Sophocles with an alarming disregard for the act of rape and the significance of gender to the dynamics that play out between Philomela, Tereus, and Procne. Hartman (1970, 337) considers the poetic merit of the metaphor as elaborative of but irreducible to the 'universally affecting' themes that underpin the myth. Joplin cannot and will not match Hartman's disinterest; for the feminist reader, Philomela's rape will always be more than metaphor as it reflects historic male-on-female violence. J. Marcus (1983, 88-89) makes a similar point in her response to Hartman as part of her discussion of *Between the Acts*, as she invokes the female reader and rewriter to: 'Let us see how the other sex sees the story' (p. 88).

The ironic concluding sequence of the novel sees Isa meditate on the antagonism that underpins her relationship with her husband Giles as a kind of violence:

Before they slept, they must fight; after they had fought, they would embrace. From that embrace another life might be born. But first they must fight, as the dog fox fights with the vixen, in the heart of darkness, in the fields of night. (p. 129)

The dysfunction of Isa's relationship with Giles appears indicative of her capitulation to, and reabsorption within, the patriarchal family structure.⁸⁰ The accusation is a familiar one to Woolf's writing that often turns to women's complicity with male power. But what this reading ignores is the sense that this friction seems at once troubling, irresistible, and erotic. Isa can respond to stories of sexual violence with outrage, enflamed with feelings of female solidarity, but when it comes to challenging these imbalances as they appear in her own life, her resistance falters, and those same imbalances form the structure for her desire.⁸¹

Isa's solidarity with the Philomela-figure in the newspaper and her violent intervention as a kind of Procne brushes up against the classical reception of her father-in-law Bart Oliver, who compulsively recites from Swinburne's 'Itylus' (1864) (p. 67, 70, 71).⁸² The

⁸⁰ J. Marcus (1983, 89-90).

⁸¹ The reflection that Isa 'never looked like Sappho' (p. 12) is understood by Beer (1992, 132 n. 12) to gesture to Isa's determined, and destructive, heterosexuality. See Abel (1989, 108-30) for whom the novel marks Woolf's turn from the 'matricentric' narratives of works such as *To the Lighthouse* (1927) to 'the heterosexual plot that originates, for women, with the father' (p. 130).

⁸² For women modernists' appropriation of Swinburne and the Decadent poets 'to fashion a feminist poetic of female desire', with a focus on H. D., see Laity (1989, 462). Laity suggests that the

secondary literature suggests that Bart's introduction of Swinburne represents the kind of misreading of the myth that Woolf works to correct.⁸³ From this perspective, Swinburne's poem and Bart's reception foreground the disjuncture between the sisters and neglect the outrage of Philomela's rape, in contrast with Isa's sororal reaction to the victim in the newspaper. To my mind, however, Woolf neither justifies the sisters' revenge, nor rejects Swinburne, and emphasizes instead the equivalence between Isa and Bart. Bart recites the first two lines of Swinburne's poem, which describe Philomela's perpetual lament and Procne's forgetfulness, before reversing the question in a moment of self-consciousness:

'O sister swallow, O sister swallow,
How can thy heart be full of spring?'

'How can my heart be full of spring?' he said aloud, standing in front of the book case. (p. 70)

Bart, like Isa before him, shifts from Philomela to Procne and turns Philomela's interrogation of her sister back on to himself. And just as Isa fails to challenge the power imbalance and domesticated violence of her romantic life, Woolf reveals how Bart clings on to the ideologies of glory, masculinity, and militarism that will send his beloved son, Giles, to war.⁸⁴ The

Decadents offer a model for modernist women writers to reject the masculine desire of their male contemporaries; however, she does not consider Woolf as part of this reception of Swinburne.

⁸³ See Beer (1992, xxi-xxvii); De Gay (2006, 205-7); J. Marcus (1983, 89).

⁸⁴ For Bart and war, see De Gay (2006, 205). Bart Oliver is generally an unsympathetic character, who lazily replays his glory days by bullying his grandson and taunts Isa with the story of how he frightened her son to tears, calling him a 'cry-baby' and a 'coward' (p. 14). Woolf seems to set Isa up against Bart, as their first meeting in the novel occurs when she interrupts his reverie of past

examples of Isa and Bart recall the forgetfulness of Swinburne's Procne and anticipate the millions of lamenting nightingales that the war will create among the populace, who grieve for deaths for which they are (indirectly) responsible.⁸⁵

The inclusion of Swinburne also gestures to the alternative versions of the myth, especially in relation to the identities of the nightingale and the swallow.⁸⁶ However, Woolf does not introduce indeterminacy into her reception as an interpretative knot for the reader to untangle. Instead, the inevitable press of war (and Woolf's despair writing in 1941) means

martial glory ('himself, a young man helmeted', p. 13). And this is precisely why the equivalence she then draws between them is so significant.

⁸⁵ Woolf may also be thinking of Penelope's identification with the nightingale (*Od.* 19.512-34). Penelope characterizes her performance of grief as strangely ambivalent – she delights in lament (cf. 'τέρπομ' ὀδυρομένη', 19.513) – which perhaps suggests a model for Isa's fixation on pain and/as pleasure. See the discussion of Penelope in Theodorakopoulos (forthcoming). I also consider the simile in the fifth chapter in this thesis, see (pp. 330-336). Theodorakopoulos (forthcoming) also points out that Penelope grieves for her still-living husband 'as *though* he were dead' (italics in the original), which fits with the novel's implicit anticipation that Bart (and, by extension, Isa) may have reason to grieve for Giles in the future.

⁸⁶ Compare the various versions e.g., Homer (*Od.* 19.518-23), Virgil (*G.* 4.511-15), Ovid (*Met.* 6.412-674); Dante (*Purgatorio* 9.13-15, 17.19-21). Ovid's version is the most popular in the Middle Ages, see Chandler (1934). My reading of Woolf's deliberate indeterminacy contrasts with J. Marcus (1983, 67), who characterizes Woolf's novel as her attempt 'to write the modern version of...Sophocles' play on the myth of Procne and Philomela'.

that it makes no difference whether the reader/Procne-figure is the nightingale or the swallow.⁸⁷ The narrator tells the reader from the outset that there will be no nightingales in the story ('nightingales didn't come so far north', p. 5) and even the identification of swallows is imprecise:

[t]he swallows – or martins were they? – The temple-haunting martins who come, have always come ... Yes, perched on the wall, they seemed to fortell what after all the *Times* was saying yesterday. Homes will be built. Each flat with its refrigerator, in the crannied wall. Each of us a free man ... (pp. 108-9).

If the nightingale stands for Procne-the-reader, then its absence seems to point to the deleterious failure of the public to 'read' and act on the impending war. And if the swallow stands for Procne-the-reader, then its association with stability and peace in the extract appears wilfully blind to the reality of the country on the cusp of war.

For the sororal community that Patricia Klindienst Joplin's reading of the myth invokes, male-on-female violence is the organizing principle behind women's writing and reading.⁸⁸ From this perspective, Philomela's tapestry bears witness to, preserves, and

⁸⁷ Perhaps Woolf, reflecting on her inability to prevent the war, positions herself as another nightingale-figure: Aeschylus' Cassandra (cf. *Ag.* 1142-45)? For Woolf, Cassandra, and the nightingale, see Pillinger (2017); Prins (2005). Woolf also famously refers to the nightingale 'whose song echoes through English literature' to evoke the simultaneous immediacy and undecipherability of classical literature and the Greek language in 'On Not Knowing Greek' (2003, 28) [1925].

⁸⁸ There is a tradition of exchange between feminist literary criticism and political and sociological work on women's lives in relation to sexual violence. For instance, Susan Brownmiller's seminal work, *Against our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (1975), shifted the conversation around rape from sexual deviance to power, situating individual acts of sexual violence within wider structures of

disseminates an acutely politicized female experience, and Joplin rehabilitates Procne by refocusing attention from the sisters' revenge to their artistry and solidarity.⁸⁹ The complicity of Woolf's Isa, who shares likeness with and feels hostility towards Giles and Bart, upsets straightforward feminist revision and emphasizes rather than downplays women's capacity for violence. Looking back to Woolf's reception of the myth, the deception and violence of the soldiers and the relationship between Isa and Giles seem to replay Ovid's use of the *militia amoris* trope in his retelling:

Tereus cried out, 'I have won! My prayers are answered, she's sailing beside me!' Triumphant, the vile barbarian scarcely could wait for his moment of bliss, and his greedy eyes never swerved from his prey, like an eagle closely watching the hare it has caught in its crooked talons and dropped in the nest high up where it cannot escape.

male-female inequality. In turn, 'the pornographic' offered a framework through which to recognize and examine the relationship between men's political dominance over women and the eroticization of this dominance in representation. Susanne Kappeler's *The Pornography of Representation* (1986), which sits in between literary criticism and the social sciences, is the foundation-text for classicist Amy Richlin's *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome* (1992b) [1991], a groundbreaking collection of feminist essays that reconsiders the ancient world through the lens of 'the pornographic'. See also Deacy and Pierce (1997); Silver and Higgins (1991).

⁸⁹ Joplin (2002, 278). See also Marder (1992); Perry (1989). Zajko (2006, 197) describes this kind of critical 'rescue' with regard to Penelope in second wave feminist responses to the *Odyssey*: 'It is as if, for their interpretations to have authority, they must locate a figure *within* an ancient text which will validate them'. Timberlake Wertenbaker's play, *The Love of the Nightingale* (1989), downplays the violence of the sisters' revenge and omits the sequence in which Tereus unwittingly eats Itylus. See review in M. McDonald (1994) from a performance from that year.

The end of the journey at last! (*Met.* 6.513-18)⁹⁰

Tereus' cry of '*vicimus!*' (6.513) is a familiar expression of triumph in erotic pursuit but as the story unfolds in Ovid the violence that underpins these amatory games is laid bare.⁹¹ The predator/prey simile points to Philomela's victimisation with less equivocation than Woolf, who, through Isa, does not create a straightforward victim.⁹² By turning from the girl in the paper to Isa, Woolf seems to draw the veil back over the violence of male-female relations as if repackaging *militia amoris* as domestic inevitability. The Philomela figure slides from Woolf's (and Isa's) mind as the analogous marital relationship between Tereus and Procne

⁹⁰ I use the translation of David Raeburn (2004). Line references correspond to the critical edition of Hugo Magnus (1892).

⁹¹ Goldenhard and Zissos (2007).

⁹² The extent to which Ovid encourages the reader to sympathize with victims like Philomela is one of the main dilemmas of feminist Ovidian studies. See Peek (2003) for a reading of Ovid's Procne and Philomela that emphasizes the indeterminacy of the poet's tone and sympathy. Peek sets his reading apart from existing treatments of the episode that read the moments of humour or irreverence in the story – e.g., the details of her murmuring (*inmurmurat*) and twitching (*palpitat*) severed tongue at *Met.* 6.555-62 – as evidence that either the poet is sadistic or the tale is tragic. Peek suggests instead that 'Ovid frequently uses black humour' and '[a] black comic tone is a mixed one' (p. 34). See also Peek (2001). Richlin (1992a, 162-64) reads the sequence as part of her wider examination of the pornographic in Ovid, in which our apparent sympathy for Philomela is actually directed towards prurient interest in her tongue. Curran (1978, 219), by contrast, suggests that 'there is deliberate and undisguised sadism in the Tereus' and, with the myth, 'Ovid understands male sexuality at its most savage'.

takes centre stage and Guy and Isa ‘fight [sic] as the dog fox fights with the vixen’ (p. 129). Woolf transposes the violence of the Tereus-Philomela dynamic in Ovid to Tereus-Procne via Giles and Isa and recalls how, in Ovid, Procne more than matches Tereus in violence, as well as the ‘cruel delight’ (*crudelia gaudia*) that Procne feels in the fulfilment of her revenge (*Met.* 6.653).⁹³

Woolf’s return to the classical tradition is not an exercise in excavating the relationship between the sisters as Marcus suggests, while the ‘voice of the shuttle’ does not have the lasting, consciousness-raising effect that Joplin imagines. Instead, Woolf seems to surpass Ovid in Ovidianism, turning from the obvious feminist entry points of the myth to imagine instead the antagonism between Tereus and Procne in terms of *militia amoris*, in which the rape of Philomela and its revenge become parts of a wider erotic battle between the sexes. Woolf uses the irony of Isa’s simultaneous distaste and desire for male violence to make her connection between the patriarchal family and the militarized state and lays the blame for the return to war on women as well as men. Woolf does not set out to ‘solve’ the discrepancies in the myth and its readings or to correct Swinburne; instead the indeterminacy of the tradition reflects the confusion of the times. The question that Isa’s desire poses to the

⁹³ Philomela laments that her rape transforms her into Procne’s rival at *Met.* 6.537-38. For the equivalence that Ovid draws between the actions of Tereus and Procne, see Gildenhard and Zissos (1999, 166); Larmour (1990, 133-34). See also Sophocles (fr. 589). In secondary literature, Woolf’s reception of Ovid focuses on her treatment of *Met.* 9.666-797 in *Orlando*, see Brown (2002a); Ranger (2012).

feminist project lingers on in the ambivalence of the female reader who is attracted to and repulsed by misogyny and domestic war.⁹⁴

By introducing Woolf's ambivalence, irony, and indeterminacy into classical reception studies as an alternative to Eliot, I have identified a new model for the female reader.⁹⁵

Woolf's model demands an equivalent theoretical framework that can best respond to her key themes, and the 'emerging strategies' outlined in the next section set out an alternative aesthetic that can balance politics with polyvalence. The essays of Theodorakopoulos and Cox that launched the study of women's writing of classical reception are remarkable for their attentiveness to the politics of women's writing. However, while the study of classical reception in contemporary women's writing nominally takes place at the intersection of feminist literary criticism and classical reception theory, thus far, the former critical standpoint, and its emphasis on redressing the lacunae in women's representation, has

⁹⁴ Patricia Moran (2007a) examines the failure of Woolf to bring her plan to imagine the 'sexual life of women' to fruition, as her later novels are 'marked by increasingly negative assessments of maternity and female sexuality' (p. 179). Perhaps this negativity *is* her treatment of the sexual life of women? See V. Woolf (1982, 6).

⁹⁵ For indeterminacy in reception theory, see Iser (1971), (1978, 181-82). Indeterminacy characterizes the relationship between the reader and the text and provides the 'gap' in which the reader can make meaning. Woolf's classic treatment of ambivalence, irony, and indeterminacy in relation to the female reader of Greek literature is 'On Not Knowing Greek', see V. Woolf (2003) [1925].

arguably enjoyed greater influence.⁹⁶ In this respect, what I bring to the conversation is a recalibration of Charles Martindale's standard-bearing work on classical reception theory from the perspective of feminist literary criticism (and vice versa), to propose a more balanced standpoint – sensitive to issues of gender, reading, writing, and aesthetics – from which to recognize emerging strategies of rewriting that tentatively connect, compare, and contrast women's receptions across a range of ancient material.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ See e.g., Theodorakopoulos (2012, 155): 'In this volume, we discuss authors whose work deserves a wider dissemination and reception than it has hitherto had, in order to bring to the attention of a wider audience of students of classical reception the range and diversity of the women's voices which are today participating in our dialogue with classical literature'.

⁹⁷ Martindale (2013a, 171) suggests that the field of classical reception studies has been under-theorized since *Redeeming the Text*. The early work on classical reception in contemporary women's writing has, quite rightly, targeted the issue of representation. I therefore think that my return to and theorisation of the female reader and rewriter will offer a small contribution to the theoretical development of the sub-discipline. The study of women as readers and rewriters brushes up against and continues in a spirit familiar to the project of feminist gynocriticism. The term, coined by Elaine Showalter (1986), describes the analysis of women's writing by literary critics as a necessary corrective to the neglect and misreading of female creative expression (p. 128). The feminist task of the gynocritic is to come up with alternative critical frameworks through which to re-evaluate writing by women ill-served in traditional critique. Showalter (1986, 132-37) identifies gynocriticism as the second stage in the development of feminist literary criticism. The first stage, labelled 'feminist critique', responds to representations of women in male-authored texts. However, the scope of gynocriticism needs broadening for women's classical reception to encompass the effect of gender difference not just on writing but on the relationship *between* texts, old and new.

1.5 Emerging Strategies

Two years before her essay on feminist theory and classical reception, Vanda Zajko, along with Miriam Leonard, edited a collection of essays that traces the confluence of classical myth and feminist thought, with a title that pays direct homage to the classical reception of Hélène Cixous.⁹⁸ The introduction identifies the conflict between the second wave feminist project, with its formation around shared identity, and the diffusion of gender identities under postmodernism. The editors emphasize the need for ‘politically engaged post-structuralism’, which ‘makes us aware of the violence inherent in binary oppositions and also insists on their expedience in negotiating ideological struggles’.⁹⁹ I suggest that Roland Barthes’s works on reading, writing, and pleasure and their feminist intertexts in the works of Hélène Cixous and Jane Gallop offer a loose theoretical scaffold for my ideas for an emergent reception of ‘politically engaged post-structuralism’ based on the female reader. This framework will underline the potential richness of ambivalence, irony, and indeterminacy as paradigms for a politically engaged feminist classicism, in which the confluence of the rescue-model of the second wave and the heterogeneity of the third emboldens the writer of

⁹⁸ Zajko and Leonard (2006b). See also the collection of essays in Zajko and Hoyle (2017), especially Doherty (2017) for strategies of mythic revisionism in relation to Homer’s *Odyssey*, and Pillinger (2017) for Virginia Woolf’s engagement with Greek myth.

⁹⁹ Zajko and Leonard (2006a, 8). The discussion appears in response to the essay by Liveley (2006a) which reconsiders Donna Haraway’s appeals to monsters of classical myth as prototypes for her postmodern cyborg mythology. See e.g. Haraway (2000) [1985].

reception and her reader to reconfigure women's relationships to Classics for the twenty-first century.

There are points of contact between classical reception theory and Barthes's work on texts and textuality that remain tantalizingly underexplored.¹⁰⁰ Barthes's elucidation of reading and writing as relational activities, his commitment to theories of intertextuality, and his conception of texts as endlessly generative and polyvocal invite new, dynamic ways of thinking about the dialectics that underpin classical reception studies (past and present, text and reader, classical work and its reception). The one text that is familiar to classical reception is, perhaps unsurprisingly, Barthes's 'The Death of the Author' (1968), and Martindale draws equivalence between a hermeneutic of reception and Barthes's challenge to authorial intention as hermeneutic certainty.¹⁰¹ Barthes's transferral of meaning-making from the absolute

¹⁰⁰ There is little close engagement with Barthes's work across classical reception studies. The unpublished Ph.D thesis of Maarten De Pourcq (2008a) is the only sustained application of Barthes's theories within Classics thus far, see also De Pourcq (2008b). Barthes's 'The Death of the Author' offers the provocation for the editors of the *Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature* to contextualize the turn to the reader as part of wider shifts in literary theory, see Cheney and Hardie (2015, 2-3). Eleftheria Ioannidou (2010) uses the provocation of 'The Death of the Author' to reinvigorate the dynamic relationship between classical theatre in translation and the theatre audience.

¹⁰¹ For feminist suspicion towards and resistance to the 'death of the author', see e.g., Battersby (1989, 146) on the female author: 'for an author to die, he must first have lived'. See also Modleski (1991). See Meagher (1996) for her discussion on reading Barthes as a woman and a feminist. Authorship remains a potent resource for feminist criticism; for instance, Holly Ranger's

authority of the author to the reader aligns nicely with Martindale's 'point of reception'. And despite the provocative title of his famous essay, Barthes does not close off the imperative to engage with the author altogether, he simply rejects authorship as the locus of meaning. Barthes's radical challenge to positivist literary analysis reconfigures a writer who has no claim to authority but who nevertheless takes part in and is formed through the ongoing process of textuality.¹⁰² This is what Martindale is getting at when he reconfigures authorship away from, for example, Virgil-the-man-who-came-up-with-and-composed-the-*Aeneid*-in-an-act-of-individual-genius, to give "Virgil", that is "*all-the-forces-that-moulded-the-text-plus-its-reception*".¹⁰³

Going further, Julia Kristeva's work on intertextuality is central to Barthes's rejection of the author as the site of originary meaning, suggestive instead of inexhaustible relationships between texts that pre-exist the literary work whose significance is realized in

work on classical reception in the poetry of Sylvia Plath complicates reductively biographical readings of her poetry, to reveal Plath's intertextual engagement with classical literature born out of her classical education; see Ranger (forthcoming 2019), (forthcoming), also Liveley's (forthcoming) work on H. D.. For the persistence of the author, see Burke (1992).

¹⁰² Barthes (2001, 1466) presents his challenge to authorship as part of a wider, political critique: 'It is thus logical that in literature it should be this positivism, the epitome and culmination of capitalist ideology, which has attached the greatest importance to the "person" of the author'.

¹⁰³ Martindale (1993, 54) emphasis in the original. Martindale borrows the phrasing from Kennedy (1990, 137).

the act of reading.¹⁰⁴ In ‘The Death of the Author’, Barthes sets out his take on intertextuality as a turn from authorship to the reader:

Thus is revealed the total existence of writing: a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author...a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ For intertextuality and classical literature, see e.g., Edmunds (2001); D. Fowler (1997); Hinds (1998). The latter two references are useful for thinking through intertextuality as an alternative to (authorial) allusion in the light of the provocation of reception studies. The application of theories of intertextuality to the Homeric epics as ‘texts’ is not uncontroversial, see e.g., the review of Dowden (2004) in Powell (2005): ‘He credits Homer “with a sophisticated intertextuality,” but how can that be when Homer worked within an oral tradition, where there were no texts?’. Powell’s dismissive response to the terms of Dowden’s enquiry does not engage with the fact that Dowden deliberately uses intertextuality to correct the lacunae in Homeric studies caused by the focus on the ‘irrecoverable performance tradition’ of the oral poem and concurrent neglect of the work as part of ‘a history of interacting texts’, see Dowden (2004, 188). See also Dowden (1996); Schein (2015b).

¹⁰⁵ Barthes (2001, 1469). See Kristeva (1980a, 1980b). The final rhetorical flourish of Barthes’s essay is particularly well known: ‘we know that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author’ (p. 1470). See Hinds (1998, 47-51) for a measured approach to intertextuality as a model for the relationships between author-reader-text. Hinds suggests that, for the critic, talking in terms of ‘allusion’ and giving a degree of weight to an ‘intention-bearing author’ (p. 50) is a necessary compromise in order to make sense of and describe the kinds of interactions that underpin classical reception.

The reader who emerges out of the ashes of authorship is a new kind of actor born from the endless nexi of intertextuality; she is ‘a reader of the text’.¹⁰⁶ The distinction between ‘the work’ and ‘the text’ is replayed and advanced in Barthes’s writing about textuality, authorship, and the reader in ‘From Work to Text’ (1971).¹⁰⁷ The change that Barthes heralds strikes a blow to positivist literary criticism; for while ‘the work’ is read with an eye to the decipherment of authorial intention, the text is an ‘irreducible plurality’ (*‘un pluriel irréductible’*).¹⁰⁸

Barthes presents his ideas within a wider critique of the commodification of art in capitalism, so that the turn from ‘the work’ to ‘the text’ and its attendant reimagining of the reader follows a shift from finished product to the process of production: ‘*the Text is experienced only in activity, in a production*’.¹⁰⁹ In *S/Z* (1970), which I discuss further below, Barthes advocates an approach to the text that turns from interpretation to ‘digression’, attentive to the text’s plurality (although for the readerly text this plurality is ‘moderate’).¹¹⁰ Barthes’s commentary elucidates his theory of reading and writing as practices that form and

¹⁰⁶ Allen (2003, 82-83).

¹⁰⁷ See Barthes (1993).

¹⁰⁸ Barthes (1993, 75), emphasis in the original.

¹⁰⁹ Barthes (1986, 58), emphasis in the original translation. The shift is pre-empted in ‘The Death of the Author’ by Barthes’s preference for ‘writing’ over ‘literature’, see Barthes (2001, 1469).

¹¹⁰ Barthes (1974, 5). Digression is also a rhetorical strategy that is strongly associated with Woolf, see e.g., Cuddy-Keane (2003); L. Marcus (2011).

reform subjectivity, in opposition to the stable subject “I” of critical interpretation: ‘This “I” which approaches the text is already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes, which are infinite or, more precisely, lost’.¹¹¹

The post-structuralist turn in the work of Roland Barthes, especially *S/Z* and *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973), offers a critical vocabulary to explore and explode the underlying tension between feminism and aestheticism that can limit women’s creative expression and its critical reception to good/bad politics. The crosspollination between these works, Cixous’s *écriture*, and Jane Gallop’s writing on feminist *jouissance* and the body suggest ways to respond to women’s reading and rewriting of classical literature attuned to feminist literary criticism, attentive to gender and experience, *and* recuperative of the relationships between reading, writing, and pleasure.¹¹²

With *S/Z*, Barthes develops his theory of reading and textuality with the concepts of readerly (*‘lisible’*) and writerly (*‘scriptible’*) texts. While the readerly text is undemanding,

¹¹¹ Barthes (1974, 10).

¹¹² The application of Barthes’s work to feminism is not uncontroversial. As Gallop (1986) notes, Barthes’s *The Pleasure of the Text* is subject to scrutiny for its implicit association of femininity with bad reading and writing practices. See e.g. Herrmann (2015, 14) [1976]: ‘And so, once more, thanks to the game of language, the equation is established in the reader’s mind between certain givens: bad text – feminine text – insults the reader by treating him like a woman – passive femininity – babble (infantilism)’. For an attempt to redirect Barthes’s work on pleasure to feminist literary criticism, see Gruss (2009). See also Gallop (1986).

conventional, and configures reading as a passive activity, the writerly text implicates the reader in its co-production (a process familiar to Jauss and Iser) and in the proliferation of meaning. The writerly text is a palimpsest whose layers are irreducible and ever-expanding, transforming the act of reading from passive consumption to active production. The effect of reading a writerly text is thus likened to writing: '[o]ur evaluation can be linked to a practice, and this practice is that of writing'.¹¹³

Cook's reception of Homer in *Achilles* finds a precursor for Barthes's theories of reading and rewriting in John Keats, who describes relationships of exchange and dialogue between prodigious readers and appreciative writers that bear remarkable similarities to modern reception theories and even Barthesian re-writing:

I have an idea that a Man might pass a very pleasant life in this manner – let him on any certain day read a certain Page of full Poesy or distilled Prose and let him wander with it, muse upon it, and reflect from it, and bring home to it, and prophesy upon it, and dream upon it – until it becomes stale – but when will it do so? (*Letters* 1.231)¹¹⁴

Keats imagines interactions between texts, readers, and authors, in which literature provides a forum for commerce and reading implies creativity.¹¹⁵ Indeed, Cook's novella evidences her acceptance of the poet's invitation to creative co-authorship, taking its implications to their

¹¹³ Barthes (1974, 4); also Barthes (1986b, 39-41).

¹¹⁴ I use Hyder Edward Rollins's 1958 editions of Keats's letters, which will be cited *Letters* by volume and page.

¹¹⁵ Goellnicht (1989).

conclusion, in which inspired and collaborative reading becomes rereading becomes rewriting.¹¹⁶

As Barthes points out, the purely writerly text is a rarity, an ideal of the avant-garde, though the reader can make the best of the readerly or classic text through alertness to potential openings for polysemy and to points that resist interpretative closure.¹¹⁷ Here, the practice of rereading as ‘play’ is important, as rereading pushes back against the idea of the work as complete, unified, and conclusively decipherable.¹¹⁸ Barthes imagines rereading as an intertextual practice that seeks ‘to disperse rather than to decipher’ meaning and he devotes the majority of *S/Z* to a demonstration of his method. His dizzying response to Balzac’s *Sarrasine* interrupts the text and fragments the narrative *telos* into something surprising, disjointed, and digressive (‘a systematic use of digression’).¹¹⁹ The intertextual display of Barthes’s reading of Balzac in *S/Z* is remarkable for its lack of citations and anticipates the ‘desperate plagiarism’ that characterizes the ‘text of bliss’ in *The Pleasure of the Text*.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Zajko (2006, 47) refers to *Achilles* as a ‘poetic novel’; Burgess (2015, 146) calls it a ‘prose poem’. This relates back, of course, to Martindale on reading (1993, 35-39).

¹¹⁷ Barthes (1974, 8).

¹¹⁸ Barthes (1974, 15-16).

¹¹⁹ Oh (2004, 203) on Barthes (1974, 12-15). For his reading of *Sarrasine*, see Barthes (1974, 16-259).

¹²⁰ Barthes (1974, 44): ‘A multivalent text can carry out its basic duplicity only if it subverts the opposition between true and false, if it fails to attribute quotations (even when seeking to discredit

Barthes's practice offers an interesting point of comparison with feminist translators and writers who call attention to their presence in the text: there is no Barthes-the-reader-who-(re)writes to distinguish from the author-text with which he engages.¹²¹

The feminist reader who rewrites in the mode of resistance constructs her female subjectivity in opposition to the male author, while for Barthes, reading and rewriting are practices that have the potential to construct only to collapse identity. And yet, Barthes seems to flaunt his, albeit ever-shifting, identity as a reader. Yael Farber's approach to translation in *Molara* offers an interesting Barthesian inflection to the politics of reading and rewriting men for contemporary female writers.¹²² In addition to sequences that she inserts in to her update to the House of Atreus mythology, Farber lifts directly from translations of Greek tragedy, especially Robert Fagles's *Agamemnon* (1977). She calls attention to the 'patchwork' of quotations out of which her play is formed in part of the paratext (p. 16) and footnotes her play-text with the relevant translation and line references.

them) to explicit authorities, if it flouts all respect for origin, paternity, propriety, if it destroys the voice which could give its text its ("organic") unity, in short, if it coldly and fraudulently abolishes quotation marks which must, as we say, in all honesty, enclose a quotation and juridically distribute the ownership of the sentences to their respective proprietors, like subdivisions of a field'.

¹²¹ Barthes (1975, 16): 'there is not, behind the text, someone active (the writer) and out front someone passive (the reader)'.

¹²² I describe Barthes as 'flaunting' his intervention in a nod to the work on feminist translation as feminist practice and intervention by Godard (1990) and Von Flotow (1997).

Farber's reader is left unclear of the extent to which, for instance, her reception of Aeschylus is her own or the translator's or both, and these questions brush up against and gesture to the legacy of Classics and colonialism through which her work is typically read.¹²³ Farber works from translations, all of which are written by men, and she rearranges them to reshape and reconfigure the classical material so that her presence as the author/creator shifts in a Barthesian way between in/visibility.

KLYTEMNESTRA: Nothing ... nothing is written.
Do not choose to be me. The hounds
that avenge all murder will forever hunt
you down. (p. 74)

The final three lines of the passage from 'The hounds' are lifted from Ian Johnston's online translation of Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* (cf. 896-98), however, Farber redirects Klytemnestra's words to Elektra rather than Orestes, to maintain her play's focus on the mother-daughter relationship. Moreover, her additions to the speech nod to the presence of Farber in Aeschylus' play and the irony that Klytemnestra's murder has been written but will be unwritten by way of Farber's intervention to stop the matricide.

With *The Pleasure of the Text*, Barthes elaborates the 'hedonist aesthetic' to which he gestures in the earlier essay 'From Work to Text' to consider intertextuality as an experience in reading.¹²⁴ Barthes applies the principles of his earlier work on (re)reading and writing to

¹²³ There is also the fact that, in performance, Farber's 'borrowings' become more explicitly Barthesian, as the play-text is performed without reference to the various translations.

¹²⁴ Barthes (1986, 63-64). See Mortimer (1989) for an elaborately intertextual commentary on *The Pleasure of the Text* in the style of *S/Z*.

recuperate an interest in pleasure from indulgence and conservatism for emancipatory politics.¹²⁵ Barthes's distinctions between 'pleasure' (*plaisir*) and 'bliss' (*jouissance*) underpin his approach to reading and marries aestheticism with the body, sensation, and radicalism:

Text of pleasure: the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a *comfortable* practice of reading.

Text of bliss: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistence of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language.¹²⁶

Barthes admits to the comforting, easy pleasure of conventional narrative but identifies disruptive moments of textual excess - repetition, surprise, and incongruence – as transformative and writerly, opening up the text and, by extension, the reader to bliss.¹²⁷ His concept of textual perversion reframes the issue of representation in art to locate pleasure at the edges of *mimesis*, at points where the distinction between the real and the not real/literary

¹²⁵ Although as Gallop (1988b, 102-4) demonstrates, Barthes's work on pleasure excites a great deal of criticism for its apparent withdrawal from left wing politics.

¹²⁶ Barthes (1975, 14), emphasis in the original. For the difficulty in translating *jouissance*, see Howard (1975, v-viii). From a feminist perspective, see Gallop (1988c).

¹²⁷ Barthes (1975, 41-42). My own writing about the female reader refers to feminist practice and never feminist praxis to gesture to the repetitions of reading/rereading/rewriting that goes into women's classical reception.

comes undone: ‘...the reader can keep saying: *I know these are only words, but all the same...* (I am moved as though these words were uttering a reality)’.¹²⁸

Oswald’s reception may seem the least able to respond to Barthes’s provocation, however, her comic sensibility is a surprising aspect of her work that unsettles the reader in what appears to be a serious, pacifist treatment of Homer’s *Iliad*. In an essay written to mark the publication of the poem, Oswald stresses the ‘anti-heroic stories’ of the *Iliad*’s minor characters: men who take part in a famous war only to ‘trip over their shields, lose their courage or miss their wives’.¹²⁹ Looking at how the former example manifests itself in *Memorial*, Oswald picks up on the irony of the epic description of Periphetos’ promise and his performance in war, as one endowed with skill in battle and ‘speed of feet’ but who gets tangled in his gear:

He was born a better son of a far lesser father
in respect to every kind of skill, both speed of feet and waging battle,
and for judgement he was in the first ranks of Mycenaeans.
He, then, now handed Hector triumphant glory;
for having turned his back he was caught on the rim of his shield,
which he carried extending to his feet, as a barrier for spears;
tangled on this he fell face up, and the helmet around his brows
clashed terribly around him as he fell. (cf. *Il.* 15.638-50)

PERIPHETOS the man from Mycenae
Who tripped on his shield (p. 57)

Homer emphasizes Periphetos’ potential for heroism to an unusual degree, so that the freak accident that brings about his death gives the formulaic line marking Hector’s glory a rather

¹²⁸ Barthes (1975, 47).

¹²⁹ Oswald (2011c).

hollow ring.¹³⁰ The passage may be the tragic counterpart to Ajax's uncomplicatedly comic pratfall into cow-dung in the race at the games for Patroclus' funeral (23.774-83).¹³¹ And while the Greeks laugh at Ajax (23.784), the comrades of Periphetos react with anguish in their helplessness (15.650-52).¹³² Oswald's response to Periphetos positions her reader somewhere in-between the epic material and its comic intertext. Her poem condenses the epic's treatment of Periphetos to a significant degree, disregarding the details that dignify and signal regret for Periphetos as a man whose martial promise is unfulfilled. The sight of Ajax falling in dung and spluttering in haughty anger is especially funny for the assembled Greeks because it punctures the façade of his heroism and for a brief moment upends the hierarchy that elevates heroes like Ajax above the rest. And while it may seem perverse that Oswald likewise preserves Periphetos' mistake for posterity (and amplifies it by her compression of the material to two lines) the bathos of her verse is undoubtedly sympathetic. Oswald

¹³⁰ See Janko (1992, 298-99).

¹³¹ Janko (1992, 298-99).

¹³² Oswald subverts the crueler strain of comedy in epic. Idomeneus taunts the dead body of Othryon, a soldier who asked Priam to marry Cassandra in exchange for a great deed ('μέγα ἔργον') rather than a bride-price. Idomeneus makes fun of Othryon for the incongruity between his promised greatness in battle and the reality. Idomeneus cements the humiliation of the dead man through playful imitation, as he pretends to be in the process of taking Othryon's corpse to Agamemnon to try to secure a similar deal for himself (13.363-82). Oswald is more sympathetic to Othryon's unorthodox dealings with Priam, referring to the soldier as a 'dreamer'. The biography references Idomeneus' taunt and even imagines it but Oswald uses Cassandra to expose the cruelty of the comedy: 'And everyone laughed and laughed/ Except Cassandra' (p. 47).

spotlights this moment of digression in the epic narrative to commiserate with an unremarkable man who is counterintuitively (and irreverently) made memorable by his moment of fallibility.

Barthes's own metaphors for writing invite crossover with the kind of aesthetic considerations that emerge out of ancient texts and suggest particular affinity with feminine models of textuality. Barthes likens the endless production of the text to the process of weaving, in which the text is a fabric (*'un tissu'*) formed and reformed through other texts. The obvious intertext here is Homer's *Odyssey*, especially Penelope's weaving, which forms the model for Farber's Klytemnestra and Elektra who create narratives-without-end out of their irresolvable griefs. Moreover, Penelope's strange pleasure in grief (cf. *Od.* 19.513) suggests an ancient archetype for the kind of ambivalence that the female reader feels towards classical literature that complicates purely political/resisting or aesthetic readings. Through a Penelopean lens, Farber's Klytemnestra and Elektra are refigured as women who respond to the past in ways that are both excessive and relentless and channel their suffering into generative acts that push back against a tradition that constrains feminine difference/*différance*.

Hélène Cixous's writing of and on *écriture féminine* in 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (1975) offers a compelling intertext to reshape Barthes's work on textual pleasure for women's reading and writing, inflecting his immoderate aesthetic with an interest in the

radical textuality of the female body.¹³³ Cixous reconfigures the Lacanian approach to subjectivity (also adopted by Barthes) as diffuse and under constant (re)negotiation in language with an eye to sexual difference.¹³⁴ The kind of homophonic textual play in which Barthes would locate bliss appears as part of Cixous's feminine textual practice.¹³⁵ The legacy of her play on the double-meaning of the verb '*voler*' ('to steal' or 'to fly') reverberates across feminist literary criticism, introducing the potent metaphor of the woman who steals language to initiate feminine semiotics.¹³⁶ Cixous describes her *écriture* as characteristic of feminine desire that emerges out of alterity to elude frameworks of sex, gender, and sexuality familiar both to the structures of patriarchy in language ('phallogocentrism') and feminist strategies of resistance (via the oppositional feminine subject position).¹³⁷ Cixous frames

¹³³ In translation, see Cixous (1976); and further in Cixous (1996). For Barthes and Cixous, see Oboussier (1994). For further on *écriture féminine*, see e.g. A. R. Jones (1981). For the influence of Cixous's writing on the development of feminist theory, see e.g. Kamuf (2015).

¹³⁴ Gallop (1988b, 105): 'To my knowledge Barthes never discusses feminism, anywhere: *The Pleasure of the Text* never even mentions sexual difference, although both sexuality and difference are central themes'.

¹³⁵ Cixous (1976, 887-88).

¹³⁶ See Herrmann (1989) [1976]; Ostriker (1982). Cixous's women who steal and fly recall the mythical Harpies and the etymology of their name from the Greek ἀρπάζω ('to steal/seize/carry off'). For comparable work on women, femininity, and the Symbolic, see Irigaray (1985).

¹³⁷ Leitch et al. (2001, 2038): 'The new opposition is not between male and female, but between a logic of the One and a logic of heterogeneity and multiplicity'. See also Kamuf (1982) and the response in N. K. Miller (1982) for the possible turn to the 'feminine' rather than the female writer

positivist interpretation as essentially patriarchal and hierarchical in its subjugation of plurality and difference, to contrast with the multiplicity and mutability of women's writing:

Her writing can only keep going, without ever inscribing or discerning contours, daring to make these vertiginous crossings of the other(s) ephemeral and passionate sojourns in him, her, them...¹³⁸

The meaning of the essay's title emerges as she invites the reader to reconsider the myth of Medusa outside of masculine representation, as viper (or indeed victim): 'You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing'.¹³⁹

Susan Gubar connects women's dispossession from language with the longstanding equivalence between the text and the female body on which male writers (and she includes

in feminist criticism. This thesis testifies to the potential for the male writer to read and rewrite classical literature according to the model of my female reader. In my second chapter on contemporary receptions of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, for instance, I look at the poetry of Michael Longley and Christopher Logue. Nevertheless, I persist in referring to the female reader throughout the thesis for two reasons. Firstly, the 'female reader' recognizes the present dominance of women as readers and rewriters of classical literature and the importance of their work, and not men's, to the creation of my model for classical reception. Secondly, my readings do not take advantage of the significant contribution of psychoanalysis as hermeneutic, in which an exploration of the 'feminine' would bear most fruit (although this is an avenue that I would like to explore). For classical myth and psychoanalysis, see Zajko and Ellen O'Gorman (2013b).

¹³⁸ Cixous (1976, 889).

¹³⁹ Cixous (1976, 885).

Barthes here) imprint their creativity.¹⁴⁰ Cixous turns this pairing on its head to propose instead a kind of bodily, libidinal writing ('Women must write through their bodies...').¹⁴¹ Cixous's female body is not written on but writes and her feminine *jouissance* is realigned to express women's creativity. The textuality of the female body is given an interesting inflection by Elizabeth Cook's reception of Keats in *Achilles*, which looks back to the history of the poet's reception and the remarkable swiftness with which writers appropriated and transformed Keats into a literary character. The tendency to explain Keats's work with reference to his body, as well as the more explicit gendering of the writer, connects the reception of the poet with the historic textualization of women. Gubar describes the 'model of the pen-penis writing on the virgin page [which] participates in a long tradition identifying the author as a male who is primary and the female as his passive creation'.¹⁴² Cook seems to do the opposite with Keats, as she transforms the male poet as part of her own creation, although the history of the poet's feminization complicates the gendering of and Cook's resistance to the male-artist/ female-object framework.

The reading experience that Barthes evokes is at once embodied and textual, as well as erotic (insofar as it 'exceeds any (social) function') and born out of and in political

¹⁴⁰ Gubar (1981, 246). See S. M. Gilbert and Gubar (1984) [1979] for the classic feminist text on nineteenth century women writers and the anxieties that surround women's creativity.

¹⁴¹ Cixous (1976, 886). See Moi (1985, 102-26) for Cixous's usefulness with regard to reimagining female creativity, as well as the problems posed by her essentialism.

¹⁴² Gubar (1981, 247).

struggle.¹⁴³ Jane Gallop examines the deliberately conflicting positions that characterize Barthes's writing on pleasure to elucidate a feminist *jouissance* in which aesthetics and ideology can coexist: 'We must think politics and pleasure together. What are the politics of pleasure? What are the pleasures of politics?'.¹⁴⁴ Gallop cites Barthes's identification of bliss at the 'edges' of communication as a way to rethink and refine political engagement beyond opposition: 'it consists in de-politicizing what is apparently political, and in politicizing what apparently is not'.¹⁴⁵ The target of Gallop's writing is the uneasy tension between, on the one hand, the female body and the experience and practice of heterosexuality and, on the other, the sexual politics of contemporary feminism. While Barthes identifies textual 'perversion' at sites that evade communicative, ideological usefulness, Gallop proposes that the confluence of feminism and heterosexuality for women is similarly perverse:

Within feminism heterosexual desire has only been theorized negatively. For example, penetration enacts the subjugation of women by men; women's attraction to men reinforces phallogentrism and women's sense of their own inferiority. In such models there is little place for pleasure, which then becomes perverse, rebellious, insubordinate to political reason.¹⁴⁶

The perversity of the heterosexual feminist reappears in the pleasure experienced by the female reader of male-authored, even misogynistic texts and their apparently masochistic

¹⁴³ Barthes (1975, 19).

¹⁴⁴ Gallop (1988b, 104).

¹⁴⁵ Barthes (1975, 44), also Gallop (1988b, 104). See further, Barthes (1975, 32-33): 'The social struggle cannot be reduced to the struggle between two rival ideologies: it is the subversion of all ideology which is in question'.

¹⁴⁶ Gallop (1988b, 108).

identification with the ‘virgins and whores’ therein.¹⁴⁷ This textual pleasure is gratuitous and belies the ideological stance that resisting reading practices of feminist literary criticism necessitate. And yet rather than characterize her perversity as a thorn in the side of her feminism, Gallop suggests that these moments of ideological unease offer the kind of insight that is crucial for feminist politics to remain insightful.¹⁴⁸ The coda to my chapter on Cook’s *Achilles*, which will examine her reception of the rape of Thetis alongside the resisting readings of Jo Shapcott and Carol Ann Duffy, similarly illustrates the need to reimagine the relationship between women’s classical reception and the strictures of politicized feminist criticism.

The interactions between Barthes, Cixous, and Gallop offer an original approach to the study of classical reception out of which the re-orientation of the sub-field towards the female reader, which engages with the tension between second and third wave feminisms, can emerge. These readings underline the potential richness of ambivalence, irony, and indeterminacy as paradigms for a politically engaged feminist classicism, in which the confluence of the rescue-model of the second wave and the heterogeneity of the third emboldens the writer of reception and her reader to reconfigure women’s relationships to Classics for the twenty-first century. Barthes’s strategies of surprise, indeterminacy, and digression interact with the ambivalence and indeterminacy that Woolf models for the female

¹⁴⁷ Gallop (1988b, 109-10).

¹⁴⁸ Gallop (1988b, 116-17). See also Gallop (1988a).

reader.¹⁴⁹ The possible point of contention between Barthes and Woolf is Barthes's suggestion that irony and multivalence are incompatible:

For multivalence (contradicted by irony) is a transgression of ownership. The wall of voices must be passed through to reach the writing: this latter eschews any designation of ownership and thus can never be *ironic*; or, at least, its irony is never certain...¹⁵⁰

However, Woolf's marriage of indeterminacy and irony precludes Barthes's criticism of irony as something that closes down meaning. Woolf's indeterminate irony – that sets up only to collapse and reform the typical ironic counter-narrative – underlines why rereading is the key practice for classical reception. Traditional irony, like Fetterley's resistance, implies that there are just two ways of reading a text: the surface way and the ironic or resisting way. What Woolf achieves by mobilizing indeterminacy is to uncover the potential for an inexhaustible number of re/readings.

1.6 Thesis Overview

At the time of writing, Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* is easily the playwright's most popular play, bucking the trend that typically confines the revival of Old Comedy to the University campus play. To my mind, the strangest facet of the play's enduring popularity into the twenty-first century is its appropriation for feminist-pacifist protest. The text is underpinned by rampant misogyny (played uncritically for laughs) and xenophobia, but the

¹⁴⁹ For indeterminacy as a strategy in feminist literary criticism, see the work of Sommer (1994) on 'incompetent readers'.

¹⁵⁰ Barthes (1974, 45).

enthusiastic reception of the sex strike theme by feminist women exposes a deep divide between critical readings of the play and its wider resonance. In the second chapter, I set out the difference that reading classical literature via the reading and rewriting of Virginia Woolf can make, and I return to Aristophanes and the dilemma he poses to feminist-pacifism to take his comedy seriously. The ambivalent and ironic attitudes to martial masculinity that pervade Woolf's writing in *Three Guineas* (1938) and 'A Society' (1921) find parallels in Aristophanes which point to Homer as a source for the play's humour. From the perspective of Woolf, the interactions between men and women in *Lysistrata* parody the gender arrangements in epic and reveal a two-pronged, comic-serious approach to sexism and militarism that mocks men's martial posturing while lamenting the terrible losses of war.

In my third chapter, I trace how Alice Oswald's *Memorial* disrupts the heroic narrative of the κλέα ἀνδρῶν to uncover and commemorate the poignancy of ordinary lives lost in the war at Troy. Oswald's radical contraction of Homeric epic reframes the telling of the story of the Trojan War as an act of mourning and draws on women's lamentation in the ancient poem to remember the dead. However, Oswald's approach to lament is highly ambivalent, and she recalls how the women's γόοι exist in tension with the heroic narrative. The parochialism manifest in Oswald's other poetry collections is in evidence in *Memorial*, as she positions the poem within a decidedly British tradition of thinking about war and its remembrance.¹⁵¹ The poem draws on the intimate connection between British classicism and the First World War, in which Homeric epic provided both a space and a template for individual soldiers to react to

¹⁵¹ Oswald explicitly 'locates' her work in response to the local landscape, see e.g., Oswald (2002), (2005b), (2007), (2009a), (2009b).

British militarism in their poetry. However, by looking back to Homer via the First World War, Oswald looks forward to the hideous persistence of conflict across the millennia. The lament of her poem remains open-ended, incomplete, and indeterminate, as she invites her modern reader not only to consider how and who they remember but also why they remember, when remembrance seems to have so little effect.

In chapter four, I turn to Elizabeth Cook's prose-poem *Achilles*, which presents the life, death, and afterlife of its eponymous hero in panorama, with a narrative that ranges from conception to reception. Although little time is spent recounting his battlefield fame, the interdependencies of warriors who fight and die in the pursuit of κλέος spill over to mark Achilles out as someone whose identity is made and remade through contact – often quite literally – with others. Of all Achilles' encounters, the least obviously fleshy is arguably the most compelling, as the final section of *Achilles* maps points of contact between the Homeric hero and the Romantic poet, John Keats, who famously imagined himself 'with Achilles shouting in the Trenches'. Cook reads the epic tradition via Keats to reveal the indeterminacies and digressions that complicate any reading of the hero and to uncover the epic as material, corporeal, erotic, and feminine. The final section of the chapter puts Keats's framework for rereading to the test with comparative close readings of near contemporary receptions of the rape of Thetis. By setting the resistance of Jo Shapcott and Carol Ann Duffy against the ambivalence and indeterminacy of Cook, an alternative and altogether more compelling way for thinking through women's writing of classical reception and its relationship to feminist politics begins to emerge

The final chapter examines Yael Farber's play *Molona*, a reception of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and its ancient intertexts that transposes the family drama to post-apartheid South Africa and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Far from unequivocally celebrating her country's non-violent transition to democracy, Farber recasts South Africa's reconciliation in the light of ambivalent readings of Aeschylus' trilogy. Farber stages Klytemnestra and Elektra as mourners who are unable to work through their grief by taking Homer's Penelope as an epic model for the tragic performance of grief in perpetuity. Farber rereads the tragedies for what they have to say about women and memory and foregrounds the intertextual relationships between the ancient plays that effectively remember each other. Farber's play-text focuses on just the first two plays of Aeschylus' trilogy as her characters do not act out the matricide. However, the Furies continue to cast their shadow over the play's conclusion to evoke the sense of irresolution and indeterminacy that lingers when retributive justice is averted or perhaps just postponed.

2. REREADING ARISTOPHANES AND HOMER THROUGH VIRGINIA WOOLF

This chapter will address the remarkable popularity of re-performing Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* for feminist and anti-war protest. The foremost example of this modern trend is the female-led Lysistrata Project, which saw over one thousand readings and performances take place across the world to protest the impending war in Iraq in 2003. The lack of critical attention that the organizers of the Project paid to Aristophanes' representation of women and the sexist theme of the sex-strike reveals longstanding problems with the play's reception for the feminist reader. My solution is to take what Aristophanes' comedy has to say about the cost of war seriously. I notice that the confluence of humour and gravitas, even tragedy, which is a hallmark of the playwright's comic-serious (σπουδαιογέλοιοι) poetics, is focalized through the female characters of the play.¹ From this alternative female perspective, the target of Aristophanes' humour is redirected from the women's incongruous grab for male power to men and their war-making.

The irony in Virginia Woolf's anti-war works offer modern updates to Aristophanic comic-seriousness and reading Aristophanes back through Woolf helps to crystallize how the play pokes fun at men's war-making while lamenting the community's losses. Her short story

¹ For Aristophanes and σπουδαιογέλοιοι, see Platter (2007, 10-13). For the seriousness of Aristophanic comedy in terms of its interactions with tragedy and politics, see Silk (2000, 42-97, 301-49). For theories of humour, e.g., Incongruity, Release Theory, Superiority, see e.g., Boyd (2004); Carroll (2005). For the application of modern humour theories to Aristophanes, see Halliwell (2008, 1-50), (2014); Platter (2016); Robson (2006).

‘A Society’ (1921) engages with the male tradition of reading Aristophanic obscenity that hampers modern feminist receptions and makes the connection between the domestic and political spheres that will form the crux of *Three Guineas* (1938).² This epistolary essay finds the tradition of military masculinity that begins with Homer risible and suggests that women can use their experience of marginalization to hold power to account. I will recast *Lysistrata* as Homeric parody in the light of Woolf, and this epic frame for the material reveals that Aristophanes’ sex-war theme replays the male-female relationships in Homer, which often explore war and peace through gender, for laughs. The epic set piece that is at the centre of the parody is Hector’s dismissal of Andromache (*Il.* 6.490-93), which has its own intratextual echoes and reappears, with adjustments, in the *Odyssey* (1.356-59) and *Lysistrata* (519-20, 538).³ What will emerge over the course of the chapter is a new way of reading Aristophanes for feminist-pacifism that takes its cues from Woolf and starts with Homer. In the final section of the chapter, I consider some late-twentieth and early twenty-first century receptions of Homer that bear the hallmarks of Woolfian irony and Aristophanic comic-seriousness.⁴

² See in V. Woolf (2001) [1921] and V. Woolf (1992a) [1938].

³ For intratextuality and epic, see R. P. Martin (2000).

⁴ Unless I state otherwise, references to Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* are from Sommerstein (1990) and line references follow the Loeb text in Henderson (1987). References to Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* are from Sommerstein (1980) and line references follow the Loeb text in Rogers (1924). References to Aristophanes’ *Peace* are from Sommerstein (1985) and line references follow the Loeb text in Rogers (1924). References to Homer’s *Iliad* are from Alexander (2015) and line references follow the OUP edition (1920). References to Homer’s *Odyssey* are from Rieu (2003) [1991].

2.1 Comic-Seriousness in Aristophanes

Michael Silk's work on Aristophanic poetics sets out the comedian's attentiveness to tragedy and emphasizes the tonal interdependence of the dramatic genres beyond straightforward borrowing or parody.⁵ He reconsiders and upends the oppositions that form the basis of the traditional, Aristotelian distinction between tragedy and comedy, which include the assumption that tragedy appeals to pity and fear while comedy makes us laugh, the 'happy ending' of comedy, and the serious intent of tragedy versus the amusement of comedy.⁶ The position that I take in this chapter, evidenced by the various approaches to writing about war and gender that I examine, returns to Silk's argument and spotlights new evidence for generic crossover in *Lysistrata*. For instance, the peaceful resolution of the play is happy if the central conflict is between war and peace (although the fifth-century audience's experience of ongoing war may render *Lysistrata*'s peace bittersweet). However, the play ends on a sour note when re-approached from the perspective of the feminist reader, for whom the resumption of traditional marital relationships that accompanies the peace is unsatisfactory.

⁵ Silk (2000, 43-97).

⁶ Silk (2000, 56-61).

The seriousness of *Lysistrata* emerges out of the tension between war and peace, as Silk notes; however, the role of gender in the war/peace dynamic demands renewed attention.⁷ The most serious moment in the play takes place during the *agon* between Lysistrata and the Magistrate, in which Lysistrata argues for women's involvement in war and investment in war-policy by calling attention to women's roles as mothers of sons who fight and die for the city:

LYSISTRATA: ... We bear its burden more than twice over; in the first place by bearing sons and sending them out as hoplites –

MAGISTRATE: Quiet, don't open old wounds. (*Lys.* 588-90, cf. 651)

Jeffrey Henderson makes the point that '[t]here could not have been many spectators who had not lost a relative in the war' and notes that the interruption of the Magistrate reflects the restrictions that surround the public expression of grief by women.⁸ The interruption may be more meaningful still, as Bonnie Honig's work on lament points to the figurative interruption of grief with pleasure that stretches back to Homer (cf. *Il.* 24.601-20).⁹ The Magistrate literally interrupts Lysistrata so that, on a metatextual level, the pleasure of comedy can continue unchecked by grief. However, the sense of loss that underlies the Magistrate's

⁷ Silk (2000, 302) sums up the *Lysistrata*'s seriousness in less than one line and makes no reference to the interactions between war/peace and men/women.

⁸ Henderson (1987, 145). For the restrictions on women's burial practice and the institutionalization of women's lament in tragedy, see e.g., Loraux (1986); Holst-Warhaft (1992).

⁹ Honig (2013, 28).

military bluster and underpins the women's protest is potentially left unresolved if the uneasiness of the play's reconciliation is exposed.¹⁰

The theme of bereavement that lurks beneath the surface of *Lysistrata* and threatens to undermine comic pleasure suggests that the comedy may be performing a similar function to tragedy for Athenians: providing an outlet for grief by looking back to the epic tradition and its dominance by women. The later sections of the chapter (2.4.1-3) will consider Aristophanes' reception of Homer, and I will suggest that women's expressions of grief had a place in Old Comedy and women's representation in Homeric epic could become subject to comic-serious parody.¹¹ The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* is a pre-classical model for the mingling of comedy and seriousness, and also has a female-focus, as Demeter's laughter at

¹⁰ For tragedy, lament, and irresolution, see Foley (1993). Foley's work seems to anticipate the approach to *Antigone* and lament in Honig (2013), as something that institutionalization cannot fully contain. Case (2007, 126) describes the activism of the Lysistrata Project as reinvigorating 'the improvised, unruly practice of laments'. However, the tantalizing connection she appears to make between lament and *Lysistrata* is unexplored and seemingly metaphorical: where the institutionalization of lament into tragedy becomes a catch-all to describe female expression and its suppression.

¹¹ This collapses the clear distinction between comedy and tragedy in terms of their pre-classical origins. See e.g., Laurie O'Higgins (2008, 108) traces the feminine roots of Old Comedy to cultic joking and likens the absorption of women's cultic voices into the institution of comedy to the appropriation of lament by tragedy and the funeral oration.

Iambe's joking temporarily interrupts her lamentation (202-5).¹² The balance of grief and laughter in Aristophanes' play is similarly on a knife-edge.¹³

The two articles of Elizabeth Craik are exceptions to the typical neglect of *Lysistrata* in work on tragic parody in Old Comedy.¹⁴ Craik makes a compelling case for reading Aristophanes' play as an extended parody of Euripides' *Trojan Women*, in which, in addition to the shared themes of women, war, and sex, she detects linguistic and staging parallels between the plays.¹⁵ I would extend the parodic vision that Craik ascribes to Aristophanes to suggest instead that apparent allusion to *Trojan Women*, beyond direct reference to its staging, actually points to both plays' shared engagement with Homer. Craik puts it bluntly when she says that *Trojan Women*, like *Lysistrata*, is essentially 'about sex and war', and what I will demonstrate is that Aristophanes reconfigures Homer in terms of 'sex and war' too.¹⁶

¹² O'Higgins (2003, 2-3). For women's roles in cult, see Zeitlin (1982).

¹³ For ambivalence and lament in tragedy, see Foley (1993).

¹⁴ Craik (1990), (1993). For the relationship between comedy and tragedy, see Konstan (2014); Silk (2000, 42-97).

¹⁵ Craik (1990), (1993). In pairing these two plays it is interesting to note that both benefit and suffer from the same tendency towards oversimplification in reception. *Trojan Women* has become the most ubiquitous anti-war play in contemporary classical reception, although I am not sure whether a straightforwardly pacifist reading gets the most out of the tragedy. For the 'universal resonance' of *Trojan Women*, see Lauriola (2015).

¹⁶ Craik (1990, 13). *Lysistrata* is not the only play in which Aristophanes inflects humour with gravitas to consider the effects of war-making. *Lysistrata* (411 BCE) shares its distaste for the

The Homeric epics offer compelling literary models for thinking seriously about war and women, although the extent to which *Lysistrata* engages with Homer has been severely underappreciated. In my analysis, the passages of the comedy that are quite explicitly Homeric – *Lysistrata*’s reference to and then reversal of Hector’s statement to Andromache that ‘war is the concern of men’ (*Il.* 6.492; cf. *Lys.* 516-20, 538) and the opposition between spinning and fighting that underpins her wool-working metaphor for state-management (*Lys.* 574-86) – are the starting points rather than the summation of the play’s epic allusions. Existing approaches to the comedy note Aristophanes’ borrowing here, but there is a lack of engagement with the full parodic function of the allusion in which Homeric pastiche is a

destruction of domestic life in the pursuit of war with *Peace* (421 BCE) and follows *Acharnians* (425 BCE) in the association between having sex and making peace. The women of *Lysistrata* miss their husbands and mourn the deaths of their sons (cf. *Lys.* 99-118, 588-97), while in *Peace*, for example, the second *parabasis* hears the chorus reflect with nostalgia on their peacetime life as farmers (*Peace* 1127-71) before their bucolic reminiscences are interrupted with complaints about army life (*Peace* 1172-90). *Acharnians* is a play in which sex and war are inextricably linked, as Dicaeopolis attributes the cause of the conflict to a series of mock-heroic abductions of *ἑταῖραι* (*Ach.* 526-29). The resumption of marital relationships at the close of *Lysistrata* replays, perhaps less emphatically, the ending of *Acharnians*, in which Dicaeopolis shares the stage with the general Lamachus, and while the latter bemoans his injured leg, the former boasts in anticipation of sexual pleasure (*Ach.* 1215-26), see Newiger (1981). The clearest divergence in Aristophanes’ examination of Athenian militarism through *Lysistrata* is the active involvement of women in public policy. For a reading of the dramatic festival in terms of masculinity, citizenship, and militarism, see J. J. Winkler (1990c); see also Goldhill (1990), (1999).

source of humour in *Lysistrata* and both epics are central to the unfolding of the comic plot.¹⁷ The reconsideration of Aristophanes' play as a work of ancient reception brings together and reconfigures several strands of secondary literature. These include works that examine the comic aspects of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, as well as related studies that consider the function of laughter and, more generally, humour within the epics. The longstanding

¹⁷ The allusion is noted in Henderson's commentary (1987, 134, 135). Surprisingly, Carroll Moulton's *Aristophanic Poetry* (1981) simply nods to the allusion in her treatment of poetics and politics in the play (p. 57; pp. 48-81). Taaffe's work on Aristophanes and women, which says a great deal about *Lysistrata*, simply refers to the lines to state that: 'Her account of the typical husband's inquiries [sic] alludes to Homer. The typical husband responds "War is the business of men!"'. Taaffe (1993, 63) does not include the Homeric reference. The chapter on the theme of 'The War between the Sexes' in Whitman (1964, 200-227) includes the lines in question but makes no mention of Homer. Whitman makes the general point about war 'damaging domestic harmony' (1964, 205). Even the linguistic approach to Aristophanes in Willi (2003, 168) makes the connection between the suppression of women's public speech in Athens and the lines in *Lysistrata* but makes no mention of their Homeric origin. The lack of attention paid to the allusion is part of a wider neglect of the lines in *Lysistrata* altogether, e.g., there is no mention of lines 516-20 in Dover (1972); McLeish (1980); Revermann (2006); Silk (2000). Perhaps the focus on the sex-war in the scholarship neglects evidence of the play's serious, even political, engagement (which, as section 2.2 in this chapter will show, is also the case with creative responses). For instance, the collection of essays in the edited volume on comedy and Athenian politics in Dobrov (1998) make no mention of *Lysistrata* at all. For intertextuality in Aristophanes more generally, see Hubbard (1991).

characterization of the *Iliad* as proto-tragic will be complicated by what I have to say about its resonance in Aristophanes' comic-serious play.¹⁸

2.2 The Lysistrata Project

There is nothing revelatory in pointing out that Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* is neither feminist nor pacifist. The anti-war sentiment expressed by Aristophanes' female characters is not absolute but directed at war with fellow Hellenes (*Lys.* 1131-34); a war, in turn, that is framed as a distraction from entanglement with the real, barbarian enemy: the Persians (*Lys.* 1248-72). Lysistrata and the other women of the play are also not averse to co-opting military symbolism and organizing in ways that invite comparison to an armed force (*Lys.* 453-61).¹⁹ The entire premise is sexist, as, over and above the racism of the sex strike, the play derives its humour from the sheer absurdity of women taking charge of public policy, and any comic challenge to contemporary gender arrangements is resolved by the play's close.²⁰

¹⁸ Most studies on comedy tend to focus on the *Odyssey*, see e.g., Burrows (1965); H. W. Clarke (1969); Colakis (1986); Levine (1982-82); Levine (1983); Meltzer (1990); Seeskin (1977). For the *Iliad* and tragedy, see T. M. Greene (1999); Slatkin (2007). See also Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448b34-1449a2. For tragic use of Homeric epic, see Garner (1990).

¹⁹ See e.g., Revermann (2008; 2010); Sommerstein (2009a; 2010). Mitchell (2016) shows that anti-war adaptations of the play in the twentieth century produced publicity material inspired by propaganda images encouraging the war effort in World War Two!

²⁰ See e.g., Levine (1987); Pomeroy (1995, 112-14); Revermann (2008), (2010); Robson (2016); Stroup (2004); and most forcibly in Taaffe (1993, 48-73). Surprisingly, the blurb for the

Characterizations of Lysistrata as a proto-feminist Aristophanic hero(ine) are similarly suspect: while the women adhere to comic stereotypes of femininity, Lysistrata sets herself apart and boasts of her compatibility with men and male values (e.g. 1124-25).²¹ The play ends with a comic stock scene that focuses aggressive male sexuality on to a nude female body (cf. 1106-1188).²² Not only do the play's female characters make no difference to the genre in this respect, but Lysistrata even orchestrates the spectacle of objectification herself.²³

translation of *Lysistrata* that I use, Sommerstein (1990), ends with the flourish: 'It could perhaps be described as the world's first and indeed still the world's greatest feminist drama'; also noted by Taaffe (1993, 162 n. 1). Platter (2007) considers Aristophanic comedy through Bakhtin and the reversals of the carnivalesque, see Bakhtin (1984). For the application of Bakhtinian theory to Old Comedy, see also A. Edwards (2002); Goldhill (1991, 167-222); Henderson (1990); P. A. Miller and Platter (1993).

²¹ The female chorus celebrate Lysistrata as 'most manly' with the superlative of ἀνδρεῖος at lines 549 and 1108. See Pomeroy (1995, 112-14); Taaffe (1993, 61-66). Lysistrata's heroism even sets her apart in Aristophanes' oeuvre and its scholarly reception: Rosen (2014) discusses how Whitman's concept of the comic hero could not accommodate the seriousness of Lysistrata, see Whitman (1964). The bibliography for gender and *Lysistrata* is vast, see e.g., Bassi (1999, 107-111); Faraone (2006); Foley (1982), (2014); A. Hughes (2011, 201-14); McClure (2015); Loraux (1993); O'Higgins (2003, 160-68); Revermann (2006, 236-60); Sommerstein (2009b), (2009d); Stroup (2004); Vaio (1973).

²² For the 'mute nude female characters' in Aristophanic comedy, see Zweig (1992).

²³ Zweig (1992, 80) refers to Lysistrata's 'masculine phase' from line 1112. Compare with Taaffe (1993, 70), for whom Lysistrata is at her 'least masculine' at this late point in the play, surrounded by the erect phallos of the male characters. For the dynamic between Lysistrata and

Despite all this, the secondary literature records a number of responses to the play in recent decades that read both its female-centric narrative and anti-war theme as evidence of proto-feminist and/or pacifist sentiments.²⁴ Martin Revermann responds to the striking disconnect between academic and artistic interpretations of the play with a defence of what he describes as ‘misunderstanding the *Lysistrata*, productively’ in contemporary reception:

Lysistrata is, after all, a very powerful woman, and war *is* considered to be an evil (even if a necessary one). For a modern mind, it seems, the step towards projecting feminism and pacifism into the play is not only an extremely small but even a necessary one. The play *has* to be read along these lines – for only then does it matter to us.²⁵

There is clearly weight to the argument that this kind of creative re-visioning is what classical reception is all about, in which reworking the literature in the service of contemporary politics and according to modern tastes justifies and explains away anachronism and ‘inaccuracy’. Moreover, the growing recognition of the disproportionate burden shouldered by female civilians in conflict means that a play that appears to place women at the centre of decision-making in war appears incredibly timely.²⁶

Reconciliation, see especially Faraone (2006); Revermann (2006, 254); Sommerstein (2009b, 242); Stroup (2004); Worman (2008, 76-79).

²⁴ Stuttard (2010, 1) describes *Lysistrata* as ‘increasingly popular and increasingly misunderstood’. See also Revermann (2008), (2010); Robson (2016).

²⁵ Revermann (2010, 70, cf. 77), emphasis in the original.

²⁶ UN Security Council resolution 1325 recognized women’s role in peace-making and the disproportionate burden experienced by women in war. For the UN’s response to women’s issues, see

The enthusiasm with which *Lysistrata* has been embraced in the United States and the United Kingdom, where it is the most frequently restaged of Aristophanes' comedies by some margin, is overwhelming.²⁷ The Lysistrata Project, a mass reception of the play in anticipation of, and in opposition to, the Bush administration's invasion of Iraq in 2003 is the clearest case in point. The largely female-led movement saw over one thousand readings, performances,

Galey (1994); Waller and Rycenga (2000). DeGroot (2001, 36) estimates that women and children make up 80% of refugees from war, see also Carey (2001). Waller and Rycenga (2000, xviii) estimate that up to 95% of war casualties are civilians. See also R. L. Riley (2008). For war and women in antiquity, see e.g., Gaca (2008), (2011a), (2011b), (2014), (2015), (2018).

²⁷ For example, the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD) performances database counts 162 productions across the UK and US, dating from 1872 until 2016. For US *Lysistratas* from 1930-2012, see Klein (2014a); for African-American *Lysistratas*, see Wetmore (2013). To my knowledge there is no book-length study of receptions of the play in the UK. For some sense of *Lysistrata*'s earlier reception history in the UK, see Hall (2007, 86-89); Walsh (2016). There are several treatments of the play's reception history outside UK and US contexts. For early modern Europe, particularly France, see Kotzamani (1997); for Eastern Europe, see Kotzamani (2005); for Greece, see Van Steen (2000, 76-123); for Kenya, see Outa (1999). And more generally, Hardwick (2010a); Van Steen (2014b: 433-450). Marina Kotzamani's invitation to Arabic theatre practitioners to recreate the Project in a Middle Eastern context provides an interesting counterpoint to the cross-cultural, cross-geographical, and cross-political relevance of the play to which the US-based Project lays claim, see Kotzamani (2006); also Case (2007, 127-28); Hardwick (2010a, 82-83).

and interpretations of the play take place across a single day, across fifty-nine countries.²⁸ The website, a focal point for the Project's geographically diverse activities, set out a mission statement that united anti-war politics with feminist concern for the gendered impact of war on (geo-)politically marginalized women.²⁹ And yet it is telling that academic responses to

²⁸ The two organizers Kathryn Blume and Sharron Bower assemble a core group of participants who lead the sixty or so iterations of the Project based in New York City, which acts as a kind of informal steering group. From the first director's meeting on 26 January to the post-performance, follow-up director's meeting on 10 March, this forum – in which the play is discussed, the Project is strategized, and the day of activism is evaluated – is overwhelmingly female. See Kelly (2006).

²⁹ From the website: 'In many countries, women have progressed to greater positions of power since Aristophanes wrote this play. Many of us *do* have a voice now. We are free to run for office. We are free to speak out for humanitarian foreign policy. We are free to teach our youth about conflict resolution through compassionate negotiation, rather than violent domination. And we can do much more. For the sake of women who DON'T have those freedoms (the very women who will feel the brutality of Bush's war in a direct way), we must speak out. We must unite.' The web pages for the Lysistrata Project are archived at: <http://lysistrataprojectarchive.com/lys>. See Donegan (2005) for the impact of new media on classical reception, including the Lysistrata Project. See Wrigley (2013) for the democratization of Classics with new media. Mark Kelly's documentary film *Operation Lysistrata* (2006) details the Project from inception, to realization, to aftermath and records its emergence out of Theaters Against War (THAW), a collaboration between theatres, practitioners, and volunteers to find creative ways to oppose the war in Iraq. New-York based actor Kathryn Blume recalls becoming aware of THAW around the same time as working on a screenplay for a modern adaptation of *Lysistrata*. Her idea for a reading of the play under the auspices of THAW blossomed into a standalone project with the involvement of fellow actor, Sharron Bower. The two women set up a

this self-styled ‘theatrical act of dissent’ distinguish between the integrity of the Project as mass political activism and the asymmetry between feminist and anti-war politics and the Project’s engagement with Aristophanes (or, to put it more bluntly, the ‘quality’ of the work as reception).³⁰

website to issue a global call for participants, only for the Project to escalate beyond all expectations. See also Klein (2014b, 111-15). For *Operation Lysistrata* as part of the cinematic tradition of *Lysistratas*, see M. M. Winkler (2017, 163-68). The documentary title ostensibly evokes the idea of the Project as a direct response to Operation Iraqi Freedom. Another layer to Kelly’s title is Anne Faulk’s earlier prose reception of the play, *Holding Out* (1998). In Faulk’s novel, the sex strike is a response by women in North America to a high-profile case of domestic violence involving the Chief Justice of the United States that they name ‘Operation Lysistrata’ (p. 101). The plot of *Lysistrata* is summarized near the start of the novel with the blandly essentialist statement that women ‘have common sense and the men don’t’ (p. 42). The novel does not engage with the women’s seizure of the Treasury to concentrate solely on the sex strike. Another more recent prose reception of the play is Meg Wolitzer’s *The Uncoupling* (2011), discussed in Klein (2014a, 127-45).

³⁰ The APGRD database records the full title of the Lysistrata Project as ‘Lysistrata Project: A Theatrical Act of Dissent’. Emily Klein’s feminist reading of *Lysistrata* suggests that modern receptions of the play mistake its ‘feminist minstrelsy’ (2014a, 6), and yet her assessment of the Lysistrata Project is largely taken up with Kathryn Blume’s creative process as an activist rather than her (lack of) engagement with Aristophanes’ play. A major source for Klein is a recorded version of Blume’s one-woman play staged in response to the Lysistrata Project, *The Accidental Activist*; see also Klein (2012). Dorota Dutsch’s response to the Lysistrata Project measures the Project’s entanglement in contemporary political discourse against the dialogism imagined in Lorna Hardwick’s diasporic model for reception, as she suggests that the organizers essentially flatten Aristophanes to the marketable concept of the sex strike, see Dutsch (2015, 575, 580-81); see Hardwick (2006). More

Dorota Dutsch's personal communications with Blume and Bower evidence their lack of interest in the play as a performance text that emerged out of a specific historical context, and the organizers rely instead on its symbolic potency, born out of a burgeoning performance tradition in the United States, to evoke a feminist-pacifist message.³¹ Their cavalier attitude towards the difference between Aristophanic comedy and the contemporary situation makes

generally, Robson (2016, 44, 48, 63-64) ascribes the endurance of *Lysistrata* into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in part to the sex strike's potency as a marketing tool. In its collapse of the plot of *Lysistrata* into the sex strike, the Project emerges from within and contributes to the wider cultural translation of Aristophanes' play as shorthand for women's activism. Helen Morales (2013) exposes the redundancy of assimilating real sex strikes that occur as part of women's political protest to Aristophanic reception. Morales considers the attention to which Leymah Gbowee was subject after advocating a sex strike as part of a series of campaigns to bring the civil war in the Republic of Liberia to an end (even suggesting that the contemporaneous *Lysistrata* Project unwittingly fuelled the comparison). The attribution of an Aristophanic framework to Gbowee's movement appears to Morales as tonally insensitive and reductionist, framing real events 'as comic, as titillating'. These readings fail to accommodate for the serious political position adopted by Gbowee and the anti-war activists, as well as the Liberian context in which the women's actions were in part a response to war rape, see Morales (2013, 287). Across various academic disciplines, the term *Lysistrata*/*Lysistrata* is used to evoke women's resistance to war, see e.g., Fox (2001); Gorman (2010). For the Project as activism in non-Classics publications, see Wiederhold and Field-Springer (2015).

³¹ For twentieth century *Lysistratas* in the US, see Klein (2014). Dutsch (2015, 582) cites personal communication with Blume and Bower in which the activists reveal that they did not prepare for the Project by consulting activists or doing any research.

for some striking disjunctions between medium and message. For example, Drue Robinson Hagan's translation of the play, one of those made freely available online for participants, uncritically reproduces the reconciliation scene and Lysistrata's part in it, which sits uncomfortably alongside the rhetoric of feminist unity and attentiveness to privilege that underpins the Project's mission statement.³² The coordinators uploaded several translations of

³² Hagan (2003). Hagan's script is available to consult at the APGRD, Oxford. If these nude characters of Aristophanes were played by female πόρνοι or ἑταῖραι, as Zweig (1992) suggests, then the inappropriateness of Hagan's reuse of the reconciliation scene is even more pronounced and at odds with the Project's commitment to speaking out on behalf of those who are metaphorically and/or literally silenced and oppressed. For a contemporary analysis of the gendering of bodies in conflict, see Ruddick (1990). Zweig (1992, 78-79) sets out how scholarship has remained divided with regard to the status (and gender) of the person who played Reconciliation. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1927) is the earliest proponent of attributing the playing of Reconciliation to a nude ἑταῖραι, a view still shared by A. Hughes (2011, 210-14) and, obviously, Zweig (1992). Laura Stone's influential work on costume in Aristophanes seems to have marked a general shift towards reinterpreting Reconciliation as a male actor in a leotard, see Stone (1980, 148-49), noted in A. Hughes (2011, 210); see also Foley (2014). For an alternative approach to the reconciliation scene as part of the Lysistrata Project, see the discussion of Ellen Anderson's eco-feminist reception, *Liz Estrada*, in Dutsch (2015, 579-81). See also John Given (2011), for an account of his attempt to call attention to the dynamics of gender and power in the treatment of Reconciliation in the performance he directed at the University of East Carolina in 2010. Given casts a male actor to play Reconciliation in a padded suit who is fondled by the ambassadors but is then replaced in the scene by the female actor who plays Lysistrata. According to Given: 'The scene, then, was an attempt to show Lysistrata herself winning the war by sacrificing herself in battle'. While it is true that Lysistrata 'does not end the play triumphantly', as it is not clear whether she speaks or is even present on stage at the finale, Given seems to ignore Lysistrata's part in

the play to their website to give free access to participants. However, there is no record of which performances or readings used which translation, or even a sense of the extent to which these translations were used at all.

Blume and Bower make no attempt to temper the heterogeneity of potential approaches with a Project-wide feminist-pacifist reading of the play.³³ This permissive

the reconciliation scene. For the ending of *Lysistrata*, see Rutherford (2015); Sommerstein (2009b, 244). For another approach to the reconciliation scene in reception, see Ewans and Phiddian (2012).

³³ In one of the final scenes of *Operation Lysistrata*, which records the final directors' meeting, Sharron Bower relays an email conversation with a male Republican who had organized a reading somewhere in the American Northwest. Bower reports, somewhat bemused, on the reasoning behind this man's enthusiasm for the cause. It turns out that he was under the impression that the Project was to oppose an overhasty rush to war rather than hostility to each and every possible form of military intervention in Iraq. The meeting's assembled women laugh at this anecdote of crossed wires before Bower asserts that this divergence of interests actually serves as testimony to the Project's principles of democracy, inclusivity, and free speech. In fact, Bower announces, the man is right. The Project *is* about an overhasty rush to war *and* it is also about wanting the UN weapons inspectors to continue with their work. The women enthusiastically agree. This is not the first time that Kelly's film picks up on discrepancies or uncertainties in the Project's activist stance. In the lead up to the day of performances, Bower is moved to clarify the mission statement on the Lysistrata Project's website after an anxious email by a female participant. The initial wording: that the Project is to protest a unilateral, pre-emptive attack in Iraq, is expanded to encompass discouragement of coalition-led (or non-unilateral) attacks, as well as a message of support for the ongoing work of UN weapons inspectors. Bower's husband is dismissive of these amendments, thinking them overly punctilious and

attitude towards the various iterations of the *Lysistrata* Project is summed up at the first directors' meeting held for those spearheading New York-based receptions, where they emphasize an ethos of creative freedom:

Bower: The creative onus is completely on you. You can have it be a two-second mime version of *Lysistrata* or a ten-minute drag version or a...

Blume: ...or if you just want to get on rollerblades and build yourself huge phalluses and head up and down Broadway...

Bower: The sky's the limit!³⁴

There is no acknowledgement that a 'ten-minute drag version' may mean something very different to a 'two-second mime version'. This is surely an important oversight in relation to a play in which the female body is subject to sustained, sexualized attention and the issue of women's public speech is the clearest way in to the text from a feminist perspective.

In addition to the issues raised by presentist approaches to classical reception (what Revermann labels misreading), I detect a marked *under*-reading of Aristophanes' play. The *Lysistrata* Project encourages participants to play up the salaciousness of the strike, which uncritically replicates the retrograde sexual politics implied by the women's withdrawal of

verging on the ridiculous. And yet the emailer has a point. The cloudiness of the *Lysistrata* Project's activism and the further obfuscation of its stance in both of these two instances by Bower are characteristic of and compounded by the Project's approach to the ancient play which, as noted, is also not unequivocal in its anti-war message. Strangely enough, what remains unsaid by Bower in her support of the ongoing work of weapons inspectors – does this mean that if WMDs are found they will support intervention? – brings the Project more in line with the not-quite pacifism of *Lysistrata*. And yet this crossover is unintentional.

³⁴ Kelly (2006). This is my own transcription.

sex to make peace and its culmination in the scene with Reconciliation (1106-88).³⁵ Ellen McLaughlin, who contributes to the *Lysistrata* Project's pool of translations, suggests that the play is:

³⁵ See e.g., Compton-Eagle (2015, 56-57); Konstan (1995, 46); O'Higgins (2003, 167-68); Sommerstein (2009, 242); Stroup (2004, 67); Worman (2008, 76-79); Zweig (1992, 78-81). *Lysistrata* makes a spectacle out of negotiations for peace between Athenian and Spartan delegates with the personified figure of Reconciliation, whose naked female body she uses to incite the men's desire for peace and to remap the territories between the warring cities. Reconciliation's body becomes the medium for peace between both the cities and the sexes, as the delegates covet specific parts of her body in jest at the stereotypical sexual preferences of their cities (cf. 1148). The productions and translations that do recognize and tackle the play's misogyny tend to transform Aristophanes' play – the ending especially – almost beyond recognition. For example, Ellen Anderson's *Liz Estrada* (2003) transforms the reconciliation scene into an eco-feminist monologue; while writer-director Deborah Coughlin's version from 2015 departs from the Greek play, and its engagement with war, almost entirely:

I changed the ending so that my *Lysistrata* (Hannah Brown) falls off the roof of parliament while being pursued by police. She gives an impassioned speech on her mobile phone and it is uploaded to the internet. The final scene is in 'heaven' with a spoilt, non-binary god, who berates Hannah for thinking she could change the world. They then decide to have a party [with] Gaggle's song Make Love Not War, with everyone involved making very sexual dance moves. It's my version of an end of *Lysistrata* [and] return to sex. (Personal communication with Coughlin, 12 November 2016).

Coughlin's all-female cast tackle *Lysistrata* in ways that are unabashedly anachronistic, with the sex strike treated as a means to evoke a high-pressure situation out of which the play's real issues arise, including female assertiveness, the dynamics of lesbian relationships within the patriarchy, and alcoholism. And while the closing song: 'Make Love Not War', references the anti-Vietnam War slogan, the central war to which this *Lysistrata* responds is metaphorical: between the sexes. For

really about erections and how funny they are...[o]nce you have accepted this fundamental premise...it liberates you enormously in terms of not feeling that you have to do some sort of scholarly approach to the work.³⁶

McLaughlin is right: the ubiquity of erect phalli on stage from line 829 is unique across Aristophanes' oeuvre.³⁷ However, what McLaughlin does not recognize is that this focus on

Coughlin's distaste for the Aristophanic reconciliation scene, see Coughlin (2015). For Anderson's *Liz Estrada*, see Dutsch (2015, 579-81). For the relationship between Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* and the movement against the war in Vietnam, see Dutsch (2015, 582-85). Lembcke (2010, 76-91) reads *Lysistrata* as an origin story, of sorts, for Hanoi Jane.

³⁶ Referenced as personal communication in Dutsch (2015, 582). For an analysis of the contemporary tendency to view 'laughter and humour as subversive, free, and empowering', see Cheng (2017). For humour, humourlessness, and feminism, see Ahmed (2010); Barreca (1992, 3); Berlant (2017).

³⁷ From the appearance of Kinesias onwards (829), all men, aside from the chorus, wear the artificial leather phalloi of their costumes erect. Stone (1980, 72-92) surveys ancient literature and archaeological evidence to determine that comic phalloi are always visible as part of male characters' costumes but they are usually dangling or rolled up. Even before Kinesias enters, the phallus is, to quote Lauren Taaffe (1993, 58), 'made conspicuous by its absence'. There are only two other explicit uses of erect phalloi by Aristophanes and both mark the reaction of a male character to a nude female character at the finale of their respective plays (cf. *Ach.* 1216-21; *Thest.* 1187-88). See Sommerstein (1990, 4). For comic costuming and phalloi, see Compton-Eagle (2015, 24-25); Stone (1980, 72-126), especially (pp. 85-88) for *Lysistrata*. For erect phalloi and comic representations of gender, see Bassi (1999, 108-10); Foley (2014). For the relationship between comic phalloi, citizen masculinity, and democracy, see J. J. Winkler (1990a).

men's bodies is part of the overriding importance of men, masculinity, and male desire to the comic genre.³⁸ The abundance of phallic references and euphemisms in the women's early discussion of the sex strike (e.g. 21-30, 124-135) repeatedly turns attention from the women to the men.³⁹ In the next section, I consider approaches that do take the relationship between obscenity, violence, and masculinity in the play seriously. However, while the *Lysistrata* Project trivializes the play, these more serious receptions risk excising the play's humour altogether.

2.2.1 Taking Obscenity Seriously

³⁸ Spike Lee's cinematic reinterpretation of *Lysistrata*, *Chi-Raq* (2015), is appropriately Aristophanic in its foregrounding of the male body and masculinity in the pursuit of war and peace. The name of the film refers both to the male lead, Chiraq, as well as the portmanteau of Chicago, the film's setting, and Iraq. The portmanteau nods to the alarming murder rates in the city which surpass the casualty rates of US service personnel in foreign wars and the opening of the film presents a series of statistics that testify to this. The ubiquity of firearms throughout the film keeps the attention of the narrative firmly on male bodies. The gun replaces or stands in for the comic phallus as the organizing symbol of the narrative and this substitution recurs in scenes throughout the film. For instance, Chiraq is shown stroking his gun before having sex with Lysistrata, General Richard L Jones is tricked by Lysistrata into riding his canon, nicknamed Whistling Dick, and a canon outside the Illinois National Guard Armoury has been graffitied with the phrase 'PENIS ENVY'. For discussions of *Chi-Raq* in terms of chorality and the *oikos/polis* dynamic respectively, see Dué (2016); Stark (2018).

³⁹ For phallic punning, see Henderson (1991, 116).

The sexuality on display in Old Comedy is often violent and erupts in aggressive obscenity.⁴⁰ In *Lysistrata*, the women of the play ape the comic routines of sexual aggression usually performed by men, and this sits uneasily in contemporary feminist receptions that try to frame the play's sexual suggestiveness in terms of female empowerment.⁴¹ The alternative

⁴⁰ See Henderson (1991) for the violence of ancient obscenity. See Robson (2006, 70-94) for an examination of obscenity in the light of modern human theories. For obscenity in translation as a challenge to the ideas of 'the classical', see Roberts (2008). For gender and language in *Lysistrata*, see K. McDonald (2016). For gender and language in comedy more generally, see Sommerstein (2009e). For the difficulty in translating classical verbal and referential humour, see Robson (2008). For the translation of humour more generally, see the essays in Chiaro (2010); and from the perspective of gender in Chiaro and Baccolini (2014). See Robson (2015) for the ubiquity of threats of sexual violence in Old Comedy. For the issue of rape in classical Athens – and the difficulty in examining an act for which there was no corresponding term – see Robson (2013, 102, 113), (2015). For the function of rape in Athenian mythology, see Keuls (1993); Lefkowitz (1998).

⁴¹ In his sweeping study of comedy in Western theatre, E. Segal (2001) issues his own lament for the priapic comedies of Aristophanes and their descendants in the comic tradition. Segal considers Aristophanes' *Birds* as the playwright's greatest achievement, establishing a framework of rejuvenation and *komos*, centred on the phallus, against which the transformations of the genre across the following two millennia are measured. After the triumph of *Birds* in 414 BCE, the women-centred plays of *Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriazusae* (411 BCE), and *Ecclesiazusae* (c. 392 BCE) barely register for Segal. Indeed, he rather disdainfully judges the contemporary popularity of *Lysistrata* against the superiority of *Birds*, remarking on the former's 'themes ostensibly congenial to the agendas of both the women's liberation and anti-war movements' (p. 123). Bowersock (2001, 51) points to the limited vision of Segal's approach: '...we have to wonder whether a phallogocentric view of comedy is really the right perspective', to suggest that there may have been more to Aristophanes and these later plays

approach to the close connection between obscenity and misogyny is to play these scenes as entirely serious, resisting the humour of the text to expose the power dynamics that underpin, and are upheld by, sexist joking. Sarah Ruden published her translation in the same year as the *Lysistrata* Project (2003) and, overall, she does a much better job of subjecting the play to feminist scrutiny, reworking certain set-pieces to emphasize the violence that underlies the play's sexual punning. For instance, the passage in which the Greek women fondle Lampito sees the Spartan leader liken her treatment to a sacrificial animal (ἱερεῖον):

CALONICE: [*feeling Lampito's breasts*]: What a splendid pair of tits you've got!
LAMPITO: [*annoyed*]: Really, you're feeling me over like a victim for sacrifice!
(Aristoph., *Lys.* 83-84)⁴²

Ruden maintains the violence that Lampito reads into Calonice's actions and translates it to a modern context to complain instead: 'What am I s'posed to be? A pig for sale?'. The translation redirects the simile from the altar to the marketplace but sustains its threatening implications, in which the violence of sacrificing an animal is reworked to evoke the slaughterhouse.

than Segal's celebration of 'rollicking masculinity' gives credit. See also Nussbaum (2006, 155). It may be the case, following Bowersock, that Segal's lack of interest in *Lysistrata* stems from his conception of comedy as inescapably phallic. Indeed, Bowersock credits the sex strike plot with inverting the 'rejuvenation-erection motif', whereby '[t]he problem for men is now not to achieve an erection, but to get rid of one', see Bowersock (2001, 51). But perhaps both Segal and Bowersock misjudge *Lysistrata*. To my mind, the sex strike plot, with its attendant frustrations for both men *and* women, does not necessarily represent such a stark break from the earlier comedies, at least not in terms of their fixation on phallic bodyliness and male potency.

⁴² Discussed in Fletcher (1999, 114).

The pig reference could make an intertextual link with Aristophanes' *Acharnians* to call attention to the ubiquity of female sexual exploitation across the genre; however, I am not sure that Ruden follows this through in her translation. The pig recalls the Megarian scene in *Acharnians* in which two young girls are sold by their father to Dicaeopolis (*Ach.* 750-835).⁴³ The girls are recast as young pigs (χοίρωσ), suitable for sacrifice ('χοίρωσ ἐγώνγα μυστικάς', 765), and their father invites Dicaeopolis to feel them ('ἄντεινον αἰ λῆς: ὡς παχεῖα καὶ καλά', 766). Aristophanes plays with the obscene double-entendre of the feminine rendering of χοίρωσ, which can also refer to vagina, before collapsing the word play with explicit obscenity, when Dicaeopolis refers to one of the girls as κύσθος ('cunt', 789).⁴⁴ The word crops up in *Lysistrata* in the misogynistic reconciliation scene, as the Athenian delegate praises Reconciliation's genitals ('ἐγὼ δὲ κύσθον γ' οὐδέπω καλλίονα', *Lys.* 1158). Disappointingly, Ruden renders this line in her translation: 'I've never gazed on such a spiffy quim', which coyly injects light-hearted humour to the interaction between Reconciliation and

⁴³ For an attempt to work through the misogyny of the Megarian scene in contemporary restaging, see Evenden (1993, 96-97). For similar issues with *Thesmophoriazousae* in reception, see Henderson (2002). For the relationship between prostitution and democracy, see Halperin (1990). Halperin (p. 14) explores the 'distribution of male sexual pleasure' as a tenet of Athenian democracy. See also Faraone and McClure (2006); Goldhill (2015); Robson (2013, 67-89).

⁴⁴ For Dicaeopolis and comic masculinity, see Compton-Eagle (2015, 90-94). For χοίρωσ and cognates throughout the scene, see (767, 771, 777, 781, 794, 800, 806, 812, 814, 818, 819, 834).

the delegates. The informality of Ruden's 'spiffy' and the euphemism of 'quim' downplays the strong and pervasive connection between Aristophanic obscenity and violence.⁴⁵

Elsewhere, Ruden does expose how obscenity, violence, and misogyny function in the reconciliation scene to link territorial and sexual conquest and how this casts a shadow over the resumption of marital relationships with their attendant, traditional gender dynamics at the play's close.⁴⁶ As the reconciliation scene continues and the delegates bicker over their respective share of Reconciliation's body/Greek territories, Lysistrata reasons with them not to quarrel over her legs ('ἔατε, μηδὲν διαφέρου περισκελοῖν', *Lys.* 1172). The verb διαφέρω is typically translated as intransitive, in terms of contrast or difference; so Sommerstein translates the line as: 'Let it be – don't go quarrelling about a pair of legs', and Jack Lindsay

⁴⁵ Sommerstein (2009d) suggests that Aristophanic euphemism works to strengthen the vividness of the image, not to obscure it.

⁴⁶ For the reconciliation scene as enabling and also anticipating the reintegration of the women into the *oikos*, see Faraone (2006); Stroup (2004). See also McClure (2015) for an opposing reading of the relationship between the sexuality of the women in *Lysistrata* and their roles as Athenian wives. Even if we consider the sex strike as initiating an inversion of a conceptual system that reduces women to their bodies, the symbolic effect of the reconciliation scene and the promise of relief for the men's sexual frustration (to which their erect phalloi serve as constant reminders) marks a return to the status quo. Bassi (1999, 111) suggests that the ending of *Lysistrata* sees the sublimation of 'martial aggression...into hetero-erotic desire', however, the reconciliation scene surely points to correlation. Dicaeopolis in *Acharnians* celebrates peace as restoring his desire for rape (*Ach.* 271-76) in what is, on the surface, a deliberate comic reversal of the connection between military and sexual conquest that also intimates an aggressive model of sexual relations that transcends the wartime/peacetime divide.

(1926) gives: ‘Agree! Now what are two legs more or less’. Ruden reinterprets the verb so that the toing and froing of the delegates’ argument is redrawn in terms of their physical treatment of Reconciliation’s body as directed by Lysistrata: ‘Hey! Make some compromise and part the legs’. Ruden renders διαφέρω as a transitive verb to emphasize the violence implicit to the reconciliation scene and Lysistrata’s pivotal role in the sustained assault on Reconciliation’s body.

Tony Harrison’s pairing of the comedy with *Trojan Women* as *The Common Chorus Parts I and II* (1988) comes closest among contemporary receptions to communicate the seriousness of the comedy.⁴⁷ He pays particular attention to the phallogentrism of Aristophanic obscenity, reviving the play’s misogyny to expose the confluence between sexism and militarism in the contemporary setting of the Greenham Common peace camps. However, the exposure of violent, male sexuality is incompatible with feminist comedy. Harrison’s complete resistance to Aristophanic humour offers an interesting counterpoint to the relative overenthusiasm of the Lysistrata Project and anticipates the targets in Woolf’s parodic treatment of military masculinity.

⁴⁷ See T. Harrison (2002b). The play was never performed on stage and Harrison refuses to consider its revival, describing his version as ‘marooned in its moment’ (pp. 197-98). Harrison originally conceived of the work as a trilogy, with Euripides’ *Hecabe* as the third play. *The Common Chorus Part I* was not Harrison’s first engagement with *Lysistrata*. In 1966 he put together another version in northern Nigeria with James Simmons called *Aikin Mata*, see T. Harrison and Simmons (1966). In relation to this earlier reception, Harrison again stresses the importance of context: ‘The text is unperformable outside Nigeria and was responsive to the tension that later erupted into a devastating civil war’ (p. 193).

Harrison amplifies Aristophanic obscenity to such an extent that it is difficult to find humour in the phallic posturing of his male characters. In interactions that draw on documented exchanges between soldiers and women at Greenham Common, the male guards shout abuse at the women as they try to sleep:

How would you like a nice shot of warm come
right down your tonsils, up your cunt, your bum?
The semen of he-men's superior to that
your stubby little hubby squirts into your twat (p. 207)⁴⁸

The offensiveness of the guards' taunts overwhelms their comic potential, as the sexual boasting and taunts are made serious with the threat of rape. Harrison's women do not play the game of masculine sexual aggression to match the men like they do in Aristophanes, so the gender dynamic that empowers men to imagine women as their sexual victims is exposed rather than balanced out or subverted.

Blake Morrison's adaptation of *Lysistrata* in *Lisa's Sex Strike* (2007) offers an interesting comparison with Harrison in terms of men's treatment of misogynistic obscenity.⁴⁹ Morrison transposes Aristophanes to the North of England to reimagine tensions between Muslim, African-Caribbean, and White English men, so much so that the young male chorus of factory workers splits at the start of the play down racial lines. Their opening song sees the

⁴⁸ T. Harrison (2002b, 194-97) pulls together testimony from interviews with women from the camp, as well as memoir, see Blackwood (1984), and popular army songs.

⁴⁹ Blake Morrison's script is available to consult at the APGRD, Oxford.

white members of the chorus use mild sexual obscenity, while they direct their chant towards the other male chorus members and their sexual joking intersects with racist taunting:

When England won in sixty-six
We use our heads, we used our dicks,
Banks and Armfield, Stiles and Ball,
We didn't use no Blacks at all.

Morrison tones down the sexualized aggression in the play while exposing, even ramping up, its xenophobia. Harrison and Morrison both portray men who display their sexual aggression through boasting. However, while Morrison's obscenity circulates among the men, only Harrison imagines sexual aggression in terms of sexual violence, as his exaggerated male sexuality is directly threatening to women.⁵⁰

Harrison's serious treatment of male sexuality is coupled with his wider examination of gender, in which men's performance of hyper-masculinity is unconvincing and unsustainable. Harrison's reception of the parabolic *agon* between the choruses becomes a tragic spectacle that calls attention with pathos rather than irony to the fragility of military masculinity (pp. 228-36, cf. *Lys.* 614-705). In Aristophanes, the two choruses are divided by gender and remove items of clothing while attacking the other side's right to speak on behalf of the city.⁵¹ The old men put forward the argument that women should not concern

⁵⁰ For threats of male-on-male rape in Old Comedy, see e.g., Robson (2015). For the modern reception of Aristophanes' homophobia, see Gamel (2002).

⁵¹ For stripping in the *parabasis*, see Henderson (1987, 149). Henderson suggests that this also happened with the chorus of *Acharnians* (cf. 626-27), *Thesmophoriazousae* (cf. 656), and *Peace* (cf. 730).

themselves with war (*Lys.* 626-29) before the women counter with evidence for their collective contribution to the city through civic and religious ritual and bearing sons (636-57). Harrison's chorus of old men are made up of First World War veterans whose exchanges with the female chorus pit their pride in war-making against the women's pacifism (pp. 228-236). Harrison addresses the tricky bind of war remembrance and anti-war politics, in which commemorating the dead brushes up uncomfortably alongside celebrating war.⁵² Harrison's female chorus emphasize the unprecedented threat posed by nuclear weaponry and the clear failure of institutionalized remembrance to prevent further war ('Remembrance Day and Cenotaph; that's something there won't be/ in any city on the globe after World War III', p. 232). The veterans put forward the opposing argument: that the dismissal of war in pacifist movements neglects the sacrifice of those involved ('I was there so why shouldn't I remember?' p. 232). After the men's failed attempt to gas the women, the women surprise the veterans with bunches of poppies to reference the symbolism of the red poppy, and to recall its pacifist alternative in the white poppy, in public commemoration. The women appropriate the red flowers from militarism to provoke domestic memories in the veterans, and the men's bluster collapses and they become sentimental and romantic, while their military service appears tragic:

WORLD WAR 1 VETERANS: We want to gas 'em and they give us bouquets!

WOMEN: To remind you of your mothers and your wedding days.

WORLD WAR 1 VETERAN 1:

God knows it's true that I'd've gladly died
in battle to protect my mother and my lovely bride.

WORLD WAR 1 VETERAN 1:

We were all of us ready to lay down our lives

⁵² The third chapter in this thesis on Alice Oswald's *Memorial* will examine the tension that she draws out between remembrance and pacifism in her reception of Homer.

to protect our little children and our helpless wives. (p. 236) ⁵³

Harrison cuts the jokes from Aristophanes in favour of foregrounding the seriousness of war. His humourless engagement with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament via ancient comedy makes sense in the light of the very real and present danger of the nuclear threat. The spectre of annihilation similarly haunts Virginia Woolf's writing and she also looks at men and militarism through women. However, her engagement with Aristophanic masculinity takes a different approach to Harrison, as she takes the sting out of obscenity by making it risible. Woolf's approach to gender and war balances the raucousness of the *Lysistrata* Project and the seriousness of Harrison with comic-seriousness.

2.3 Virginia Woolf's 'A Society'

Despite growing interest in the writers' Hellenism, little attention has been paid to Woolf as a reader, rewriter, and spectator of Aristophanes.⁵⁴ Her short story 'A Society' is a

⁵³ There is the sense in which the reconciliation of the veterans with the women and the powerful tragic vision of their sacrifice that closes the *agon* ennobles war-making. Again, this is the knot in pacifism that Harrison is self-consciously unable to untie.

⁵⁴ For Woolf's Hellenism as an expression of her pacifism, see Mills (2014); Ribeyrol (2011). More generally, see R. Fowler (1983), (1999); Koulouris (2011). For Woolf and tragedy, see Pillinger (2017); Prins (2017, 35-56); Worman (2018). The most sustained treatment of Woolf's Hellenism is in Koulouris, which contains barely a reference to Aristophanes. The most relevant detail is that Leslie Stephen's library included a copy of Aristophanes *Wasps* in B. B Rogers's translation (1897) (p. 42). R. Fowler (1999, 231) gives more of a sense of Woolf's active engagement with Aristophanes as she

reception of Aristophanes' female comedies, especially *Lysistrata*.⁵⁵ The piece is set just before the start of the First World War and describes the infiltration of women into traditional institutions of power and influence to pass judgement on men's dominance over public life and anticipates the themes that she will revisit with *Three Guineas* on the precipice of the Second World War.⁵⁶ Woolf connects the limitations of women's intellectual, professional, and sexual lives with men's fascination with the classical past as a paradigm for post-Victorian sexual freedoms. She skewers the relationship between the Hellenism of her male peers and predecessors and its sense of erotic possibility to make the serious point that the reiteration of sexual hierarchy through obscenity maintains and reproduces not only the sexual status quo but the conditions for war.⁵⁷

The women's community in 'A Society' engages directly with Aristophanes' play and the male tradition of classical learning. The women form a 'society for asking questions' (p.

detects the influence of *Birds* (688, 755-56), which Woolf saw in performance in 1903, into *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). Putzel (2012, 199-211) catalogues the plays that Woolf attended, which include Sophocles' *Electra* (1909), *Oedipus Rex* (1912), (1923), Aristophanes' *Wasps* (1909), *Lysistrata* (1938).

⁵⁵ See Mariscal (2014) for Woolf's Aristophanic allusions in 'A Society'.

⁵⁶ For the relationship between feminism and pacifism and the emergence of that relationship in the context of the First World War, see Berkman (1990); Confortini (2012, 3-18).

⁵⁷ 'A Society' also shares themes with *Ecclesiazusae*, however, the importance of militarism to Woolf's reception explains my specific focus on *Lysistrata*.

42), a female counterpart to male organizations such as those to which Woolf's Bloomsbury peers belonged, most notably the Cambridge Apostles (but also the tradition of classicism associated with the Oxford Greeks).⁵⁸ As in *Lysistrata*, there is humour to the way in which the women incompetently ape the behaviours of men, interrupting philosophical enquiry with ephemera and digressions.⁵⁹ Aristophanes' women frame motherhood as their contribution to the city (*Lys.* 588-90, 651), and Woolf's women vow celibacy as an act of deliberate childlessness provoked by men's failure to live up to their part of the social contract, which the women reason to be writing good books ("“Why” she asked “if men write such rubbish as this, should our mothers have wasted their youth in bringing them into the world?””, p. 42).⁶⁰

⁵⁸ The full title for the Apostles was the Cambridge Conversazione Society. Revermann (2006, 243) reads the opening of *Lysistrata* as women setting up their own female version of male clubs/ἐταιρείαι. Koulouris (2011, 79-80) reads from the Cambridge sections of Leonard Woolf's autobiography (1960) for the importance of ceremony to the Apostles' sense of belonging (and, by extension, their exclusion of others).

⁵⁹ Elizabeth, in theatrical fashion, disguises herself as a man to gain employment as a book reviewer, and skirts uneasily around the subject of men's literary merit:

‘And you can't deny that education is of the highest importance, and that it would be extremely annoying, if you found yourself alone at Brighton late at night, not to know which was the best boarding house to stay at...’. (p. 50)

For the Apostles' interest in Socratic dialogue, see Rosenbaum (1987, 161-75). For Woolf and digression, see Cuddy-Keane (2003).

⁶⁰ The connection between political crisis and a lack of good poetry recalls the contest in Aristophanes' *Frogs*. See Prash (2012) for details of the anonymous play *Aristophanes at Oxford O.W.*, published in 1894, that pokes fun at Oscar Wilde. Prash reads the play as part of a culture war

With 'A Society', Woolf makes obscenity the target, rather than the medium, for humour. Woolf takes up the trope of the stupid Classics professor that she will revisit with Erasmus Cowan in *Jacob's Room* (1922) and turns the spotlight on the critical reception of Sappho as her example of men reading women badly:

'Well,' she resumed, 'when Professor Hobkin was out I examined his life work, an edition of Sappho. It's a queer looking book, six or seven inches thick, not all by Sappho. Oh, no. Most of it is a defence of Sappho's chastity, which some German has denied, and I can assure you the passion with which these two gentlemen argued, the learning they displayed, the prodigious ingenuity with which they disputed the use of some implement which looked to me for all the world like a hairpin astounded me; especially when the door opened and Professor Hobkin himself appeared. A very nice, mild, old gentleman, but what could *he* know about chastity?' (p. 44)

Woolf frames her wry portrait of Professor Hobkin, whose paternal censorship and exhaustive philological enquiry overwhelms his female object of study ('It's a queer looking book, six or seven inches thick, not all by Sappho'), as an overly censorious offshoot of the tendency to read classical literature for titillation.⁶¹

centred on reading preferences that pitted Euripides against Aristophanes. Euripides is the favoured playwright for the Oxford Greeks' 'New Hellenism', although Prasch admits that Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* was embraced as part of their new, sensual aesthetic (p. 467).

⁶¹ For Woolf and Sappho in the context of early-twentieth century women's poetry, see Gubar (1984); see also J. Marcus (1983, 81, 87). Gubar contextualizes Woolf's use of Sappho in 'A Society' as part of her response to a newspaper article which claimed that 'Since Sappho there has been no female of first rate' (a line to which Woolf directly refers in 'A Society', p. 49). Bradshaw (2001, xvii) offers the same context for the story and provides the detail that the review in question was in praise of Arnold Bennett's *Our Women: Chapters on the Sex-Discord* (1920). Bennett's insistence on women's intellectual and creative inferiority provides a clear target to which Woolf can aim her satire.

Woolf comically recasts the classical learnedness of her contemporaries to suggest that the kind of classical education that she was denied primes men for prurience and bad scholarship.⁶² Details from Woolf's diaries suggest that men reading women and the subject

However, as Woolf would recognize, Bennett's piece did not spring out of nowhere: he was a product of his time and a product of his gender and class. Woolf invites us to look past the direct allusion to this individual's work to the wider context of men's educational, cultural, economic, and political advantage and, with regard to Hellenism, the Cambridge Apostles epitomized this sense of male privilege. Woolf anticipates the feminist 'rehabilitation' of Sappho in second wave feminist scholarship; the early proponents of which expose the critical bias in ancient and modern treatments of her poetry, see especially the 'critical stereotypes' identified in Lefkowitz (1973); also Hallett (1979). DuBois (1995) examines the legacy of Sappho, and her instrumentalization, in postclassical, masculine thought. For the ancient reception of Sappho, see Williamson (1995, 5-33). See DuBois (1978) *contra* Page (1955). For the relationship between feminist classical scholarship on Sappho and women's translations, see Balmer (2013, 73-99). The companion volumes of essays in E. Greene (1996a), (1996b) cover critical approaches to Sappho and her reception history respectively. See also DuBois (1995). The entry for Sappho in Monique Wittig and Sande Zeig's lesbian encyclopaedia, published in 1979, is famously left as a blank page.

⁶² Woolf reviewed Laurence Housman's pro-suffrage adaptation of *Lysistrata* in late 1910, see V. Woolf (2011, 372-75). And while other reviewers appeared disgruntled at the lack of obscenity in Housman's rendering, Woolf latches on to the issue of women's representation:

Lysistrata would not quite do on a platform, nor would her policies make converts. One supposes that she means well ... and at times her plain words sound true and right; but at other times, and there are more of these, her Punch-like followers and their farcical methods make one glad to think that the play was only meant for Athens. It is all done very skilfully, and

of obscenity were topics that she associated with Aristophanes' play. In an entry from 1918, she records a meeting with Roger Fry in which they discussed *Lysistrata* and his plans for translation. She describes Fry:

carrying a roll of manuscript, which was, he said, his translation of the *Lysistrata*. This he has done, on a moderate knowledge of Greek, & wishes to have acted, but doubts *how far one can go* (emphasis my own)⁶³

A week later, she recounts an eclectic conversation with Fry, spread over the course of several hours, and punctuated with quotations from this translation.⁶⁴ Woolf's biography of Fry, published in 1940, would then recall his hopes and reservations for the play:

He was also trying his hand at translating the *Lysistrata* for Madame Donnay. "I've never imagined such *indecenty* possible on the stage. It would be fun if they could

constantly makes one laugh, but it is an uneasy laughter, lest perhaps any one should take it for true because it is made to seem topical, and because they do it so well.

See V. Woolf (2011, 373). What I think Woolf is getting at with the line 'it is made to *seem* topical' (emphasis my own) is the unknowability of the classical past and its literature and thus the inevitable failure of classical reception. Woolf famously crystallizes these sentiments in her essay 'On Not Knowing Greek' (2003) [1925]. In this essay, Woolf even suggests that plays are better read as poetry than seen (p. 28), which seems an appropriate rejoinder to the over-emphasis on spectacle in the *Lysistrata* Project and the under-emphasis on the play-text.

⁶³ V. Woolf (1977, 137). See also Mariscal (2014, 103 n. 103).

⁶⁴ V. Woolf (1977, 140): 'I don't see how to put 3 or 4 hours of Roger's conversation into the rest of this page ... it was about all manner of things; on growing old; on loneliness; on religion; on morality; on Nessa; on Duncan; on French literature; on education; on Jews; on marriage; & on the *Lysistrata*. Occasionally he read a quotation from a book by Proust; (whose name I've forgotten), & then from his translation [of the *Lysistrata*]'.

really do it, but of course no one could now. What civilised people the Greeks were!...” (emphasis my own)⁶⁵

Woolf’s phrases – ‘how far one can go’ and ‘indecenty’ – draw a line from Fry’s reading of *Lysistrata* to late-nineteenth century sexual politics, calling to mind the illustrations of Aubrey Beardsley and the ‘indecenty’ trial of Oscar Wilde.⁶⁶ However, instead of foregrounding the connection between Oxbridge, Hellenism, and homosexuality,

⁶⁵ V. Woolf (1940, 210).

⁶⁶ For Oscar Wilde’s classicism, see K. Riley et al. (2017). For Fry’s reception of Beardsley’s oeuvre, see Fry (1904). Fry detects evidence of what he describes as ‘his proclivity to the expression of moral depravity’ (p. 627) from his earliest drawings and goes on to muse that: ‘One might even argue that to some extent Beardsley’s moral perversity actually prevented him, in spite of his extraordinary specific talent for design, from ever becoming a great designer’ (p. 628). The oblique reference in Woolf’s diary to ‘Madame Donnay’ as the recipient of Fry’s translation may make the connection with Beardsley even stronger. Richard Warren (2018, 134-35) makes the case for the influence of the French dramatist, Maurice Donnay’s version of *Lysistrata* (1892) on Beardsley’s illustrations. Donnay’s *Lysistrata* was performed at the *Grand-Théâtre* in Paris in 1892 and reworked again in 1896 and 1919. The play essentially transforms Aristophanes’ comedy in the style of the French revue ‘as a comedy of sexual manners and marital duplicity’, in which *Lysistrata* breaks the oath with her lover, see Robson (2016, 50-51); see also Beta (2010, 246-47). The fullest treatment is in the Ph.D thesis of Kotzamani (1997, 11-89). Is the translation that Fry is working on in 1918 something to do with the 1919 revision of Donnay’s play? Donnay’s version was clearly influential beyond Paris, as Van Steen (2000, 110) records how Greek actress Marika Kotopoule played and produced a restaging of Donnay’s version at the Homonoia Theatre in 1910.

Woolf turns the spotlight on male heterosexuality and the Aristophanic tradition in Britain.⁶⁷ The watershed moment for *Lysistrata* came in 1896 with the circulation of an unabridged prose translation of the play by Samuel Smith and the accompanying set of eight erotic illustrations by Beardsley.⁶⁸ The private circulation of the text maintained the Victorian sense of Aristophanes as a textual resource for elite male readers, as opposed to a public spectacle.⁶⁹ *Lysistrata* and her followers are shown naked or partially uncovered, and their bodies are grotesque in their voluptuousness. The translation playfully reveals nothing new to a student of Greek, poking fun at the ironic mismatch between a classical education that equips male students with the language skills to defy the censored editions and translations of the classroom.⁷⁰ The edition even jokingly positions itself as an erotic educational tool, with

⁶⁷ For the connections between Hellenism and homosexuality/homosociality with a focus on the Oxford Greeks, see Dowling (1994).

⁶⁸ See Walsh (2016) for the slow transformation of the reception of Old Comedy from philology to performance, entering the British stage in the Greek plays of Oxford and Cambridge from the late nineteenth century. *Lysistrata*, along with the other women-centred plays, remained overshadowed by *Birds* and *Frogs*. Hall (2007, 85) contrasts the ‘maleness’ of the British classical tradition at this time with Germany.

⁶⁹ For an alternative reading of Beardsley’s illustrations, see Kotzamani (1997, 355-60); Walsh (2016, 231-37). Van Steen (2014a, 756) describes the Paris revue tradition in which Donnay’s *Lysistrata* took part in a similar fashion, as one which ‘objectified mythical or legendary women for the sake of male voyeuristic pleasure’; also cited in Robson (2016, 50).

⁷⁰ John Henderson questions approaches to *Lysistrata* that respond to its onstage gender dynamics through a pornographic framework. To Henderson, the very public and communal nature of

accompanying notes that explain the sexual positions to which the play alludes.⁷¹ However, the sense that the joke is specifically for men is perhaps nowhere clearer than in the suggestion that Beardsley's illustrations reworked contemporary renderings of British women. Philip Walsh suggests that 'Beardsley hoped to satirize Britain's rich history of portrait painting', but what this would mean for the women on whose bodies the jokes rest is left unasked.⁷²

comic obscenity as part of the institution of Athenian drama does not map across to modern conceptions of pornography as private and individual. However, what we see with the private circulation of Beardsley and Smith is a recalibration of the play as pornographic in the modern sense. At the same time, the private consumption of the material evokes the male community of the public school and university systems, thus providing a link back from the reception to its fifth-century context in public performance. The volume edited by Richlin (1992b), in which Zweig (1992) appears, is explicit in its debt to feminist engagements with pornography and their theoretical definitions of the pornographic, especially Kappeler (1986). Zweig (1992, 85-87) suggests that comic scenes with nude women *do* bear comparison with contemporary definitions of pornography.

⁷¹ Hall (2007, 91 n. 120).

⁷² Walsh (2016, 235). Walsh suggests that Beardsley's work plays to two audiences, the 'consumer of pornography' and the 'classical reader', as if these standpoints are mutually exclusive (p. 237). Berlant and Ngai (2017, 243) make a link between the contemporary reception of comedy and pornography as cultural products that express a modern turn to individualism in that audiences expect these products to respond to their particular needs/desires.

In 'A Society', Woolf takes aim at both the Professor Hobkins of this world and the Beardsleys, as both approaches amount to the appropriation and misreading of femininity, and Woolf turns men's misunderstanding of women into a source of humour. The women are alarmed at the unlikely focus of Professor Hobkin and suspect that Castalia, who infiltrated the professor's rooms dressed as a charwoman, is mistaken. They reason that the austere man that she describes, with his fixation on Sappho's sexuality, must surely be a gynaecologist, and the women put forward instead their vision of the typically dissolute scholar 'perhaps addicted to wine, but what of it?' (p. 45). Castalia is the only one of the women to break their vow of chastity and she returns to the women pregnant.⁷³ Her example at once defies but also, in a sense, justifies the Professor's fixation on Sappho and sex, which is at once prurient and puritanical. Woolf's Castalia delights in her new-found eroticism that pushes against convention and reverses the typical heterosexual power dynamic.⁷⁴ In Greek mythology, Castalia is a muse of poetry, but in Woolf's female re-visioning, Castalia suggests that it is her younger male lover who inspires her: 'He is only twenty one and divinely beautiful' (p. 47). Castalia embodies an expression of active female sexuality that the women struggle to align with societal mores, and they begin to take tentative steps to recognize the constructedness of patriarchal definitions of female desire and behaviour ("What is chastity then? I mean is it good, or is it bad, or is it nothing at all?", p. 47).

⁷³ See (p. 102 n. 66). With this detail, perhaps Woolf's version interacts with Maurice Donnay's too?

⁷⁴ For early-twentieth century 'Sapphistries' in Lesbian poetry, see Gubar (1984).

The outbreak of war, which interrupts one of the women's meetings, adds seriousness to the comedy, and Castalia's eroticism is complicated, even compromised, by her capitulation to heterosexuality and motherhood. Woolf's work emerges alongside the uneasy marriage of feminist and pacifist political movements in the early twentieth century, in which a branch of feminist-pacifism began to take shape to respond to the entanglement of patriarchy and militarism.⁷⁵ There is some easy humour at men's expense when the women puncture the edifice of male intellectual superiority, such as their reaction to the poetry of Tennyson: 'We could listen to no more of this gibberish. "We want no more poetry!"' (p. 43).⁷⁶ However, the women's fixation on men and the question of their intellectual worth now appears as a calamitous distraction (almost as a counterpart to the ridiculousness of men's fixation with women's sexuality):

'What war?' we cried. 'What war?' We remembered, too late, that we had never thought of sending anyone to the House of Commons. We had forgotten all about it...'
(p. 51)

⁷⁵ I do not wish to suggest that the relationship between feminism/the suffrage movement and pacifism is straightforward. Indeed, the early feminist movement split down pro-war/anti-war lines. For discussion, see Berkman (1990). For the reception of *Lysistrata* as part of the British suffrage movement, see Hall (2007, 86-88); for *Lysistrata* and the French suffrage movement, see Kotzamani (1997, 336-46). For feminist approaches to contemporary militarism, see Cockburn (2012); Eisenstein (2007); Enloe (2000). For the role of women in contemporary peace-making efforts, see Carey (2001); Confortini (2012); Fox (2001); Stiehm (2001). For critical responses to the reception of women's centrality to peace-making in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, see the essays in Kronsell and Svedberg (2012), especially Parashar (2012); also J. R. Richards (1990).

⁷⁶ For Tennyson and Victorian manhood, see Dowling (1994, 49-51).

Woolf's use of Aristophanic comedy to reflect with seriousness on the First World War anticipates the shift in the Classicist and translator Gilbert Murray's reception of the play. In his *History of Greek Literature* (1897), Murray dismisses *Lysistrata* as apolitical but 'daring [in its] indecency' and focuses entirely on the sex-strike and the bawdiness of the female characters.⁷⁷ However, he returns to the play with renewed urgency after the First World War to emphasize its relevance. His revised outlook admits to the attraction of the play for those eager to push social, especially sexual, boundaries as he once was, but tempers this impulse with alertness to the tragedy that underpins the farce:

The *Lysistrata* had behind it much suffering and burning pity ... It is owing to this background of intense feeling that the *Lysistrata* becomes not exactly a great comedy, but a great play, making its appeal not to laughter alone but also to deeper things than laughter.⁷⁸

The women's complete ignorance of the contemporary political climate in 1914 could be mildly amusing. However, from the perspective of 1921 when Woolf was writing, the failure of the women to properly recognize, address, and denounce the relationship between men and militarism is unforgiveable. The trauma of the war is left poignantly unspoken, with a line break marking the dissolution of the Society and the meeting of Cassandra and Castalia on Armistice Day ("Oh dear," cried Castalia, pushing the book away from her, "What fools we were!", p. 51). Cassandra tries to fall back on the old truths ("Ask any journalist,

⁷⁷ Murray (1897, 287; 287-88). Note that the term 'indecency' crops up again.

⁷⁸ Murray (1933, 180). Murray's most influential anti-war engagement with Classics is his *Trojan Woman* in response to the Boer War, published and performed in 1905, see discussion in Hall and Macintosh (2005, 508-11). For the text with notes, see Murray (1905). For Murray's approach to translation, see Morwood (2007). See also the essays in Stray (2007), especially Griffith (2007).

schoolmaster, politician or public house keeper in the land and they will tell you that men are much cleverer than women.”, p. 52) but Castalia reframes men’s intellectual pursuits from the perspective of the past four years as irreducible to militarism, which should have been their target all along:

‘Oh, Cassandra, for Heaven’s sake let us devise a method by which men may bear children! It is our only chance. For unless we provide them with some innocent occupation we shall get neither good people nor good books; we shall perish beneath the fruits of their unbridled activity...’ (p. 53)

The women remain unsure how to detach men and masculinity from their expressions in patriarchy and war-making and they abandon their society for asking questions to the next generation and appoint Castalia’s infant daughter Ann to the role of president, a dubious honour to which she bursts into tears (p. 53). The closing image of the crying child is a lightly comic, domestic commonplace that appears less funny against the gravity of the situation (and, perhaps unconsciously, looks back through the tradition of war literature to recall Astyanax at *Il.* 6.467-70). Woolf hones her ironic comic-seriousness over the near two decades that follow and, on the cusp of another war, she turns her attention, like the women in ‘A Society’ should have, to men, masculine performance, and war-making.

2.4 Woolf’s *Three Guineas*, Comic-Seriousness, and Homer

This section will set out the potential difference that reading Woolf makes to the reception of Aristophanes. The connection that Woolf draws out between gender, militarism, masculinity, and performance will help me to identify the key sites of Homeric parody that my reading of Homer through Aristophanes from section 2.4.1 will develop. The contemporary reception of Woolf’s essay saw a number of reviewers gift her the moniker ‘the

new *Lysistrata*'.⁷⁹ Ober Williams's piece for the *Times Literary Supplement* draws parallels between Aristophanes and Woolf in their examination of gender, war, and peace, only to make an important tonal distinction:

In essence, the question propounded is that of *Lysistrata* – how can women help to stop war? – but the simple levity of Aristophanes's [sic] answer naturally bears no resemblance to Mrs Woolf's treatment of a matter that brooks no laughter. Humour she uses, but her seriousness is profound.⁸⁰

Contrary to Williams, I suggest that an aesthetic that comingles the comic with the serious and that engages with militarism in gendered terms suggests that Woolf's writing about war is particularly receptive to Aristophanes.⁸¹ Moreover, Woolf evidences her attentiveness to the comic potential of Homer in 'On Not Knowing Greek', in the passage in which she considers the difficulty of the linguistic and cultural translation of comedy.⁸² She makes her point by turning, not to Aristophanes, but to Homer:

⁷⁹ Fernald (2006, 176 n. 30).

⁸⁰ O. Williams (1938).

⁸¹ There seem to be links between *Three Guineas* and *Lysistrata* that are tantalizingly unexplored. Woolf saw a version of *Lysistrata* in Regent's Park written by her niece Angelica in 1938, see Putzel (2012, 209). Putzel's work on Virginia Woolf and the theatre also reveals that, among her notes for *Three Guineas*, there is the fragment of a play entitled: 'The Burning of the Vote: A Comedy'. Putzel describes the work as a 'burlesque' and suggests that it includes a 'Lysistrata-like chorus of women', see Putzel (2012, 71-72).

⁸² See (p. 101 n. 62) for discussion of Woolf's suggestion that Housman's *Lysistrata* 'makes one laugh ... because it is made to seem topical'.

There is a passage in the *Odyssey* where laughter begins to steal upon us, but if Homer were looking we should probably think it better to control our merriment. To laugh instantly it is almost necessary (though Aristophanes may supply us with an exception) to laugh in English. (p. 36)

Woolf's sense of impropriety at laughing at Homer is ironic and pointed; the essay elaborates the ways in which women's engagements with classical literature are always, in a sense, improper. Moreover, just as Woolf uses the essay to reveal her sensitivity to Greek, albeit in its unknowability, her apology for misreading and laughing at Homer masks a sense of rightness.

Woolf's opening gambit in *Three Guineas* taps into the longstanding tradition of women's exclusion from public discourse that goes back to Homer. To my mind, her reply to the letter from 'an educated man' who asks: 'How in your opinion are we to prevent war?' (p. 153) recalls Hector's dismissal of Andromache and the immutable connection between war policy and men:

But one does not like to leave so remarkable a letter as yours – a letter perhaps unique in the history of human correspondence, since when before has an educated man asked a woman how in her opinion war can be prevented? – unanswered. (p. 153)

But go to the house and tend to your work,
to your loom and distaff, and direct your handmaids
to ply their work; war is the concern of men (πόλεμος δ' ἄνδρεςσι μελήσει),
all men, and me most of all, who live in Ilion. (*Il.* 6.490-93)

Woolf's essay imagines her own community of female 'outsiders' whose political potency is tied to their exclusion from decision-making and one of her early footnotes revisits the rebuttal, that connects Woolf to *Lysistrata* via 'A Society', that motherhood makes war women's business (cf. *Lys.* 588, 651):

There is of course one essential that the educated woman can supply: children. And one method by which she can help to prevent war is to refuse to bear children ... The

fact that the birth rate in the educated class is falling would seem to show that educated women are taking Mrs Normanton's advice. It was offered to them in very similar circumstances over two thousand years ago by Lysistrata. (p. 360 n. 10)

Reading Homer via Woolf suggests a way to 'read' the epic like Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, who inverts Hector's speech, with direct allusion to the line in the *Iliad*, to reclaim war for women and recast wool-work for men:

LYSISTRATA: ... Later on we'd come to know of some other even worse decision of yours, and then we'd ask, "Husband, why are you carrying through this policy in such a stupid way?" And at once he'd give me an angry look and tell me to spin my thread or else he'd see I had a headache for weeks: "war is for men to take care of."

(‘πόλεμος δ’ ἄνδρεςσι μελήσει’)

MAGRISTRATE: *You* put *us* on the right path? An outrageous claim, and one I won't stand for!

LYSISTRATA: Be quiet!

MAGRISTRATE: *I* am to be quiet for *you*, you damned woman, and that when you wear a veil around your head? Then may I not live!

LYSISTRATA: Well if you find that a stumbling-block, take this veil from me, have it, put it around *your* head – and *then* be quiet!

FIRST OLD WOMAN: And take this basket too.

LYSISTRATA: And then hitch up your robe and start carding wool, chewing beans as you work; and let war be for *women* to take care of (‘πόλεμος δὲ γυναιξὶ μελήσει’)! (*Lys.* 529-38).⁸³

Three Guineas casts martial masculinity as a spectacle that promotes an ideology of war glory and obscures war suffering. The photographs that she prints as part of her essay show a military general, 'heralds', an academic procession, a judge, and an archbishop. Woolf's narrative, on the other hand, fixates on a set of images showing the devastation of the Spanish Civil War that she pointedly does not reveal:

⁸³ Andromache does not promote peace but asks Hector to adopt a defensive strategy at *Iliad* 6.433-39, just as the women in *Lysistrata* are not pacifists (*Lys.* 1248-72).

These are not pleasant photographs to look upon. They are photographs of dead bodies for the most part. This morning's collection contains the photograph of what might be a man's body, or a woman's; it is so mutilated that it might, on the other hand, be the body of a pig. But those certainly are dead children, and that undoubtedly is the section of a house. (p. 164)⁸⁴

Woolf uses the photographs of the men of the professions to make the connection between the patriarchal state and war-making, and her refrain for the 'pictures of dead bodies and ruined houses' that is repeated throughout the text underlines the cost of militarism. However, more importantly, by providing one set of photographs and not the other, Woolf models an alternative, even feminine, approach to 'reading' war. For Woolf, the act of looking at powerful men and their performance of masculinity is another way of looking at the horrors of war-making.

Woolf trains the reader to avoid the tunnel vision of the women in 'A Society' who were unable to look out from domestic patriarchy to state-led militarism. Her revelation of war suffering is at once oblique and pointedly direct; why look at photographs of dead bodies when you can go straight to the source: powerful men? There are revelatory moments like this in Homer, in which the griefs of male victors are focalized through the suffering of female victims in simile (cf. *Il.* 16.7-11; *Od.* 8.521-31), while Andromache's future suffering is imagined by Hector as testament to his own war glory (*Il.* 6.459-61).⁸⁵ Woolf sets out an alternative way of looking at war that foregrounds suffering and, in this, she recalls, to my

⁸⁴ Humm (2002, 197) sets out how the absent photographs 'act in dialectical tension with the five visible photographs'.

⁸⁵ For the interpretation of the simile at *Il.* 16.7-11, see Gaca (2008).

mind, the re-visioning of war that can take place in lament.⁸⁶ Looking back to Homer via Woolf exposes the irony of lament as a counter-narrative to the pursuit of glory. Hector encourages Andromache to take up wool-work and abandon war talk but she does neither, instead, she makes war her business, in contrast with Helen who weaves the κλέα ἀνδρῶν

⁸⁶ See e.g., Easterling (1991). R. Fowler (1999, 228) examines Woolf's attentiveness to tragic chorality as 'a collective anonymous voice beyond the individual, subjective, or omniscient voice of the novelist'. The possibility of female spectatorship at ancient drama offers another model (in addition to the Greek chorus) for the kind of outsiders' perspective on cultural institutions that Woolf explores in *Three Guineas*. O'Higgins (2003, 135-44) approaches the longstanding question regarding women's attendance at the dramatic festivals from an interesting angle. If women did attend but were seated in a section at the back of the theatre, then they would have had a unique view, not only of the spectacle but also of the other spectators: women watching men who are watching men (sometimes playing women). For the political charge underlying the scholarly question of women's theatre attendance, which overlaps with issues of gender, women's representation, and feminism, see Katz (1998). For politics and Aristophanic scholarship more generally, see Van Steen (2007); Walsh (2009). Approaches that emphasize the political function of Athenian drama are the least receptive to the idea of female spectatorship, see e.g., Goldhill (1991, 184; 1994). The middle ground seems to accept the possibility of women's attendance but with the caveat that the 'notional audience' of the drama were men, see e.g., Henderson (1991), (1996, 15). A. Hughes (2011) goes furthest to suggest that some of Aristophanes' jokes depended on women being in the audience. See also Sourvinou-Inwood (2003, 177-84). For a summary of the ancient material that support each position, see Podlecki (1990); Roselli (2011, 158-94). For the ancient audience of drama as a collective, see Hall (2014); Longo (1990). For a modern perspective, see Heim (2016).

(3.126-28), by stirring her handmaids to lament (‘τῆσιν δὲ γόον πάσῃσιν ἐνῶρσεν’, 6.499).⁸⁷

The re-vision of war in lament is communicated quite literally in the case of Hector’s death, as Andromache, who is conspicuous by her absence from the walls, learns about her husband through the laments of Hecabe (22.437-59). Andromache reacts to Hector’s dead body, which she eventually sees as she takes her place with the other spectating Trojans (22.462-64), with pessimism for the suffering that awaits Astyanax (22.484-507) in direct contrast to the glorious future that Hector had predicted (6.479-81).⁸⁸

The tone of outrage that underpins Woolf’s dynamic between visible ‘victors’ and hidden victims is inflected with satire. Woolf nods to stereotypes of feminine frivolousness as she uncovers male excess and it becomes clear that the male professions are not averse to ostentation (‘For there, in courts and universities, we find the same love of dress’, p. 180). She goes through the professions and their fripperies, such as ‘feathers that are discarded upon active service’ (p. 180) and emphasizes how men’s regalia and their posturing in institutional spectacle, which foreground the glory of war and obscure its suffering, are absurd and

⁸⁷ Iris makes the distinction between Helen’s weaving and the experience of seeing actual battle in terms of spectacle, as she encourages Helen to show herself on the walls (initiating the famous *teichoscopia*) and ‘see the marvellous deeds of the Trojan horse-breakers and bronze-clad Achaeans’ (3.130-31).

⁸⁸ Even men’s laments, which are typically interpreted in terms of their especial connection to κλέος, indirectly expose victimisation in war. The γόοι-speeches of both Agamemnon (4.155-82) and Achilles (18.324-42) describe their return to war and recommitment to κλέος in terms of the suffering they will cause to bereaved women. For gender and lament, see Murnaghan (1999).

dangerous ('He is on the contrary ridiculous, a barbarous displeasing spectacle', p. 180).

Woolf's satiric take on the symbols of male glory and their profound link with state militarism has echoes in Aristophanes, as *Lysistrata* identifies the practice of going into the *agora* in full armour as a symptom of unnecessary, not to mention ridiculous, warmongering:

LYSISTRATA: If in the first place we can stop people doing their shopping in armour, and lunatic behaviour like that.

OLD WOMAN: Hear, hear, by Paphian Aphrodite!

LYSISTRATA: At the moment there they are – among the potters, among the greengrocers, you name it – walking around the Agora in armour as if they were Corybantes!

MAGISTRATE: Yes, indeed, that's what brave men *should* do.

LYSISTRATA: But it really is a ridiculous spectacle, when a man with a shield and a Gorgon on it goes and buys a ravenfish! (*Lys.* 556-60)

Laurie O'Higgins suggests that the institutionalization of comedy shifts the focus to women as targets of humour; however, a Woolfian perspective points to men and militarism as the play's real comic targets.⁸⁹ The crossover with Aristophanes helps to foreground Woolf's conflation of male uniform with costuming and, more pointedly, reveals martial masculinity as a performance (and a ridiculous one at that). In her second letter, to the honorary treasurer of a women's college, Woolf animates the static photographs of these powerful men as she imagines watching a public procession of professionals and wryly suggests that, based on the feminist gains of the last twenty years, women could, one day, tag along too. Woolf describes this imaginary future in which women have equal access to the professions in terms of costuming:

Who can say whether, as time goes on, we may not dress in military uniform, with gold lace on our breasts, swords at her sides, and something like the old family coal-scuttle on our heads, save that that venerable object was never decorated with plumes of white horsehair. (p. 242)

⁸⁹ O'Higgins (2003, 1).

Woolf's coal-scuttle helmet appears to play on the tradition of laughing at women's debasement of male customs and symbolism that includes the oath-making scene in *Lysistrata* (190-99) and continues when one of the women uses the helmet of Athena to feign pregnancy and escape the Acropolis (742-59). However, the real force of Woolf's satire lands firmly on men's performance of masculinity: what real difference is there, Woolf seems to ask, tongue-firmly-in-cheek, between a helmet and a coal-scuttle?

For the reader who looks back to Homer via Woolf, her coal-scuttle helmet, and the seriousness of her comedy, the relationship between Hector and his helmet appears ripe for satire.⁹⁰ Hector's return to the city of Troy is marked by the ubiquity of his armour, which he does not remove the entire time he is in Troy (*Il.* 6.237ff.). Homer makes the connection between Hector's martial dress and his enthusiasm for war through contrast with Paris, whom Hector finds in his room with Helen where he is, in Hector's words, 'hanging back from hated war' ('μεθιέντα...στυγεροῦ πολέμοιο', 6.330).⁹¹ Paris is not wearing but sensitively handling his armour (6.321-22), which recalls Aphrodite's boast that her favourite resembles someone on his way to or reposing after a dance rather than a fight (cf. 3.392-94) as if to undo Paris' earlier arming scene (3.330-38). Hector speaks to Hecabe, Paris, Helen, and Andromache while helmeted, and his epithet κορυθαίολος, which he shares with Ares, appears on five

⁹⁰ It seems apt that Woolf records her earliest encounter with Classics as when her brother Thoby tells her 'the story of the Greeks; about Hector and Troy', see in R. Fowler (1983, 339).

⁹¹ H. W. Clarke (1969, 248-49) considers Paris' comic conduct in the *Iliad* as suggestive of 'other possibilities, other views of life beyond the heroic, alternative ways of heroism'.

occasions (6.263, 342, 359, 369, 440). However, Hector's battle gear only becomes conspicuous when Astyanax recoils at the sight of the helmet, which is focalized through the boy's terrified perspective:

So speaking, shining Hector reached out for his son;
but the child turned away, back to the breast of his fair-belted nurse,
crying, frightened at the sight of his own father,
struck with terror (ταρβήσας) seeing the bronze helmet and crest of horsehair,
nodding dreadfully, as he thought, from the topmost of the helmet.
They burst out laughing, his dear father and lady mother.
At once shining Hector lifted the helmet from his head,
and placed it, gleaming, on the earth (6.466-73)

The gentleness of the humour in the passage turns acerbic when approached via the perspectives of Woolf and Lysistrata, for whom men's costuming is a source of ridicule. On the battlefield, warriors react with terror at the appearance of Hector in armour (cf. 15.280), while, back in the palace at Troy, the sight of Hector in armour is only frightening to a child. Hector warns Paris, his opposite when it comes to armour-wearing, to be mindful of the laughter of the Greeks at his cowardice (3.43). The reader who follows Woolf, however, is more likely to ridicule Hector's commitment to his helmet (and, by implication, war), and the contemporary receptions of this scene that I will examine in section 2.5 direct especial scorn towards the glorious future that Hector goes on to imagine for his frightened son (6.479-81).

2.4.1 Military Masculinity

Homer (and Hector) matter to Woolf because epic heroism persists as a potent cultural force for militarism: the kind of 'preposterous masculine fiction' that she complains about

during the First World War.⁹² Woolf turns her eye to the pomp and ceremony of the establishment in the construction of that fiction and makes the point that the elaborate costuming of male professionals exhibits the kind of ostentation that is called ‘immodest’ in women (*Three Guineas* p. 179). Woolf’s attentiveness to gender, costume, and warfare resonates with Aristophanes, who stages gender-as-performance in the sequence between Lysistrata and the Magistrate, in which Lysistrata must overturn Hector’s exclusion of women from their stake in war-making if she is to secure peace (cf. *Lys.* 529-38).

Lysistrata and her chorus not only reverse Hector’s rhetoric but recast the Magistrate in the feminine role of the dismissed wife and forcibly transform him into a weaver. Aristophanes matches the feminization of the Magistrate with the complementary masculinization of certain women of the chorus, who appear on stage as hoplites to repel

⁹² V. Woolf (1976, 76) [1916]. Ribeyrol (2011, 24-27) suggests that Woolf turns her attention to marginal authors to enact what the critic describes as a ‘feminine Hellenism’. However, there is room to feminize Homer through attentiveness to the margins of epic and the collective women’s voices of lament. There may be a link between Woolf’s attentiveness to Plato and Socrates’ critique of Homer and imitative poetry in *Republic* 10 (cf. 595b10-c2). Ribeyrol (2011, 22) also notes Woolf’s exasperation against the creeping militarism in society, citing the extension of conscription in 1916, followed by the Military Service Act as examples. Woolf expresses her distaste for militarism in relation to classical reception as she describes the Cambridge Greek Play of 1900, the *Agamemnon*, as acted by men ‘ill at ease in their armour’, quoted in R. Fowler (1999, 229).

Scythian archers who attempt to arrest Lysistrata (*Lys.* 453-61).⁹³ These militarized women complicate femininity, and Aristophanes matches their visual gender play with language. Lysistrata feminizes military terms to describe fully armed fighting women (‘μαχίμων γυναικῶν ἔνδον ἐξοπλισμένων’, 454), with the provocative pairing of μαχίμων and γυναικῶν. She also calls on her reserve fighters as female allies, opening up the political, and therefore male, act of being an ally to women (‘ζύμμαχοι γυναῖκες’, 456). The dignity of the military man and his masculinity is encroached by the incongruous coupling of artificially feminized bodies with hoplite armour. Comic-costume is deliberately self-referential and never fully disguises the actor underneath, and this is especially the case when men play women.⁹⁴ Aristophanes’ chorus take this one step further, as men play women playing masculine-women by layering armour over female body-costumes over the male actors’ bodies.⁹⁵

The gender performance of Aristophanes’ younger women is another source of laughter in light of comic cross-dressing and suggests another potential epic intertext. The women’s plan to persuade the men to pursue peace rather than war relies on the motif of men’s susceptibility to feminine performance (cf. 149-54, 219-22), which plays out on stage between Myrrhine and Cinesias (870-958). The motif looks back to the deception of Zeus by

⁹³ Compton-Eagle (2015, 1-15) sets out the origins of comic costuming as emerging out of and in relation to an epic tradition that links a warrior’s status to his equipment.

⁹⁴ For comic imitation, see Taaffe (1993, 65). See also Case (1985); Zeitlin (1981).

⁹⁵ See Foley (2000). For padding in female costume, see Compton-Eagle (2015, 52). Foley (1982, 9) suggests that Lysistrata was not padded as a sign of difference but that she may have been armed over her female dress at *Lys.* 450-65.

Hera (the Διὸς Ἀπάτη, *Il.* 14.153ff.) and the association of Aphrodite with persuasion, to which, in personified form, the women in *Lysistrata* dedicate their oath (cf. *Lys.* 203). Hera's elaborate toilette humorously recalls the epic arming scene (*Il.* 14.170-87) and lends itself to appropriation by Aristophanes for his sex-war plot.⁹⁶ Hera uses Aphrodite's charmed girdle (κεστός), which is inscribed with lovemaking (φιλότης), desire (ἔμερος), and the language of 'intimate persuasion' (ἄριστὺς πάρφασις), after her own gentle words do not suffice (ἐπέεσσι ... μαλακοῖσιν, 1.582).⁹⁷ Hera's persuasive seduction of Zeus and the women's planned seductions in *Lysistrata* mobilize the performance of femininity, once words have failed, for military intervention: Hera wants Zeus to fall asleep to turn the tide of battle towards the Greeks and Aristophanes' women want their men to return home and abandon the war. Hera's success has been likened to the warrior's ἀριστεία, and the scene of seduction and frustration between Cinesias and Myrrhine, which marks the turning point for the sex-strike, arguably stages Myrrhine's (and the women's) victory in the sex-war.⁹⁸ Aristophanes 'reads' the Διὸς Ἀπάτη as a motif that is primed for comic re-performance, and the playwright makes the comic potential of the motif even funnier in reception by subverting the ending that the audience and Cinesias expect so that Myrrhine's seduction frustrates rather than fulfils the desire of her husband.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ For Hera's 'arming scene', see Janko (1992, 179).

⁹⁷ Worman (1997, 165).

⁹⁸ Patzer (1999, 173).

⁹⁹ The sex-strike plot, and its turn to domestic action to solve a political dispute, recalls the proto-sex-war between Ocean and Tethys to which Hera refers to disguise her real, martial motive for needing Aphrodite's help (14.200-10). For the function of para-narratives in the *Iliad*, see Alden

The on-stage transformation of the Magistrate is also multi-layered, as *Lysistrata* re-costumes him fit for a funeral (*Lys.* 599-607). The Magistrate's shifts from man, to wife, to female corpse, run concurrently with *Lysistrata*'s exposition of the wool-working metaphor,

(2000). In an extended piece, I will also draw out how the relationships between Paris and Helen, who are engaged in their own sex-war, and Odysseus and Penelope (as well as Zeus and Hera) work as additional intertexts for the Cinesias-Myrrhine scene of seduction and frustration. For instance, Myrrhine and Cinesias recall Paris' increased desire for Helen not despite but because of her revulsion for him:

‘But come, let us go to bed and pleasure ourselves with love;
for never at any time has desire so overwhelmed my senses –
not since I first carried you off from lovely Lacedaemon
and sailed in my seagoing ships,
and on that rocky island first joined in love and sex –
as now I desire you and sweet passion holds me.’ (*Il.* 3.441-46)

CINESIAS: She seems to my eyes to have grown a lot younger and to have a tenderer look in her eye. And as for her haughtiness and petulance towards me, why, it's just that that overwhelms me with desire! (*Lys.* 885-88)

For Odysseus and Penelope, the delays in their lovemaking and the significance of their marital bed (for instance, they are ready to cry all night if not for Athena's intervention! *Od.* 23.242-46) have comic potential in light of Myrrhine's tactic of delaying Cinesias by making the bed. There may even be a way to bring Zeus-Hera, Odysseus-Penelope, and Cinesias-Myrrhine together, as Levine (1983) interprets Penelope's strange laugh at 18.163 as indicative of her deception of the suitors. He suggests that her seduction-frustration of the suitors replays Hera's deception of Zeus at *Il.* 14.159ff. Moreover, Penelope's fixation on her lost time with Odysseus and the effects of age (e.g., *Od.* 23.210-14) reappear in the serious passage in *Lysistrata* in which the women and men reflect on time lost in war (*Lys.* 591-94).

which, in conversation with Homeric epic, may evoke the language of lament. The simile at *Iliad* 12.432-35 likens the oscillations of the battlefield, and the transience of the supremacy that the Trojans are about to enjoy, to a woman weighing her wool:

Yet still the Trojans were not able to make a rout of the Achaeans,
but they held on, as a woman carefully in her poverty holds her scales,
and holding a weight of wool, one on each side, she raises them
to balance equally, so as to gain for her children a meagre pittance

The simile is not explicitly about the hardships of war, unless, however, it is read with special reference to Hector and in anticipation of Andromache weaving as a slave in Argos (6.456-58) and Astyanax destitute (22.489-507).¹⁰⁰ From this perspective, the simile interacts with the epic motif that describes victors with reference to victims (cf. *Il.* 16.7-11; *Od.* 8.521-31). The fundamental difference, however, is that this simile does not describe enemy victims of war but instead emphasizes the connection between Hector's death and the consequences for his family.¹⁰¹

Aristophanes' comic-serious approach to epic war-making and gender relations helps to expose potential instances of proto-comic-seriousness in Homer.¹⁰² Hector's 'as if I were a woman' speech (αὐτῶς ὥς τε γυναῖκα', *Il.* 22.125), in which he imagines removing his battle

¹⁰⁰ The woman's scales anticipate the scales of Zeus that weigh out the fate of Hector at *Il.* 22.209-13.

¹⁰¹ See Kozak (2008, 157-58) for the Trojans' dependence on Hector for their entire way of life, which is emphasized in the chase sequence with Achilles in the portrait of life before the war (cf. 22.145-56).

¹⁰² Meltzer (1990) suggests that Paris is a comic foil for the tragic heroism of Hector.

gear to meet Achilles, return Helen and her possessions, and make peace, comes close to anticipating the confluence of tragedy and comedy in Aristophanes' treatment of war:

I could set forth to meet him and he not pity me,
nor even respect me, but kill me naked as I was,
as if I were a woman, since I would have put off my armour.
It is not now possible from rock or oak, in the country way,
to chatter to him those things that a girl and youth
chatter to each other, a girl and youth –
no, it is better to engage with him straightaway;
we shall see to whom the Olympians give glory. (*Il.* 22.123-30, cf. 22.111-30)¹⁰³

Nicole Loraux cautions against reading too much in to Hector's identification with femininity, which simply likens the unarmed warrior to someone for whom war is not their business: like women and like his brother Paris, who is an archer, handles his gear, and is often accused of effeminacy (13.769).¹⁰⁴ Andromache's lament, in which she criticises Hector's excessive manliness (*ἀγνηγορίας ἀλεγεινῆς*, 22.459), will seem ironic in light of this passage, as Hector's masculinity, and therefore his commitment to battle, has never been more explicitly compromised than in book 22. Hector's vision seems incongruous for the warrior on the cusp of battle, and therefore perhaps baldly comic, but the interaction between sex and death in the passage, which is also the dynamic that underpins the gravity in *Lysistrata*, frames the moment of slippage in the warrior's pursuit of κλέος as comic-serious.

The passage intimates an understanding of the relationship between war-making and masculinity as performative and material, in which the warrior's manliness, and his

¹⁰³ For discussion, see e.g., Loraux (1995, 80-81); Redfield (1975, 158-59); Van Nortwick (2001). See Ready (2005) for an emphasis on the passage's eroticism.

¹⁰⁴ Loraux (1995, 80). See also Ransom (2011).

attachment to κλέος, is about as substantial as his suit of armour. Hector does not just imagine feminizing his body but also imagines engaging in intimate chatter (ὀαριζέμεναι), which echoes the *homilia* scene with Andromache (cf. 6.516).¹⁰⁵ Thomas Van Nortwick points out that ‘the verb is cognate with *oar*, “wife”, the etymology suggesting that to *oarizein* is basically to “talk like a wife”’, so that even in *Iliad* 6 Hector was talking like a woman.¹⁰⁶ Looking back to ὄαρ and its cognates via Aristophanes’ sex-war theme inflects the intimate chatter between Hector and Andromache, and its potential intratextual echoes, with humour: Andromache’s unsuccessful persuasion of Hector during their chatter could have done with the kind of intimate persuasion that comes with Aphrodite’s girdle, which uses the cognate noun ὀαριστὺς (22.146).¹⁰⁷

Hector’s sentimentality in the ‘if I were a woman’ passage recalls and eroticizes his nostalgia for pre-war Troy (18.288-92) and is one of several temporary pauses that postpone the trajectory of the war and the epic narrative, in which Hector’s death will mark the end of the epic but not the end of the war.¹⁰⁸ Alexander’s addition of ‘in the country way’ to her

¹⁰⁵ De Jong (2012, 91).

¹⁰⁶ Van Nortwick (2001, 222). Van Nortwick reads Homer’s reference to ὀαρίζε γυναῖκί at 6.516 as Hector talking ‘like a wife to his wife’ as part of the critic’s interest in the epic ‘second self’ as a forerunner for identification. To Van Nortwick, Hector’s warrior masculinity is marked out in the epic as his second self is a woman (p. 234).

¹⁰⁷ Van Nortwick (2001, 222)

¹⁰⁸ Murnaghan (1997, 36).

translation of the line 22.126 (‘οὐ μὲν πως νῦν ἔστιν ἀπὸ δρυὸς οὐδ’ ἀπὸ πέτρης’) emphasizes the pastoral setting that Hector imagines for his courting couple and underlines the connection between the pastoral and peace that Homer embeds throughout the epic (e.g., 3.257-58).¹⁰⁹ Hector’s passage is important for Aristophanes because it makes the link between peace and the resumption of romantic relationships explicit, which is the theme of the comedy.¹¹⁰ The sexual undertone to the intimate chatter in Homer, which could appear bawdy from the perspective of Aristophanes, is balanced with the reminder of the serious side of war, as the cognate noun ὄαρ appears twice to describe men who fight for their wives (‘ἀμυνόμενα ὄρεσσι’, 5.486, 9.327). The romantic and martial inflections of ὀαριζόμενα and its cognates foreground Hector’s dilemma, in which his nostalgia drives him to fight to protect a way of life that he will not be able to experience again, which is emphasized in the chase sequence (22.145-56).¹¹¹ Aristophanes stages the torment of wives who long for their husbands (cf. *Lys.* 102-6) and their sex-strike is designed to expose the bind of the warrior who cannot fight for and be with his wife at the same time.

¹⁰⁹ The secondary literature on pastoral and peace in the epic focuses on the similes and the Shield of Achilles *ecphrasis*, see e.g., Taplin (1980).

¹¹⁰ Menelaus does something similar at 13.620-39, as he contrasts war with pleasure: sleep, love-making, song, and dance. See Taplin (1980, 4-5). The disturbing counterpart to this for the feminist reader is the rape and enslavement of captured women that occurs during war in Homer and which is translated to the classical stage in Euripides’ *Trojan Women*, especially if Aristophanes is parodying Homer via the epic’s recent reception in *Trojan Women*, produced in Athens four years before *Lysistrata*.

¹¹¹ Kozak (2008, 157-58).

Hector emphasizes the vulnerability of the unarmed warrior and anticipates the significance of his body, and what Achilles does or does not do with it, in death. The noun ὄαριστὺς reappears on the battlefield to imply intimacy, even eroticism, between enemy warriors (cf. πολέμου ὄαριστὺς, 17.228).¹¹² Hector's death and the posthumous treatment of his body realize the feminization that the warrior imagines for his body without armour and perverts the innocent romance of the courting couple who chatter. Hector's neck, which Achilles pierces with his spear, is provocatively 'soft' (ἀπαλοῖο, 22.327), and the Greeks, who take it in turns to inflict more blows, comment on how Hector is 'softer to handle' in death (μαλακώτερος ἀμφαφάσθαι, 22.373).¹¹³ The Greeks make Hector's softness into a sardonic joke, by contrasting the malleability of his dead body with the intractability of the warrior when he was burning their ships (22.373-74). The softness of Hector's corpse also recalls, with irony, the soft words (μαλακοῖς ἐπέεσσιν) that Helen uses to persuade Paris to fight. This is an inversion of Hector's words to Andromache at 6.490-93, as Paris' grief is dismissed by Helen. The interplay between Hector and Helen's softness also interacts with the softness that Hera is advised to use to persuade Zeus to support the Greeks (1.582) Aristophanes recalls the tragic vulnerability of the body in war, as Lysistrata orders her female army not to strip the bodies of the Scythians ('Go on, drag them down, hit them, thump them, revile them, be

¹¹² Loraux (1995, 81); Van Nortwick (2001, 222); Vernant (1986, 57).

¹¹³ De Jong (2012, 138); Vernant (1986, 57).

shameless! Stop – withdraw – no stripping the bodies’, *Lys.* 459-61).¹¹⁴ The warrior’s feminization in defeat seems a step too far for the comedy (recall that the Magistrate is feminized before his mock funeral): clearly some things are too serious for comic parody.

2.4.2 Telemachus

Aristophanes is not the first to revisit *Iliad* 6.490-93, as *Lysistrata* seems to build on, and potentially expose for the later reader, a tradition of parodic reception already in evidence between and within the epics at *Odyssey* 1.356-59 (as well as 21.350-58).¹¹⁵ The *Odyssey*

¹¹⁴ *Lysistrata*’s appeal to martial restraint does also serve as a comic nod to the theatrical illusion, as stripping the Scythians would mean removing their costumes.

¹¹⁵ Rousseau (2015) traces the echoes of *Iliad* 6.490-93 in *Odyssey* 1.356-59 and 21.350-53. I will concentrate on *Odyssey* 1.356-59, although I may come back to consider 21.350-53 for an extended piece of writing. Rousseau emphasizes the deliberateness of the linguistic echoes across the epics (which then remerge in Aristophanes) as ‘quotation’, which is not uncontroversial. For the problems of thinking about Homer and allusion, see e.g., Burgess (2006); Currie (2006); Willcock (1997). Currie (2006) is especially helpful to identify the main differences between neoanalysts, e.g., Pucci (1987); Rutherford (2001), and oralists, e.g., Nagy (1979), in their respective approaches to the relationship between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. For the former, the focus is on ‘relationships of dependence’, and for the latter, the focus is on the ‘common tradition’, see Currie (2006, 4). There can be no ‘quotation’ between the epics for oralists, as similarities are explained by adherence to epic formulae. For the sense that the *Odyssey* marks itself out as the sequel to the *Iliad*, see J. Griffin (1987, 63-70). Currie (2006, 8 n. 47) calls the relationship between *Iliad* 6.490-93 and *Odyssey* 1.356-59, 21.350-53, ‘one of the most interesting cases’ of verbal quotation between the epics, see further

recasts male prerogative through the masculine inadequacy of Telemachus and the humorous inter-epic comparison between warrior and teenager recalls the similar tension between Hector and Paris. The relationships between Hector, Telemachus, and Paris are further complicated by the men's relationships with women. The arrangements between the sexes and their corresponding attitudes to war in Homer form the basis of Aristophanes' epic reception, turning from the representation of war to the sex-war dynamics of the play.

‘So go to your quarters now and attend to your work, the loom and the spindle, and tell the servants to get on with theirs. Making decisions must be men's concern (μῦθος δ' ἄνδρεςσι μελήσει), and mine in particular; for I am master in this house.’ (*Od.* 1.356-59)

Telemachus dismisses Penelope following the model established by Hector, inverted by Paris, and reproached by Lysistrata, in which a man overrides a woman's grief by staking a claim to authority. However, the comic suggestiveness of Telemachus mimicking Hector is generally underappreciated, as readings tend to interpret his criticism of Penelope without reference to the interaction between the epics.¹¹⁶ Katz, for instance, notes the repetition without irony and instead looks at the reappearance of the formula at *Odyssey* 1.356-59 at 21.350-53 as evidence

discussion in Rutherford (2001, 140-41). Rutherford asserts that the lines in the *Iliad* ‘became proverbial, even notorious’ (p. 140).

¹¹⁶ The exception is Rousseau (2015, 25): ‘The rhapsode is clearly deriving a little amusement from dressing Telemachus up as Hector’. For approaches to humour in the *Odyssey*, see e.g., Burrows (1965); H. W. Clarke (1969); Colakis (1986); Levine (1982-83), (1983); Turkeltaub (2014).

for Telemachus taking on the role of κύριος in Odysseus' absence.¹¹⁷ The recognition of parodic inter-epic reception changes the texture of the early books of the *Odyssey* (often referred to as the Telemachy) and recasts Telemachus as another comic figure for Aristophanes' parodic approach to military masculinity.

Telemachus borrows Hector's warrior script to rebuke his mother as part of what the epic poet describes as his newly godlike (ισόθεος) state, buoyed by the advice of Athena to challenge the suitors (1.321-25). However, chastising Penelope seems like an absurd way to demonstrate his newfound bravery, as it means arguing in favour of sustaining a bardic performance that the suitors enjoy after he has already complained to Athena that 'these men are only interested in music' (1.159). Athena sets Telemachus up to play the role of a warrior like Hector, commenting appreciatively on his stature at 1.207 but, in practice, he falls comically short. This continues into the next book when Telemachus' poise unravels as he confronts the suitors. He admits that he cannot match up to Odysseus' manliness and would make an ineffective fighter (2.58-61). Telemachus is undone by his unimpressive body and

¹¹⁷ Katz (1991, 36, 152). M. Clarke (2001, 337) does not see 'quotation' between the lines but ascribes to the oralist view of traditional formulae. Felson-Rubin (1994, 20) makes no mention of inter-epic borrowing and refers to *Odyssey* 1.359 as evidence of Telemachus' burgeoning maturity. Murnaghan (1987, 156-57, 165) similarly reads Telemachus' dismissal as a sign of his maturity and alignment with the world of epic κλέος. J. Heath (2001, 129) describes the identification of Telemachus' maturation over the epic as the 'critical consensus' on the poem. S. West (1990, 120) thinks the lines demonstrate Telemachus' 'callousness'.

his related lack of courage, as the image of the warrior-in-the-making built up by Athena falls away and, in retrospect, is rendered comic.

The suitors respond to Telemachus as a comic figure: Antinous laughs and gives him the epithet ‘braggart’ (‘Τηλέμαχ’ ὑπαγόρη’, 2.301), which is comic in light of the disparity between his boasts the earlier night and their execution at the assembly.¹¹⁸ Antinous appears to marvel at Telemachus’ audaciousness (2.303), however, the statement is laced with irony, as it quickly becomes clear that the suitors consider Telemachus’ plan to find out about Odysseus and embark on his own mini-epic journey hilarious: they mock his plans and feign fear at their fulfilment (3.324-25). The speaker who sneers at Telemachus’ plot is described as exceedingly manly (ὑπερηνορέων), and while the suitors’ overweening masculinity is a source of censure in the epic, it also functions at this point to contrast with Telemachus’ comic immaturity. The same point can be made more generally: the irony of the suitors’ confidence, established by the fact that Odysseus *will* return and Telemachus *will* get his revenge, does not cancel out but coexists alongside Telemachus’ failure of maturity in these early books.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ For Telemachus as a comic figure to the suitors, see e.g. Levine (1982-83).

¹¹⁹ Telemachus’ maturation over the epic includes being able to look back to see the comic side of his immaturity as a younger man and to play with his comic persona to continue to deceive the suitors. At the contest of the bow (where he will return to Hector’s words at 21.350-58), Telemachus sends himself up, ironically reminding the suitors of his earlier failures to stand up to them (e.g., 2.58-71): “I suppose I shall always be a coward and a weakling. Or perhaps I’m too young, not sure

Likening Telemachus to a divinity at 1.324 is a joke and one that becomes more apparent as the story unfolds, as another inter-epic allusion emerges. Puffed up by Athena's rhetoric, Telemachus apes the words of Hector, but the unravelling of his poise reveals a closer affinity to Paris, who has been identified as a comic foil for Hector.¹²⁰ Paris is described as 'godlike' on several occasions (*Il.* 3.27, 30, 58), but Hector contrasts his brother's spectacular appearance with his own manly conduct ('outstanding only in beauty'/ 'εἶδος ἄριστε', 3.39). As noted, Paris is rescued from having to meet Menelaus in one-on-one combat and Hector imagines the Greeks' mocking laughter at the prospect of Paris as first among the Trojans (3.42). The comic reading of Telemachus-as-Paris recasts the suitors' reactions to him. When Telemachus tells the suitors to be quiet at *Od.* 1.368, the suitors react to him by biting their lips at the 'daring' (θαρσαλέος) of his speech (1.381-83). This action is commonly associated with the suppression of passion, commonly anger, however, seeing as laughter is the typical response of the suitors to Telemachus' efforts to assert his authority throughout the epic (e.g. 2.301, 20.374, 21.376), it seems reasonable to assume that this is the reaction they are attempting to stifle.¹²¹

enough yet of my own strength to defend myself against anyone who cares to pick a quarrel with me. Well, sirs, it is now up to you, who are stronger men than I; let's get the contest settled'" (21.131-36).

¹²⁰ Meltzer (1990).

¹²¹ Levine (1982-83) points out that laughter scenes in the *Odyssey* are dominated by the suitors; see also Colakis (1986, 138).

Telemachus' threat is completely ineffectual as the evening continues at the suitors' leisure: 'They danced to music and enjoyed themselves/ till evening, then they went back home to sleep' (1.422-23). Telemachus shrinks from battle, albeit of a domestic kind, for the dance and this detail again recalls Paris (*Il.* 3.390-94). However, the comparison with Paris only underlines Telemachus' complete failure of masculinity, as what also becomes apparent is that Telemachus is not a very convincing Paris either.¹²² The suitors retire to bed and Telemachus goes to his bedroom with the aged servant, Eurycleia:

She brought the torches now; she was the slave
who loved him most ...
...
He slept the night there, wrapped in woollen blankets,
planning the journey told him by Athena. (*Od.* 1.424-44)

The fine robes that line Paris' bed that Aphrodite uses to tempt Helen (*Il.* 3.391-92) become woollen blankets for Telemachus and Helen is substituted for Eurycleia, whom we are told, in a way that appears humorous in its comparison to Helen, that Laertes bought a long time ago but did not sleep with to maintain marital harmony (*Od.* 1.429-33). Eurycleia even folds Telemachus' clothes for him like a child so that the suitors appear more like Paris, especially in their attempted seduction of another man's wife. In contrast, Telemachus, in his immaturity, is neither lover nor fighter. Moreover, Telemachus' complete lack of eroticism complicates the oppositional relationship between Hector and Paris. Hector's militarism makes Telemachus' efforts at imitation seem funny, however, Hector's relationship with his fellow warriors has a touch of Paris about it, as Hector dismisses Helen, who tries to persuade

¹²² Compare with the austere refusal of Hector in *Iliad* 6 to take wine with Hecabe (6.258-65) or to sit with Helen (6.354-62). Hector declines in order not to 'forget his courage' (6.265) as Telemachus will.

him to stay back from the fight, by referring to the Trojans' longing for him ('ἐμεῖο ποθὴν ἀπεόντος ἔχουσιν', *Il.* 6.362).

A comic reappraisal of Telemachus' masculinity also shifts the focus of the feminist reader who fixates on the dismissal of Penelope as evidence of ancient misogyny. Telemachus' words at *Od.* 1.356-59 have become a focal point for proto-feminist and feminist critique from Germaine de Staël to Mary Beard's feminist manifesto, *Women and Power* (2017).¹²³ Beard gestures to the potency of the 'long view' of Classics, with the ability to identify trans-historical and trans-cultural misogyny, for feminist critique, and her opening sequence identifies lines 1.356-59 as the 'first recorded example of a man telling a woman to "shut up"' (p. 3). Beard concedes that '[t]here is something faintly ridiculous about this wet-behind-the-ears lad shutting up the savvy, middle-aged Penelope' (p. 4), but her deliberately anachronistic take on the passage belies the potential to find irony in Homer's treatment of Telemachus.

If the passage is more about laughing at Telemachus than dismissing Penelope, then a reappraisal of Penelope is also in order. Emily Wilson's feminist translation is attentive to the ironies of the epic and helps to reveal Penelope's role in sustaining the comedy at her son's

¹²³ De Staël (1964, 157) [1800] reacts to Greek literature in which '[e]ven sons hardly respected their mothers. Telemachus orders Penelope to be silent and she leaves imbued with admiration for his wisdom'. Discussed in Marson (1998, 455), who states '[w]hen Staël reads Homer's *Odyssey*, she is quick to note the silencing of Penelope and the power and promise of what Penelope had tried to say'.

expense. The difference in Wilson's translation centres on Telemachus' epithet *πεπνυμένος*, which is used to refer to him forty-six times over the epic including when he dismisses Penelope (1.345).¹²⁴ John Heath connects Telemachus' maturation to the epithet, which is affixed to wise men who 'speak and act accordingly', and suggests that Telemachus grows into and shapes his conduct in relation to the term over the course of the *Odyssey*.¹²⁵ However, Heath interprets Telemachus' words to Penelope as evidence that '[t]he young man has just begun to act in accordance with his mature character', and Heath describes later instances in which Telemachus falls short of the epithet as stumbling blocks on the journey to maturation rather than ironic comments on his bluster (e.g., 3.21-24).¹²⁶ Wilson provocatively renders the epithet at 1.345 as 'sullen', in contrast with 'prudent' in Rieu, 'thoughtful' in Lattimore, and 'wise' in Fitzgerald and exposes the reading that I have advanced in this chapter in which the epic poet dissembles in his praise.

Wilson's deliberate 'mistranslation' of '*πεπνυμένος*' colours her subsequent treatment of the word, which recurs at 1.367, when he responds to the suitors' harassment of Penelope by telling them to be quiet so they can all enjoy the bard in peace (1.367-71). Wilson translates the epithet as action, to describe the way in which Telemachus rouses himself to

¹²⁴ J. Heath (2001, 136).

¹²⁵ J. Heath (2001, 135). Heitman (2005, 55) suggests that Telemachus' maturation over the epic means becoming less *πεπνυμένος* and more *πολύμητις*, as the ability to deceive, which *πεπνυμένος* precludes, is the hallmark of Odysseus' model of manliness.

¹²⁶ J. Heath (2001, 139-40).

speak, rendering: ‘τοῖσι δὲ Τηλέμαχος πεπνυμένος ἤρχετο μύθων’ as: ‘Telemachus inhaled, then started speaking’.¹²⁷ Wilson picks up on the word’s metaphoric resonance in epic, in which it is associated with the soul and breath. However, Wilson’s earlier hostile rendering of πεπνυμένος means that she paints a picture of Telemachus with his chest puffed up, in an (unsuccessful) performance of masculinity. The detail also recasts Athena’s earlier praise for his stature as ironic and gently mocking (‘Dear boy, I see how big and tall you are/ ‘ὄρω κάλον τε μέγαν τε’, 1.301).

Penelope’s surprised reaction to Telemachus (1.360) is typically taken as early evidence of his maturation and Penelope’s recognition of this.¹²⁸ Penelope responds to Telemachus’ rebuke in Rieu’s rendering as follows: ‘Penelope was taken aback, but she retired to her own apartments, for she took her son’s sensible (πεπνυμένον) words to heart’ (1.360-61). However, Wilson continues to resist the standard translation and, in this instance, describes Telemachus’ words, and their reception by Penelope, as ‘uneasy’. Wilson interprets the sense (or lack thereof) of Telemachus via his effect on Penelope and refocuses the scene based on what Penelope does (or does not do) when she retires to her room. Wilson subtly calls attention to the fact that, like Andromache in the parallel scene at *Iliad* 6.447-502, Penelope does not take up weaving, nor does she instruct her maids to work; instead, she continues to grieve for Odysseus before she falls asleep (1.361-33). Wilson’s translation uncovers the potential for irony in Homer, and out of which Penelope is less a figure in need of rescue than a resisting reader in her own right.

¹²⁷ Compare with Rieu: ‘But the thoughtful Telemachus called them to order.’

¹²⁸ See e.g., J. Heath (2001, 139); Katz (1991, 152).

An important development between the epics is that Telemachus substitutes Hector's manly concern for war (πόλεμος) with public speech (μῦθος). Lysistrata's evocation of Hector-Andromache/Telemachus-Penelope as type-scenes for her female complaint focuses not only on war but on the rights to speak about it in public fora like the Assembly (*Lys.* 513-15); her double-edged criticism thus brings together to rebut the statements of *both* Hector and Telemachus. Penelope's empowered role in the passage is important for Aristophanes' Lysistrata (after all, Aristophanes' women are waiting wives, *Lys.* 102-6), as Penelope's critique of Phemius' song (and her potential resistance to Telemachus' claims for μῦθος) intimates the kind of female response to militarism that Lysistrata puts into practice with her inversion of *Iliad* 6.492.¹²⁹ Penelope explicitly engages with, and inserts her voice in between, the relationship between the warrior and the poet, by which the deeds of men are celebrated.¹³⁰ While Penelope's stance is not exactly anti-epic (she explicitly encourages

¹²⁹ Clayton (2004, 35-38) understands Telemachus' appropriation of μῦθος as integral to the distance that the epic poet establishes between the *Odyssey*, with its focus on μῦθος, and the *Iliad*, with its focus on war. Clayton points out that while it may seem as though Telemachus has excluded Penelope from male μῦθοι, her 'feminine weaving-speech' actually calls attention to Penelope's alternative μῦθος.

¹³⁰ See Murnaghan (1987, 154-57) for the tension between Telemachus and Penelope at *Od.* 1.356-59 in terms of the former's openness to the world of epic where Odysseus exists only through his κλέος.

Phemius to recall another heroic song from his repertoire), her act of proto-literary criticism serves as a model for later respondents to epic poetry, from Sappho 16 to Propertius.¹³¹

2.4.3 Thersites

Thersites' invective at *Iliad* 2.225-42 subverts the theme of the epic narrative and the heroism of its warriors so that the story of the Trojan War appears less about the pursuit of glory on the battlefield and more about the pursuit of material rewards, including women:¹³²

‘Son of Atreus, what thing now do you fault and covet?
Your huts are full of bronze, any choice women
are within your shelter, whom we Achaeans gave you
as first spoils when we sacked a city.
Or do you lack yet more gold, which some man
of the horse-breaking Trojans will carry from Ilion as ransom for his son,
whom I, or another Achaean, have bound and let away –
or a new woman so you can join in fornication,

¹³¹ The theme of displeasure at epic song and attentiveness to the relationship between literature and militarism is also characteristically Aristophanic and appears in the earlier comedy *Peace*. Trygaeus repeatedly interrupts the Homeric songs of a young boy, which include the beginning of the *Epigoni* and adaptations from the *Iliad* (cf. *Peace* 1270-87), complaining that: ‘you sing of nothing but warfare’ (*Peace* 1289). With *Lysistrata*, Aristophanes revisits Trygaeus’ distaste for epic as a threat to peace in his earlier play and refracts it through the gendered responses of his female characters so that opposing epic becomes a way not just to maintain but to make peace.

¹³² From the 1980s, Thersites has been taken more seriously in the secondary literature as a character whose complaints engage with the wider themes of the epic, especially the μῆνις of Achilles, see e.g., Postlewaite (1988). For material reward and ransom in the *Iliad*, see Cairns (2011); D. F. Wilson (2002).

a woman you can possess apart? It is indecent
that you, the leader, march the sons of the Achaeans into evil.
Wretches, cowardly disgraces, Achaean women, no longer men of Achaea!
Let us return to our homes with our ships, let us leave this man
here in Troy to brood upon his prizes, so that he may know
whether we too, in some way, are of use to him, or whether not.
And now he has dishonoured Achilles, a far better man than him;
for he keeps his prize, having seized it, he personally taking it.
Why, there is no gall in the heart of Achilles, rather he is slow to action!
Otherwise, son of Atreus, now would be your last outrage.’ (2.225-42)

Thersites proposes that the trajectory of the war at Troy, at least as far as the Greeks are concerned, is led entirely by Agamemnon and his appetites, and the ire he directs towards Agamemnon stems from the latter’s accumulation of goods won by other men. Thersites collapses the wider conflict between Greeks and Trojans into intra-Greek rivalries, in which Agamemnon’s acquisitiveness disrupts the find-and-keep economies of bronze, gold, and women that reward men’s heroism.¹³³ Thersites foregrounds Agamemnon’s libido as an especial area for complaint, fixating on Agamemnon’s insatiability (2.232-33).¹³⁴ On reflection, Thersites’ sexual jealousy offers an apt, albeit anti-heroic, lens for Aristophanes to consider the origins of the entire conflict. Thersites’ perspective serves as a reminder that the Trojan War has been about women and sex all along.

¹³³ Aristophanes will imaginatively solve the unfairness of the sexual economy that Thersites identifies in the Greek camp for the city of Athens in his comedy *Ecclesiazusae*, albeit for women.

¹³⁴ On lines 2.232-33, Kirk (1985, 141) notes: ‘The phrase μίσγεα (etc.) ἐν φιλόττητι is formular, but the addition of γυναῖκα νέην and the ἵνα construction give it an almost pornographic flavour’. Thersites’ use of obscenity will emerge with particular force in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*.

Thersites' speech anticipates the link between war and sex that Aristophanes will play for laughs in *Lysistrata*. However, the scrutiny of war policy that Thersites tries to incite among the Greeks is only given room to play out in Aristophanes' reception.¹³⁵ In the epic, Thersites is the butt of the joke and Homer spends some time outlining the outrageous ugliness that makes him such an obvious comic character (2.216-19).¹³⁶ Thersites' demand to give up the fight is immediately quashed by Odysseus, who beats him until he cries and threatens to expose his genitals (2.246-69). The Greek masses unite, but not in the way that Thersites intended, as rather than opposing Agamemnon they come together to laugh at Thersites and his distress (2.270-71). And yet what is particularly interesting about Thersites in Homer, from the perspective of Aristophanes, is that he accuses the Greeks of cowardice by likening them to women for *not* sailing home and abandoning the war (2.235). Thersites inverts the gendered taunt levelled at men who show insufficient enthusiasm for battle (e.g. 7.96) to reverse the epic association between heroism, masculinity, and fighting. In Thersites' topsy-turvy invective, real men make peace and go home.

There is something quite Aristophanic in Odysseus' treatment of Thersites, as the violence he metes out anticipates the comic violence endured by slave characters in Old Comedy (2.248-51).¹³⁷ Aristophanes indirectly recalls the altercation between Odysseus and

¹³⁵ In the *Aithiopsis*, Thersites also seems to enjoy popular support for his views, as the Greeks revolt after Achilles kills Thersites for criticizing his love for Penthesilea, see Fantuzzi (2012, 271-72).

¹³⁶ Thersites appears as a monkey in Plato's *Myth of Er* at *Republic* 620c.

¹³⁷ Thersites' status is unclear. He is unique among the named characters in the *Iliad* to have neither a patronymic nor place of origin, however, his responsibility for capturing and ransoming

Thersites in *Lysistrata* via the domestic violence that Lysistrata describes to the Magistrate that occurs when women try to have their say in war policy:

LYSISTRATA: ... For a long time previously, thanks to our self-control, we endured <in silence> whatever you men did, because you wouldn't let us utter a sound; but we certainly weren't satisfied with you! No, we were well aware of your doings, and often at home we'd hear how you'd made a bad decision on some great issue; and then, grieving inwardly, we'd put on a smile and ask you: 'In the Assembly today, what did you decide to inscribe on the stone as a footnote to the peace treaty?' To which my husband would say 'What's that to *you*? Be quiet, won't you?' And keep quiet I did.

FIRST OLD WOMAN: *I would never have kept quiet!*

MAGISTRATE [*to Lysistrata*]: 'You'd have got a belting all right if you *hadn't* kept quiet!

LYSISTRATA: That's why at that time I for one did keep quiet. Later on we'd come to know of some other even worse decision of yours, and then we'd ask, 'Husband, why are you carrying through this policy in such a stupid way?' And at once he'd give me an angry look and tell me to spin my thread or else he'd see I had a headache for weeks: 'war is for men to take care of'. (cf. *Lys.* 506-20)

The domestic scene is another iteration of the male-female divide in matters of war that characterizes Aristophanes' reception of Homer. However, the link to the Thersites episode aligns the women with the comic epic outsider, and the 'angry look' and threat of the husband in *Lysistrata*'s example recall Odysseus' glare at Thersites as well as his 'hard words' ('ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν χαλεπῶ ἠνίπαπε μύθῳ', *Il.* 2.245). Thersites' desire to encourage popular revolt against disastrous war policy is realized through *Lysistrata* and her female followers. While the ribald, carnivalesque voice of Thersites fails to gain support and is promptly

prisoners (2.231) suggests that he is among the elite, front fighters, see discussion of Kirk (1987, 138-39). For class in ancient comedy, see Roselli (2014). Sommerstein (2009c) suggests that the distinction between citizen and slave is underplayed in Aristophanic comedy. For citizenship and Athenian identity, see e.g., Goldhill (1990); Hall (1997); J. J. Winkler (1990a). For the use of comedy to shed light on ancient slavery as an institution, see the essays in Akrigg and Tordoff (2013).

subdued in the epic, Old Comedy provides a platform for subaltern voices to band together and hold decision-makers to account (albeit only until their primary objective is achieved). Aristophanes dignifies Thersites through drawing equivalence between his complaints and the campaign of Lysistrata. And in so doing, shifts the comic emphasis in Homer from the physical assault that Thersites suffers to his sexual joking.

The warring husband and wife that Lysistrata describe may also, through contact with Thersites' iconoclastic treatment of war-making, reflect back to and insinuate comic violence in the relationship between Hector and Andromache. Lysistrata connects the disastrousness of Athenian foreign policy and an inability to make peace with women's exclusion from public debate. She translates Andromache's strategic recommendation to Hector (*Il.* 6.431-39) as comic patter ('Husband, why are you carrying through this policy in such a stupid way?'). The gist of Hector's reply in the epic is repeated in Aristophanes, the final part verbatim, but supplemented with an angry look and the threat of violence (something that the Magistrate also threatens at the start of the sequence).

The reception history of Thersites demands closer scrutiny that is beyond the scope of this chapter.¹³⁸ However, it is worth pointing out that Thersites emerges among Woolf and her

¹³⁸ For instance, I imagine that Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* will have influenced the Bloomsbury Group's reception of Thersites. For Woolf's engagement with *Troilus and Cressida* in *Between the Acts*, see Bishop (1991, 120). Moreover, Thersites seems to play a meaningful role in anti-war classical reception in Germany. Max Joseph Wolff turns to Thersites in his parodic treatment of Homer and contemporary anti-war writing in *Vor Troja nichts Neues* (1930) (to maintain the intended parodic relationship, the translation should be 'All Quiet on the Trojan Front'). The title of

contemporaries as an exemplary figure for popular protest for men and women. In his memoirs, Leonard Woolf evokes ‘the voice of Thersites’ as the first in a long line of revolutionaries who are denounced by the ruling class:

‘This is the voice of Thersites, and Jack Cade, and Jacques Bonhomme, of Danton and Marat, of Bakunin and Karl Marx, of bloody revolutionaries, Bolsheviks, Left Wing intellectuals and Utopians. We conservatives are the only realists – it is fatal to alter anything except the buttons on a uniform or what makes no matter – but to do X would be the end of civilisation’.¹³⁹

Woolf’s lecture ‘Women and Fiction’, which she delivered at Newnham College and which would become ‘A Room of One’s Own’, was summarized and printed in the college magazine

the work, as well as Wolff’s pseudonym Emil Marius Requark, directly invoke Erich Maria Remarque’s treatment of the First World War in *Im Westen nichts Neues* (1928), published in English as *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Wolff uses Thersites as a narrator to expose heroism as a fiction that relies on heroic narratives like the *Iliad* for its perpetuation. Thersites describes Homer as complicit with militarism, composing versions of war that fit with a narrative of heroism but are unsustainable for anyone with any real experience of warfare:

There’s this old guy here. I think he comes from Smyrna. His name is Homer. He is kind of an official reporter, and he also entertains the leaders during their daily meals with his singing. You can imagine what comes of that. Extravagant praises. In return, he gets a glass of wine or a piece of roast, and when he has consumed them both, he lays it on thick once more. No man believes him here, of course, but at home they are crazy for his reports. (p. 33)

The translation is taken from Kazecki (2012, 162). See discussions in Kazecki (2012, 161-63); Murdoch (2015). No English edition of the work exists. Murdoch (2015, 55) mentions another reception of Thersites among post-First World War anti-war German literature, in Karel Čapek’s *Apocryphal Stories* (1997) [1945].

¹³⁹ L. Woolf (1967, 225-26).

called *Thersites*.¹⁴⁰ Looking back to the episode via Aristophanes reframes the epic in accordance with Thersites' vision and his parodic take on heroism wins out and Agamemnon is the butt of the joke. The exchange works both ways, as Lysistrata's position is strengthened by association with Thersites, who seems to model epic parody by making Achilles' earlier speeches at *Iliad* 1 comic, in which he describes Agamemnon as the most covetous ('Ἀτρεΐδη κύδιστε φιλοκτεανώτατε πάντων', 1.122).¹⁴¹ Lysistrata is a kind of proto-resisting reader of epic, like Thersites, and she makes a more receptive audience to Thersites' speech than the assembled Greek warriors.¹⁴² In the play she aligns the unappreciated appositeness of his words for her own righteous (and ridiculed) criticism of war-making.

2.5 Contemporary Comic-Serious Receptions of Homer

Hector emerges as the prime target for epic parody in contemporary receptions, with Andromache serving as a lens through which to focalize jokes at the expense of his militaristic posturing. Alice Oswald's final verse for Hector in *Memorial*, as well as a passage from Christopher Logue's *Cold Calls* (2005), and Michael Longley's poem 'The Parting'

¹⁴⁰ Moran (2007b, 23).

¹⁴¹ Willcock (1978, 200 n. to line 2.228): 'Theristes puts himself forward as spokesman of the Greeks. In fact he speaks rather like a parody of Achilleus in the quarrel in Book 1'. For Achilles' speech and heroic debate, see M. C. Clarke (2002).

¹⁴² For Thersites' role in exposing the epic's multiple voices, see Rose (1988).

(1995c) offer companions to and modern takes on the kind of Woolfian/Aristophanic irony on display in this chapter.

2.5.1 Alice Oswald and Christopher Logue

Oswald's verse replicates the tonal shifts of comic-seriousness that reject the ideology of war-making while remaining sensitive to the men who die in its service.¹⁴³ The result is a complicated portrait of the pursuit of κλέος in a poem that sets out to resist the glamour of epic heroism, and Oswald invites us both to laugh at and weep for the dead soldier. Oswald's poem, which I will examine in detail in the next chapter, re-negotiates the relationship between representation and commemoration that she inherits from epic poetry. And from the outset, Oswald is keen to announce that her commemorative agenda will not collapse under the weight of Hector's accumulated fame. The first two lines of the verse introduce its subject and signal a shift in tone for the poem: 'And HECTOR died like everyone else/ He was in charge of the Trojans' (p. 71). There is irony in the slippage between how Hector both did and did not die 'like everyone else'. Hector's death is incomparable in the epic narrative: its

¹⁴³ As I will demonstrate in the third chapter, Oswald draws on First World War soldier poetry and the ubiquity of the war in British cultural memories to rethink the relationship between the poet and the representation of soldiers on the battlefield. However, her inexperience of war is a source of anxiety in the poem that responds to the rhetoric of experience that surrounds the work of the soldier poets (see my discussion pp. 161-175). Irony is a key theme in soldier poetry, see e.g., Fussell (2013); Puissant (2009), and I find it telling that Oswald inserts irony into her poem through the domestic relationship of Hector and Andromache rather than through the battlefield of which she has no experience.

drawn out description in *Iliad* 22 and the surrounding sequence of events – his killing of Patroclus, Achilles’ return to battle, the retrieval of Hector’s body, and its return to Troy for cremation and interment – are touchstone scenes in the epic that drive the narrative *telos*.¹⁴⁴ And yet when Hector is divorced from the narrative of war, and is simply the last of the two-hundred and fourteen soldiers that Oswald revisits, his death can appear unremarkable. The description of Hector ‘in charge of the Trojans’, which is both accurate and willfully understated, has much the same effect. Elephenor, for example, who appears twice in the *Iliad* for all of twenty lines (2.536-545, 4.463-472), retains his role in Oswald in ‘command of forty ships’ (p. 15).

The biography becomes more biting in its satire as Hector’s excessive, performative, but ultimately fragile, masculinity appears as a target:

He who was so boastful and anxious
And used to nip home deafened by weapons
To stand in full armour in the doorway
Like a man rushing in leaving his motorbike running (p. 72)

As with Aristophanes, the humour of the passage draws out the tension between the perspectives of husband and wife. Hector is indeed ‘boastful and anxious’: he can boast that of all the men in Troy war is his foremost concern (6.492-93), at the same time as he is clearly burdened by the expectations of the Trojans (6.440-46, 22.99-10).¹⁴⁵ The effect of condensing the wealth of epic material surrounding Hector to two rather mundane, uncomplimentary personality traits is surprising and comic. The biography builds on Andromache’s pointed

¹⁴⁴ See especially Redfield (1975, 153-59); see also Lynn-George (1988, 234).

¹⁴⁵ For Hector’s acute sensitivity to shame, see Cairns (1993, 78-83).

reference to Hector's excessive manliness (ἀγηνωρίας ἀλεγεινῆς, 22.457, cf. 6.407), to reassess the soldier from a domestic context and find him absurd.¹⁴⁶

The pious reason for Hector's return to the city (6.113-15) reappears in *Memorial*, with colloquialism, as entirely frivolous ('nip home'). The simile that likens Hector's return to Troy in full armour to a man who leaves his motorbike running has a Woolfian touch about it, in which the achievement of masculinity seems simply a case of bravado and accessorizing. Oswald domesticates the accoutrements of battle to recast the armoured soldier as the rather more pathetic spectacle of a man who may be in the grip of a mid-life crisis and/or overcompensating. Christopher Logue strikes a comparable note of bathos in his description of a soldier in *Cold Calls*:

There was a Greek called Themion.
Mad about armour. If not armour, cars.
Of course he went to Troy. And Troy
Saw a stray spear transfix him as he drove. (pp. 19-20)

In this passage, which bears a remarkable resemblance to one of Oswald's biographical verses for the dead (albeit more pointedly humorous), Logue suggests comic equivalence between Homeric militarism and modern, mundane, stereotypically masculine interests. In this way, both Oswald and Logue posit hyper-masculinity and its validation in and expression through war as ridiculous.

¹⁴⁶ See Graziosi and Haubold (2003) on the contrast between positive 'manliness' (ἡνωρέη) and its excess (ἀγηνωρία) in Homer. At *Iliad* 12.41-46, Hector is compared in a simile to a wild boar or lion, 'revelling in his strength' but whose 'courage will kill him'.

Aristophanes' practice of comic-seriousness sees the parodic treatment of Hector work in coexistence with a more typically tragic reading of how his death unfolds; Oswald and Logue pursue approaches that are similarly nuanced.¹⁴⁷ Logue's verse comically likens war to a mundane hobby, equivalent to an interest in cars, but there is discordance in the humour when the stakes are revealed and Themion is killed. In Oswald, the comic incongruence of Hector in full armour in the domestic space takes a tragic turn. His posturing in armour 'in the doorway' situates the soldier in a liminal space between domesticity and the battlefield.¹⁴⁸ The image recalls the crucial moment at which Hector imagines an alternative to war via his crisis of masculinity that revolves around wearing or removing his armour (22.111-130). The strange clash between Hector who stands 'in the doorway' and the man 'rushing in' only emphasizes the transience of his return to the family. Hector's 'deafness' and his hovering in the doorway blend exasperation with regret for the soldier's near escape from but eventual surrender to epic masculinity and his concurrent alienation from the domestic sphere and family life.

¹⁴⁷ Despite his militarism, the common response to Hector in anti-war reception is to take him seriously. For instance, Simone Weil foregrounds the poignancy of Andromache making a bath for Hector while he is fighting and dying as one of the opening images of her 'The *Iliad*, or the Poem of Force' (2005, 4) [1940]. Weil's contemporary, Rachel Bepaloff (2005, 43) [1943], also responds to Hector with tragic pathos, e.g., 'In the crowd of mediocrities that are Priam's sons, he stands alone, a prince, born to rule. Neither super-man, nor demigod, nor godlike, he is a man and among men a prince'. For a recent response to Bepaloff, see Schein (2018). I discuss Weil in relation to Oswald in the next chapter, see (pp. 173-75).

¹⁴⁸ See Katz (1981).

2.5.2 Michael Longley

In the epic, Hector is also remarkably insensible – figuratively ‘deaf’ as Oswald’s verse suggests – to Andromache’s prescient fears for their son (6.407-9, 432; cf. 22.484-507, 24.726-38), anticipating instead the young boy’s future as an extension of his κλέος (6.476-81). Longley’s poem, ‘The Helmet’ (1995b), takes a more straightforwardly caustic approach to Hector’s militarism vis-à-vis Astyanax.¹⁴⁹

And at once shining Hector lifted the helmet from his head,
and placed it, gleaming, on the earth;
then he rocked his beloved son in his arms and kissed him,
and prayed aloud to Zeus and to the other gods;
‘Zeus, and you other gods, grant me now that this child too,
my son, will become, even as I am, conspicuous among the Trojans,
likewise in courage, and rule Ilion in strength.
And one day may someone say of him, “This man is far better than his father”
as he returns from war, and may he bear back bloodstained spoils of armour,
having killed an enemy man, and his mother’s heart rejoice.’
So speaking he placed in the hands of his beloved wife
his son; and she took him to her perfumed breast,
laughing as she cried. (*Il.* 6.474-84)

When shiny Hector reached out for his son, the wean
Squirmed and buried his head between his nurse’s breasts
And howled, terrorized by his father, by flashing bronze
And the nightmarish nodding of the horse-hair crest.

His daddy laughed, his mammy laughed, and his daddy
Took off his helmet and laid it on the ground to gleam,
Then kissed the babbie and dandled him in his arms and
Prayed that his son might grow up bloodier than him. (‘The Helmet’)

¹⁴⁹ For treatments of Longley’s classical reception in secondary literature, see e.g., Hardwick (2004b), (2007c); Impens (2018, 85-125); Taplin (2007). See also Longley (2009).

The tension of Longley's first verse, in which the boy is 'terrorized by his father' in full uniform (l. 3), seems to deflate in the second, as Hector removes his helmet and husband and wife laugh together (cf. 6.471). However, the enjambment between the penultimate and final lines of the poem underline the casual violence of Hector's vision for his son in the epic, as paternal affection and sentimentality unexpectedly reveals itself as martial ambition (ll. 7-8).

Hector's failure to remove his armour during his return to Troy appears inseparable from his dismissal of Andromache, and the correlation between military dress and military policy excites women's scorn from *Lysistrata* to Woolf to Oswald to Longley.¹⁵⁰ Longley's continued reception of the Hector-Andromache relationship in 'The Parting', which partners 'The Helmet', re-visits the confluence of tragedy and comedy in the domestic scene and calls attention to the strange reaction of Andromache as an epic prototype for ambivalence. In Homer, the tension between the comic (Astyanax's confused fright) and the tragic (the impending deaths of father and son) is mediated through and performed by way of the equivocal reaction of Andromache, 'laughing as she cried' (δακρυόεν γελάσασα, 6.484). The use of γελάω recalls the deception of Zeus by Hera (15.101-3), and while Andromache is not purposefully deceiving Hector, the connection with Hera signals the potential to read her laughter as feigned and ironic, which is a possibility that the reception of Longley will draw out.¹⁵¹ Moreover, Aristophanes returns to γελάω as part of *Lysistrata*'s rebuttal of Hector's

¹⁵⁰ Katz (1981, 31) suggests that Hector's removal of his helmet marks his furthest distance from the battlefield.

¹⁵¹ For nonverbal behaviour in Homer, albeit with a focus on the *Odyssey*, see Lateiner (1995). Once her deception is found out, Hera returns to Olympus and complains about Zeus' arrogance

speech as she describes the archetypal wife who hides her grief at the ongoing war by feigning a smile (*Ly.* 512).

Tears are central to the characterization of Andromache in the epic. She cries (or is imagined crying) on five occasions in *Iliad* 6 alone: three times in the moments immediately before and during her meeting with Hector (6.373, 405, 496) and twice in Hector's vision for the future (6.455, 459). The relationship between Andromache and crying is so well established that Hector imagines that the appearance of her in tears will recall the Trojan War and his memory for others (6.459-60). The friction between Hector and his wife in their approach to war-making plays out through their emotive reactions to Astyanax. The tension in the nonverbal gestures between Hector and Andromache call attention to the irreconcilability of their positions and preempt the opposition between the pair in Andromache's pleas and Hector's dismissal. Hector smiles at his child, while Andromache cries (6.404-5). Their conflict over Astyanax reaches a climax as Hector anticipates a future of battlefield glory for his son, deaf to Andromache's concern that losing his father will prove disastrous (6.407-9, 431-2), and he even implicates his wife in support of this martial vision (6.476-81). The tendency to sentimentalize the scene stems from the focus on the couple's only show of like-

(15.94) before resigning herself to his rule (15.104-9). As she makes this speech, she adopts an expression of ambivalence: 'Hera smiled/ with her lips, but her forehead by her dark brows/ did not soften' (15.101-3). The connection is strengthened by the fact that it is the sight of Hector's injured body that alerts Zeus to Hera's duplicity (15.6-15). Moreover, Zeus goes on to prophesize the battlefield narrative, even forecasting Hector's death (15.68), adding a further crossover to *Iliad* 6, where Andromache and Hector contemplate this scenario (e.g., 6.409-10, 6.447-49).

mindedness when they both laugh at Astyanax (6.471). However, Andromache's laughter is soon mixed with tears in reaction to Hector's speech. Her return to tears undercuts the potential levity of this comic interlude and introduces a sardonic edge, calling attention once again to the unsurmountable discordance between husband and wife.

In Longley's provocatively brief poem, Hector's overweening masculinity is a target for ridicule and Longley's Andromache emphasizes her equivocation in the epic to reframe her evasiveness as both deliberate and political:

He: "Leave it to the big boys, Andromache."

"Hector, my darling husband, och, och," she. ('The Parting')

Longley truncates Hector's dismissal of Andromache from the epic to the point of absurdity, with the gendered thrust of his words – that war is men's business – recast as cliché. 'Leave it to the big boys' upends the serious, tragic tone of the equivalent lines in the epic, blending machismo with immature posturing to poke fun at Hector's commitment to fighting. The interwoven fates of father and son that Longley skewers in 'The Helmet' re-emerge subtly in the reference to 'big boys' as both man and boy will die prematurely, though only one will make the conscious decision to do so. Andromache's gnomic one-line reply to Hector in Longley's poem looks back to this moment in the epic, replayed in 'The Helmet', and the sense that Andromache's appeals to Hector and her fears for their son are futile in light of the intractability of martial masculinity in the pursuit of glory.

The three identifiable phases of Andromache's reply in 'The Parting' see her move further away from her husband and his martial self-image, and Longley achieves this with shifts in register and language. When Andromache addresses Hector by his name she is

indistinguishable from and recalls the rest of the epic's speakers, even the poet; she then refers to him as her 'darling husband' to underline their personal, domestic, and unique connection; and finally, with 'och och', she evokes the refrain of Irish lament to anticipate his death and her grief. The line follows, in truncated form, the turns of Andromache's encounter with Hector in the epic. Her first speech relates to the war, with reference to her bereavements and subsequent reliance on Hector, and she attempts to interfere in military strategy (6.407-39). She then reacts with equivocation in the family scene with Astyanax, where she laughs while crying (6.484); and finally, she ignores his command to return to her weaving and rouses her handmaids to lament (6.467-502).

The strategic inhibitions of Andromache's speech in 'The Parting' evidence an undercurrent of female resistance, where the gap between what Andromache says and what we suppose that Hector hears is a source of serious humour (and which Wilson's translation of the *Odyssey* emphasizes in relation to Penelope). The divide between husband and wife and their respective approaches to war could not be more emphatic for Longley, as Andromache and Hector literally speak a different language.¹⁵² Andromache sets Hector up for her reply, drawing him in with English endearment, only to withdraw to Irish idiom and keening. Longley contextualizes the subtle resistance of Andromache with Anglo-Irish politics, drawing on the colonial legacy of the English language and classical education in Ireland.¹⁵³ Andromache thus speaks the language of the epic poet in the first instance, before turning to

¹⁵² I think Longley's reception foregrounds the unexpected patterns of identification that Zajko (2006a, 88-91) draws out in her reading of *Il.* 6.369-502.

¹⁵³ See e.g., Impens (2018); O'Higgins (2017); Stanford (1976).

British polite address (and an Anglicized version of Irish endearment).¹⁵⁴ Her final retreat to lament seems to suggest continuity between Greek and Irish traditions of female mourning, as well as female solidarity, wherein grief explodes the strictures of the master discourse, be it epic song or the English language.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, Longley presents Andromache as an astute reader of the *Iliad* and its tradition, moving seamlessly between epic, English, and Irish. This contrasts with his Hector, whose ridiculous and inappropriate translation of Homeric verse into English idiom strips his words of any semblance of dignity. The *Iliad* seems unsuited to English translation, as Longley's targets for censure include not only the militarism of Hector but the appropriation of Classics for English imperialism.

The deception of Hector by Andromache in Longley's poem, in which she feigns polite cordiality before retreating to lament, draws together the performance of female anti-war resistance latent in Homer and realized in Aristophanes. Across these texts, women express their anti-war sentiment and make war their concern by strategic performances of humour (or politeness in Longley's case) and grief. And if 'och och' is an evasion of Hector, then the pressing question is to whom does Andromache speak? The answer is surely to her handmaids, one of whom reveals to Hector (and Homer's audience) a glimpse of a group of women who are clearly responding to the battlefield beyond the purview of men. The woman who locates Andromache for Hector on his return to Troy knows where she is and why: 'she heard / the Trojans are worn down, and that Achaean strength is great,/ by now she has

¹⁵⁴ I am grateful to Diana Spencer for pointing out this nuance of 'my darling husband' in Longley's line.

¹⁵⁵ See e.g., Macintosh (1996).

arrived at the tower in urgent haste' (6.386-88). Longley uses Andromache's speech to gesture to these women, operating at the margins of the epic text, who talk about and respond to war in ways that seem distinct from men and the narrative of κλέος (or indeed its Anglicized translation).

2.6 Conclusion

The continued reception of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* is a success story in the afterlife of Old Comedy. However, the pervasive under-reading of the play's comic-seriousness is disappointing when considered alongside the longstanding dialogue between feminist readers/rewriters and other classical texts. In this chapter I have suggested that one way to appropriate Aristophanes for feminist, anti-war politics is to go back to Homer. Part of the comedy in *Lysistrata* emerges out of its parodic treatment of Homeric masculinity, something that the text shares with the later pacifist writings of Virginia Woolf. The mockery of war-mongering in Aristophanes is undertaken by the female characters in the play, who revive and render comic the female-male relationships in Homer. The germs of humour at the expense of hyper-masculine and militaristic posturing are already latent between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which Aristophanes' and indeed Woolf's receptions bring to the fore. The humour that is directed towards military masculinity is balanced by the underlying grief that underpins the opposition that Homer's and Aristophanes' women express towards war-making. The comic-seriousness that underpins Aristophanic comedy is crystallized through these women, for whom laughter at men can very easily turn to tears. Oswald, Logue, and Longley look back to the epic warrior with an eye to Aristophanes and comic-seriousness, and Oswald and Longley's receptions express distaste for the tragic inevitability and dignity of Hector's death.

All three writers hold up the excesses of martial masculinity for censure, and Oswald and Longley unravel the dignity of Hector's overweening manliness through the perspective of Andromache.

3. ALICE OSWALD'S MEMORIAL

In this chapter I discuss Alice Oswald's treatment of death and remembrance in Homer in her long poem, *Memorial: An Excavation of the Iliad* (2011).¹ Oswald describes her reception practice, with its excision or, indeed, excavation of the epic narrative, as amounting to a 'reckless dismissal of seven-eighths of the poem' (p. 2), in which the remaining eighth is retained for commemoration.² The constituent elements of *Memorial* are the list or catalogue, the 'biography' of the dead soldier, and the simile. After an opening list of the dead printed in the order in which they die in the epic (pp. 5-12), the poem proper spotlights each soldier by re-listing their name and/or briefly fleshing out their life and death in vignettes that Oswald describes as 'biographies'. These recollections of dead men are interspersed with Homeric

¹ For the bibliographic reference, see Oswald (2011a). All references to Homer's *Iliad* use the translation of Alexander (2015) unless otherwise stated. I follow Oswald's spelling of names unless I am quoting directly from translation, in which case I follow the translator's spelling. All references to Homer's *Odyssey* use the translation of Rieu (2003) unless otherwise stated. The poem was published in the US in 2013 as *Memorial: A Version of Homer's Iliad*. See Oswald (2013) for her response to the change in the title. All references to the poem will correspond to the UK edition from 2011. For a selection of reviews, see e.g., Kellaway (2011); Womack (2011). For a less enthusiastic reading, see Logan (2012). The poem has become something of a touchstone for thinking about contemporary approaches to memorialization and the cultural 'work' of remembrance, see e.g., Marina Warner's (2017) review of Thomas Laqueur's *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (2015) in which she refers to Oswald's 'fine "excavation" of the *Iliad*' to examine the omissions in what and whom are remembered.

² Oswald (2011a, 2).

similes, most of which are printed twice on the page. The final pages of the poem are given over to nine individual similes, with a tenth that is repeated (pp. 73-84). While the deaths of soldiers follow the chronology of the epic, the similes are disconnected from their place in the narrative, gaining new meanings and different emphases.³

Oswald turns from the narrative of heroism to the remembrance of soldiers to recast the material she retains from epic as lament.⁴ *Memorial* responds to the epic's scenes of largely female-led mourning (e.g., *Il.* 19.287-300, 22.431-36, 447-514, 24.725-45, 748-59, 762-75), which serve as models to refocus the narrative surrounding the dead soldiers from their pursuit of glory to the losses endured for glory's sake.⁵ *Memorial*'s acute sensitivity to the lives lost at Troy means that it has typically been read as an anti-war poem, as well as one that takes part in a tradition of women responding to and rejecting epic κλέος that stretches

³ The critical reception of *Memorial* means that its structure is fairly well known and has been described on a number of occasions, see especially Minchin (2015); also Hahnemann (2014, 1-2).

⁴ See G. Paul (2018). For the relationship between grief and glory in Homer, see especially Nagy (1979, 94-115).

⁵ Oswald (2011a, 1-2). For lament and its relationship to epic κλέος, see especially Easterling (1991); Holst-Warhaft (1992, 108-113); R. P. Martin (1989, 86-88); Murnaghan (1999). Nagy (1979, 94-117) approaches the tension between κλέος and lament in terms of memory, though he is less attentive to gender. Our understanding of archaic lament is mediated through artistic representation such as in the *Iliad*, see Alexiou (2002). For comparative work that uses modern lament to reflect on ancient practice, see Alexiou (2002); Holst-Warhaft (1992); Sultan (1999).

back to Sappho 16.⁶ And indeed, Oswald's method of excavation exposes her readers to the sheer relentlessness of death on Troy's battlefields.

Oswald's update to the γόος also looks out from the dead of the *Iliad* to the mass casualties of the First World War and she returns to the confrontation with epic heroism characteristic of the work produced by British soldier poets.⁷ Elizabeth Vandiver's extensive research examines the instrumentalization of classical epic for imagining and describing modern soldiering in the years leading up to, during, and after the First World War.⁸ From the broadest of perspectives, classical reception became a way for soldiers to either acquiesce to or react against the appropriation of Classics to validate the war project.⁹ And this is evident

⁶ See especially Hahnemann (forthcoming); Pache (2018); G. Paul (2018); Schein (2015c).

⁷ Oswald hints at contemporary equivalence between the dead at Troy and modern casualties of war through her reference to 'soldiers' rather than warriors, e.g., in her introduction to the poem (p. 1). For clarity, I also refer to the men who fight at Troy as 'soldiers' throughout this chapter. Brink Productions has co-produced the staging of *Memorial* with the Barbican Centre, London. The London dates in September 2018 closely coincide with the centenary of the Armistice and form part of a series of commemorative events for 14-18-NOW WW1 Centenary Art Commissions:

<https://www.1418now.org.uk/partners/barbican/>

⁸ See especially Vandiver (2010), also (1999), (2007), (2008).

⁹ Wilfred Owen's repudiation of the 'old Lie' that 'it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country' ('The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est/ Pro patria mori*', l. 27-28; cf. Horace, *Odes* III.2.13) is perhaps the most famous example of classical engagement among the soldier poets and serves to exemplify the anti-war narrative attributed to the genre. Owen's distaste for the rhetoric of sacrifice in

in the writing of soldier poets who consider (and often react against) the conceptualization of the battlefield as a space to pursue a modern form of κλέος.¹⁰ Oswald also explicitly likens her work to local war memorials that form part of the fabric of almost every British village, calling attention to a tradition of remembering the dead that is personal, localized, and anti-

‘Dulce et Decorum Est’ finds expression in the rejection of cultural classicism that instils militaristic fervour and obscures the horrors of war in ‘children ardent for some desperate glory’ (l. 26). Vandiver (2010, 393-403) suggests that Owen’s apparent resistance to Classics through his bitter exhortation of Horace belies a more complicated and often fruitful relationship with classical literature. Vandiver also draws attention to numerous examples of soldiers who, even after Owen, continue to use the tag ‘*dulce et decorum est*’ unironically to advertise their patriotism.

¹⁰ The classicism of soldier poets is born at least in part out of the dominant place of Classics in boys’ grammar and public schools at the turn of the century. However, Vandiver (2010, 92-162) does point out that a formal classical education, and thus access to the ancient texts in their original languages, was not an absolute prerequisite for subsequent classical engagement. Vandiver (2010, 33-92) shows how κλέος is reimagined through service and sacrifice and entangled in a ‘romantic view of chivalry and with Christianity of the “muscular” variety’ that emphasized competition and comradeship (p. 33). Oswald even describes her reception of Homer in terms that seem to correspond with the entanglement of classicism, classism, militarism, and patriotism that excited anti-war sentiment:

I’ve always felt, with [t]he *Iliad*, a real frustration that it’s read wrong ... That it’s turned into this public school poem, which I don’t think it is. That glamourizing of war, and white-limbed, flowing-haired Greek heroes – it’s become a cliched, British empire part of our culture.

See in Crown and Oswald (2011). See also Oswald (2013) for her discomfort at the prospect of American soldiers taking copies of the *Iliad* to war with them.

monumental. The significance of the First World War to the poem is heretofore unrecognized in the secondary literature, though it is striking how the Greeks' fears of dying without memorial, far from home, reemerge as an integral part of the remembrance of the hundreds of thousands of British soldiers who would not have their bodies repatriated from the Western Front and Gallipoli (e.g. *Il.* 12.70, 13.227, 14.70).¹¹

However, Oswald's approach to pacifism and remembrance is more complex and cautious than previous readings of the poem appreciate. The question of whether the act of remembering soldiers who die in war can ever be disentangled from the ideology of militarism underlies her return to Homer to rethink contemporary commemoration. My reading of *Memorial* will highlight points of contact and points of tension between the poem's intertexts – the First World War, ancient lament, and the epic – to reveal the scrutiny to which Oswald subjects remembrance and pacifism in poetry. These areas of self-reflection include: the ethics and ambiguities of civilian (especially female-authored) war writing, the potential to overstate the γόος as a discourse that resists κλέος, the need to accommodate for the soldier's lust for battle (χάρμη, cf. *Il.* 4.222, 7.218, 7.285, 8.252, 12.203, 12.389, 393, 13.82,

¹¹ In 1916, the British government decided that soldiers would be buried where they died. For discussion, see Booth (1996, 21-49). For Gallipoli as the new Troy in war poetry, see Vandiver (2010, 228-80). For epic, J. Griffin (1980, 108-9) identifies the fear and regret of dying far from home as part of the 'architecture' of Homer's poem. Patroclus sets out the consequences for the unburied at 23.71-74. For the secondary literature on *Memorial*, see Farrier (2014); Greenwood (2018); Hahnemann (2014), (forthcoming); Harrop (2013); Linne and Niederhoff (2018); Minchin (2015); Pache (2018); G. Paul (2018); Schein (2015c).

14.441, 15.380, 477, 16.823, 17.103, 19.148), and the failure of institutionalized public remembrance to prevent further bloodshed.

3.1 Remembering the Dead

3.1.1 War Writing

There is growing recognition of women's engagements with the classical tradition to reflect on the First World War and to challenge the contemporary narrative of heroism.¹² H. D. wrote *Helen in Egypt* (1961) after both world wars and in the midst of the anti-colonial struggles that followed, using the lyric voice to circumvent and/or question the pursuit of military glory.¹³ If her Achilles is Homeric, his distaste for the κλέα ἀνδρῶν ('I do not want to hear of Agamemnon/ and the Trojan Walls', p. 18) and longing for home ('I am sick of the Trojan plain,/ I would rise, I would fall again/ in a tempest, a hurricane', p. 248) draws more from the *Odyssey* than the *Iliad*. And while the palinode of Stesichorus (and its reception in

¹² For example, for Virginia Woolf's engagement with Homer in *Jacob's Room* (2012) [1922] see F. M. Cox and Theodorakopoulos (forthcoming a); for Naomi Mitchison's *Cloud Cuckoo Land* (1928) [1925] see Bridges (2017); for Vera Brittain's anti-epic reception of Homer in *Testament of Youth* (1933) see Hurst (2006, 211-19). See also (pp. 96-108) in this thesis for Virginia Woolf's 'A Society' (2001) [1921]. For contemporary British women's engagements with Greece in World War One via the Greek Front in the Salonica Campaign, see Wills (2017).

¹³ For H. D.'s classical reception, see Gregory (1997); Liveley (forthcoming). For H. D. and Sappho (although without *Helen in Egypt*), see Collecott (1999).

Euripides) is the explicit jumping off point for H. D.'s transplantation of Helen from Troy to Egypt, H. D. follows Sappho's lyric provocation to Homer to turn from the martial to the erotic (cf. fr. 16).¹⁴ H. D.'s Helen does not simply reject the epic narrative of the battlefield but suggests, perhaps ironically, that it is incomprehensible to women: 'but could she understand?/ could a woman ever/ know what the heroes felt,/ what spurred them to war and battle, what charged them with fever?' (p. 293).

H. D.'s work gestures to the conceptual relationship between gender and war which is reaffirmed, without irony, in the antiwar rhetoric of soldier poets. The incomprehensibility of war to H. D.'s Helen is preempted by soldier poets who insist that the demands of writing about the battlefield are not those of ordinary creativity: to pull back the curtain to reveal the theatre of war demands experience not just imagination. The relationship between representation and experience has epic origins, as in the invocation, the epic poet contrasts the 'rumour' of men with the Muses' divine recollection, as the goddesses inspire the poet in consolation for his detachment from the events of which he sings (2.485-86).¹⁵ In his poem 'Glory of Women' (1917), Siegfried Sassoon inflects the epic's connection between artistic representation and experience with gender, to excoriate women for their enthusiasm for the war and their hawkish endorsement of the heroic code ('You love us when we're heroes,

¹⁴ For Sappho and Homer, see e.g., Du Bois (1978); Rissman (1983).

¹⁵ Goldhill (1991, 70) describes the *Iliad's* investment in the idea of 'presence [as] a prerequisite of accurate knowledge'. For the rhetoric of experience in World War One, see Watson (2004). Winter (1995, 221) describes the soldier poet as 'the truth-teller *par excellence*'.

home on leave', l. 1).¹⁶ Sassoon (like Homer before him, cf. *Od.* 8.91) suggests that there is a vicarious pleasure in listening to war stories with the disinterest of a civilian (...You listen with delight./ By tales of dirt and danger fondly thrilled', ll. 5-6), in which lack of experience, and thus inability to contextualize accounts of the battlefield, means that women can only relate to recollections of war as fictions.

One tactic of women writers has been to use the domestic sphere to reflect and/or to reject the battlefield or else to write memoirs of their own (female) experiences of wartime life. However, Sassoon maintains that the barrier between the martial and the domestic is impenetrable and opens up a psychic divide between men and women.¹⁷ David Jones's First World War epic, *In Parenthesis* (2010) [1937], is an important intertext for Oswald, although the poem and the poet are entangled in the rhetoric of experience that delegitimizes civilian war poetry.¹⁸ Jones's preface frames the long poem, which traces the journey of Private John

¹⁶ The poem is dated to between November and December 1917, see Sassoon (1917). Most of the women's fiction and poetry that we associate with anti-war responses to the First World War were published after the Armistice. Tylee (1990, 103-29) calls attention to some of the few pacifist novels published between 1916-18.

¹⁷ See Byles (1995) for a reexamination of women's war poetry that builds on the 'rescue' of women's First World War poetry in the anthology of Reilly (1981).

¹⁸ For Jones's poem, Classics, and trauma, see Hall (2018). Oswald (2013) praises Jones's poem as 'the best translation of the *Iliad*', although the work is certainly not a translation in any obvious sense. Oswald locates the compatibility between the *Iliad* and *In Parenthesis* in what she sees as their shared sensibility via authenticity, one which *Memorial* seeks to replicate despite her distance

Ball and his regiment from England to the Somme and the battle of Mametz Wood, in terms of personal response ('This writing has to do with some things I saw, felt, & was part of', ix).¹⁹ T.S. Eliot's introduction to Jones's poem demonstrates that noncombatant men were also subject to the rhetoric of experience and Eliot points to Jones's soldiering as the impetus for his particular talent:

David Jones is a representative of the same literary generation as Joyce and Pound and myself, if four men born between 1882 and 1895 can be regarded as of the same literary generation. David Jones is the youngest, and the tardiest to publish. The lives of all of us were altered by the War, but David Jones is the only one to have fought in it.²⁰

While only soldiers could write authentic poetry about war, the rhetoric of experience hampered their aesthetic reception among certain Modernist critics for whom the soldier's work was testimonial to war rather than testament to artistic craft.²¹

from war experience. Oswald (2013) praises Jones's poem for its grounding in what she describes as the 'real': 'It's not a translation, it's its own thing, but to me it's got something of the feeling of real people and a real world...'

¹⁹ Similarly: 'Each person and every event are free reflections of people and things remembered, or projected from intimately known possibilities' (pp. ix-x). The final lines of the poem are a translation from a passage of the French epic, *La Chanson de Roland*, and insist on presence for understanding: '...the man who was on the field...and who wrote the book...the man who does not know this has not understood anything' (p. 187).

²⁰ Eliot (2010: viii) [1961]. For *In Parenthesis* and the Modernist aesthetic, see Dudley (2013, 107).

²¹ Campbell (2005, 263) describes this tension between Modernism and war poetry; for instance, W. B. Yeats excluded war poetry from his *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1966) [1936].

Oswald writes self-consciously as a civilian to explore the aesthetics and ethics of writing war from a position of inexperience. She remembers the men before they became soldiers as much as she remembers the war itself and her method of excavation extricates soldiers from the web of the heroic narrative so that they emerge in their heterogeneity.²² Men unsuited for war like Melanippus ‘not really a fighter more a farmer’ (p. 57; cf. 15.545-583), or Othyron ‘the dreamer’ (p. 47; cf. 13.363-82), and Harpalion ‘not quite ready for life’ (p. 50; cf. 13.643-59), coexist, fight, and die alongside the likes of Acamas ‘a massive man best fighter in Thrace’ (p. 25; cf. 6.7-11).²³ However, Jones troubles this kind of eccentricity and

²² On the micro level, the displacement of heroes who dominate the epic narrative from the centre to the margin and the integration of the formerly marginalized to the centre results in a redistribution of narrative space. On the macro level, the displacement of Homeric heroes at the centre of the *Iliad*'s narrative challenges the value system that centred them in the first place. The result is that a soldier like Achilles who enjoys (according to Oswald's poetics) a disproportionate amount of narrative attention is pushed to the margins of *Memorial*. And in his absence, several Achillean-type figures, easily missed in the epic, begin to emerge. There are those who have watery mothers (Pedasus, Aesepeus and Satinus, pp.27 and 51; cf. 6.20-28, 14.442-448), there are those prophesized to die (Adrestus and Amphius, p.40; cf. 11.328-335) and another who came to Troy with two potential destinies (Euchenor, p.50; cf. 13.660-672).

²³ Oswald downplays Melanippus' prowess as one who 'distinguished himself among the Trojans' (15.550). Part of the paratext to *Memorial* describes the 'litany of war-dead, most of whom are little more than names, but each of whom lives and dies unforgotten in the copious retrospect of Homer's glance'. In secondary literature, the fullest treatment of Homer's minor characters appears in J. Griffin (1980, 103-43); see also Tsagalis (2004, 178-87). For a comparable approach to minor

fancifulness (albeit in relation to the First World War), as he describes the Somme as the point at which soldiers lost touch with their past selves and the idiosyncrasies of men flattened to leave soldiers who either lived through or died during the war (p. ix). In this light, the recollection of and nostalgia for pre-war life, which emerge most clearly in Homer in simile, can seem cloyingly sentimental.²⁴ Oswald's use of Homeric simile is an obvious place to examine points of contact between literary artifice and in/experience. Oswald suggests that Homeric simile emerges out of 'pastoral lyric', and her reworkings of pastoral similes align with the emphasis on their engagements with, rather than detours from, the heroic narrative in scholarship.²⁵ For instance, Susanne Wofford emphasizes the role of likeness and un-likeness

characters in Virgil's *Aeneid*, see Dinter (2005). J. Griffin (1980, 140) distinguishes his approach to earlier scholarship that identified little of importance in the lives and deaths of minor characters. He cites as an example Bowra (1972, 56) for whom 'small touches' simply 'enliven' rather than add to the narrative.

²⁴ In his important work on war poetry, which foregrounds irony in the work of soldier poets, Fussell writes: 'If the opposite of war is peace, the opposite of experiencing moments of war is proposing moments of pastoral' (2013, 251) [1975].

²⁵ Oswald (2011a, 1). Oswald distinguishes her engagement with pastoral from a nostalgic view of nature, writing with appreciation for the poetry of Ted Hughes, see Oswald (2005a); see also Oswald (2014); Winterson (2004). Oswald resists the label 'nature poet' and what she sees as its dislocation of the poet from her subject. She insists on a holistic approach to the natural world, citing 'Homer, Ovid, Shakespeare' as 'the best nature poets ... because they include the human and the non-human in the same picture', Oswald (2014). She returns in interviews to her interpretation of *enargeia* as the antithesis of nostalgia, reflecting a kind of poetic immediacy best realized in Homer. In the prologue to *Memorial*, Oswald glosses *enargeia* as 'bright unbearable reality' and in an interview, she

in epic simile in the construction of ‘an implicit counternarrative lodged in the representation of heroic action’, and Oswald’s own use of figurative language calls attention to the cost of war, as well as its indescribability for the civilian poet.²⁶

In Oswald’s treatment of Gorgythion’s poppy simile, the only simile in *Memorial* that maintains the relationship between a soldier and his death simile from epic, she examines the effect of figurative language to evoke the dead soldier:

As if it was June
A poppy being hammered by the rain
Sinks its head down

describes the effect in Homer as: ‘He just transmits life. No mediation. He describes a leaf and you don’t get a description of a leaf, you get a proper leaf’, Oswald (2014); see also Oswald (2013); discussed in the context of *Memorial* in Farrier (2014).

²⁶ Wofford (1992, 30, cf. 29-96). For Oswald and simile, see Minchin (2015); G. Paul (2018, 143-45). Kirk (1976, 11-12), for example, refers to the extended similes and the *ecphrasis* of the shield of Achilles as ‘intrusions’: ‘These intrusions are morally and aesthetically permissible; they do not break the heroic mood that must predominate before Troy because they are formally enclosed in similes or in a digression about armour. From within these enclosed scenes shafts of heroic reference can be discharged (intentionally or not) without any serious disturbance of tone, and in such a way as to produce a confrontation in miniature of two separate ways of life’ (p. 12). See Atchity (1978); D. H. Porter (1972). In contrast, Oliver Taplin (1980) focuses on the shield of Achilles to suggest that the pastoral digressions in the epic narrative are an integral part of the heroic story and give the poem its tragic tone. For the reception of epic simile in twentieth-century poetry, see Taplin (2007). For a general survey of Homeric similes and their critical reception, see Buxton (2004). For similes and epic performance, see e.g., R. P. Martin (1997); Minchin (2001).

It's exactly like that
When a man's neck gives in
And the bronze calyx of his helmet
Sinks his head down (p.32; cf. 8.306-308)

The key line here is the emphatic: 'It's exactly like that', which insists that vehicle and tenor are in-sync to bolster the vividness of the image. However, the line goes too far, so that its hyperbole exposes the appositeness of likening a dead soldier to a drooping poppy. Here, the pursuit of aesthetic pleasure is revealed as wrongheaded in war writing, as it sanitizes the horror of the battlefield. Wofford's reading of Homer's poppy simile identifies the point of tension between the anticipation of renewal for the poppy and the finality of death for the soldier.²⁷

The tension between likeness and unlikeness that Oswald draws out with the poppy simile is nothing new.²⁸ However, Oswald reworks the traditional tension between vehicle and tenor to call attention to the poet and her reader. Oswald's equivocal treatment of the death of Gorgythion gestures to her confused position in between the competing approaches to war writing that she inherits from her poetic models: between the detachment of the epic

²⁷ Wofford (1992, 50-51): 'The poppy is not wilted or dead, just top-heavy; in any case, a poppy will return every spring to bow its head, but Gorgythion's death is final: it is a unique event that does not participate in any natural cycles of renewal or return' (p. 51).

²⁸ Silk (1974, 5): 'Plainly, the point of similarity (the tilt of the man's head and the poppy's head) makes possible a fine sensory effect. But equally plainly, that single point is outweighed in interest by the points of dissimilarity, the contrast'.

poet and the involvement of the soldier poet.²⁹ The simile reaches an uneasy stalemate between a comparison that is descriptively apt (the poppy may well droop like the soldier's head) and yet alarmingly understated. The line that reveals that the man's neck simply 'gives in' is both euphemistic and highly affective, it is also an invention on Oswald's part as the epic does not specifically refer to the soldier's neck (although Virgil does, cf. A. 9.433-37). The line seems to evoke a kind of passive surrender on the part of the soldier in death; while the idea of someone's neck giving in – like it caves in? – offers an unsparing sense of the vulnerability of the human body in battle.

The simile's (and its composer's) inadequacies are complicated further by the fact that Oswald has no experience of war. Oswald's training as a gardener aligns her with the simile's vehicle (the poppy) rather than its tenor (the dead soldier).³⁰ The same weighting in experience to vehicle over tenor is likely for most of her readers too. The decision for Oswald to omit the part of the Homeric simile that situates the poppy in a garden – 'his head hung to one side like a garden poppy/ made heavy with seed and the showers of spring' ('μήκων δ' ὡς ἐτέρωσε κάρη βάλεν, ἢ τ' ἐνὶ κήπῳ/ καρπῷ βριθομένη νοτίησί τε εἰαρινῆσιν, 8.306-7) – thus seems pointedly evasive. The poet voice of *Memorial* is conflated here with Oswald-the-poet and tries to downplay the life experience that makes Oswald an inauthentic war writer, in the

²⁹ Taplin (2007, 179-80) identifies the 'coexistence of similarity and distance' in the reception of Homeric simile, in which Homeric imagery is at once familiar and alien. By reading Homer via soldier poetry and the rhetoric of experience, Oswald undermines recourse to the familiar.

³⁰ For the 'translation' of 'tenor' and 'vehicle' to describe epic simile, see Silk (1974, 9-18, cf. 3-26).

opposite way to how soldier poets' experiences instilled their work with 'truth'. There is even a sense of overcompensation in how Oswald specifies the source of the weight of the helmet – 'the bronze calyx' – in comparison to Homer's lack of elaboration and reference simply to the helmet. The initial bluster of claiming that the comparison is absolutely appropriate ('It's exactly like that') seems to belie an anxiety that this is simply not the case.³¹

The simile and its descriptive inadequacies are rendered all the more potent through the re-emergence of the poppy as an ubiquitous symbol of remembrance for the dead of the First World War. This 'war to end all wars' was anything but, and, with the poppy, Oswald prods at her reader to think again about the meaning and function of symbolism in war remembrance. Oliver Taplin's work on the reception of the Homeric simile identifies the 'coexistence of similarity and distance' as the site of creative tension for poets like Christopher Logue and Michael Longley, in which Homeric imagery is at once familiar and alien.³² For instance, Michael Longley's 'A Poppy' (2000) picks up on the same kind of 'mismatch' that Homer implies between the life cycle and regeneration of the poppy and the finality of death. Longley's poem, like Oswald's, looks back to the First World War via Homer (and to Homer via the First World War); and it is worth briefly calling attention to the first three lines of the verse and their engagement with epic focalization. Longley describes the shift in attention between the many and the few as typically Homeric and, in so doing, anticipates how Oswald's method of excavation will rework Homer for commemoration:

³¹ For an important approach to simile and the failure or 'limits' of analogy, with reference to Catullus 68b, see Feeney (1992).

³² Taplin (2007, 179-80).

When millions march into the mincing machine
An image in Homer picks out the individual
Tommy and the doughboy in his doughboy helmet (ll. 1-3)

The poem starts with a reference to the First World War and perhaps Charles Hamilton Sorley's untitled sonnet that begins 'When you see millions of the mouthless dead'.³³ The 'millions' and the 'mincing machine' recall the mass casualties of the war and the almost indescribable horror of the battlefield to which anti-war soldier poetry attests. The second line mimics the shift from the multitude to the individual that underpins Homeric poetry (cf. *Il.* 2.487-93), and the third line returns to the twentieth century soldier but via the scrutiny of Homeric focalization. However, Longley does not seem to share Oswald's equivocation in writing about and from either tradition, as to Oswald, even the anti-war treatment of the poppy is rendered problematic by her distance from the battlefield. Longley playfully 'steals' the poppy image from Homer (albeit for an anti-war political purpose) and aligns himself in this 'crime' with Virgil ('an image Virgil steals – *lasso papavera/ Collo* – and so do I', ll, 7-8), while Oswald's borrowing is full of angst.

By reading Homer via soldier poetry and the rhetoric of experience, Oswald challenges the usefulness of framing the Homeric simile in terms of sameness and difference. To Oswald, even similitude is an evasion that demands further scrutiny.³⁴ Is the poppy now a

³³ I discuss Oswald's reception of Sorley's poem at (pp. 223-27).

³⁴ Oswald's ambivalence towards sameness/difference brings her closer to the approach taken by Derek Walcott in *Omeros*, see Taplin (2007, 186). For while Homeric simile is integral to Oswald's reception in a way that it is not with Walcott, the simile that Taplin discusses in *Omeros*, which likens the storyteller Seven Seas to an old canoe, expresses distaste for the heroic tradition that is comparable

cliché that divorces people further from, rather than reminds them of, the men who died? And is remembering these men an end in itself or must remembrance of the war dead be orientated towards sentiments that are either pro- or anti- war?³⁵ Is there a place for figurative language in war writing or do the aesthetics of truth that conflated soldier poetry with real war experience demand that writers pursue realism?³⁶

The battlefield, as opposed to the Greek camp or the city of Troy, is a space that is largely (and deliberately) ignored in women's receptions of epic, but it is here where men win

to Oswald's approach to κλέος as an instrument in twentieth century warfare. The Homeric narrative in Walcott, embodied by the storyteller, becomes a 'caved-in canoe' in which boys 'play [sic] war' before they age and 'work marry and die'. Walcott attributes the perpetuation of war and its cycle of death to the canoe/storyteller who becomes 'choked with old leaves, old words' (XXvII:III (147)). Oswald does something similar with her reception of *Il.* 6.146-49, which I discuss at (pp. 219-28).

³⁵ The origin of the poppy as a symbol of remembrance is tied up with militarism. 'In Flanders Fields' (1915) by Major John McCrae, written to commemorate the Second Battle of Ypres and the death of his friend, is the source of the poppy's symbolism. The dead address the soldier and demand that he continues the fight on their behalf: 'Take up our quarrel with the foe:/ To you from failing hands we throw/ The torch; be yours to hold it high' (ll. 10-12). For the poem, see Silkin (1979, 81). Michael Longley's 'Poppies' (1995a) takes a caustic look at the symbolism of the poppy in remembrance and the creeping association of the poppy and public remembrance with militarism ('...but others hid inside their poppies/ Razor blades and added to their poppies more red poppies', ll. 3-4).

³⁶ For the aesthetics of the 'beautiful death' (καλός θάνατος) in Homer, see Vernant (1991).

glory that Oswald focuses most of her attention.³⁷ Rather like Simone Weil, she returns to the battlefield to expose the epic poet's relentless depiction of suffering.³⁸ In her pacifist polemic, 'The *Iliad*, or the Poem of Force' (2005 [1940]), Weil deploys a discourse of 'force' – 'that *x* that turns anybody who is subjected to it into a *thing*' (p. 3) – to probe beneath human interrelations and antagonisms to uncover the dehumanizing/objectifying effect of conflict. The maelstrom of the battlefield transforms the soldier's relationship with death in such a way that 'for the soldier, death is the future, the future his profession assigns him' (p.

³⁷ The Homeric epithet that describes battle as the place where men win glory (κυδιάνερα) recurs throughout the *Iliad*, see e.g., 4.225, 6.124, 7.113. This epithet is not just deployed by the poet voice but used by the warriors themselves, e.g., 13.270. Certain works from Josephine Balmer's oeuvre, considered collectively, come closest to equivalence with what Oswald tries to do with Homer. Balmer's work ranges from meditations on grief via monumental inscription in 'Set it in Stone (13/8)' (2004) to Ovidian reflections on Gallipoli with the collection *The Word for Sorrow* (2009). For discussion, see Ranger (2016, 201-28). However, her work with Homeric material in 'Fresh Meat: A Perversion of *Iliad* 22' (2004) is closer in approach to Elizabeth Cook's *Achilles*. In the poem, Balmer uncovers the latent eroticism in the meeting between Hector and Achilles at *Iliad* 22.25-360 via the lyric poetry of Sappho. For discussion, see Balmer (2013, 177-83). Anne Carson's *Nox* (2010) evokes the interplay between monumentality and personal grief, see Theodorakopoulos (2013). Carson refers to her reception of Catullus 101 in response to her brother's death as an 'epitaph', which is like what Oswald produces with each biography, see Carson and O'Rourke (2010).

³⁸ For treatments of Oswald and Weil, see Gold (2016, 368); Hahnemann (forthcoming); Schein (2015c). For Weil's reception of classical literature, focusing on Homer, Sophocles, and Aeschylus, see Meaney (2007). For the problem with Weil's religiosity in terms of her reception of the *Iliad*, see e.g., Schein (2015c, 153).

22). Subject to a force that compels him to confront his mortality at all times, the soldier's sense of humanity (of his own and of others) begins to unravel (especially pp. 20-24).³⁹

Both women call attention to the grim equality that death exercises over soldiers, so that just as Weil suggests that 'no man is set above or below the condition common to all men' (p. 30), Oswald can provocatively state that 'HECTOR died like everyone else' (p. 71). Oswald emphasizes changes in fortune as an effect of something that seems remarkably like Weil's 'force', as Scamandrius' experience as a hunter is recalled in the line: 'impartial death has killed a killer' (p. 18; cf. *Il.* 5.49-58). In a particularly serendipitous encounter between the texts, Oswald's depiction of Archeptolemos' death gives an almost literal rendering of a statement in Weil:

Somebody was here, and the next minute there is nobody here at all ('Il y avait quelqu'un, et, un instant plus tard, il n'y a personne', Weil, p. 3)

Poor ARCHEPTOLEMOS
Someone was there
And the next moment no one (*Memorial* p. 33)

However, while Weil's vanishing soldier reflects the dehumanizing effect of force, the brief glimpse of Archeptolemos in *Memorial* speaks to the brevity of his appearance in the epic poem and the attendant precarity of his memorial in the text.⁴⁰ Archeptolemos appears in

³⁹ Judith Butler's work on 'grievability' and precariousness chimes with Oswald's own interest in who, how, and why we remember and forget, see J. Butler (2006), (2010). For points of contact between Weil and Butler, see Gayman (2010).

⁴⁰ Oswald actually condenses the material available for Archeptolemos from the epic narrative to make her point. In the *Iliad*, Archeptolemos is described as 'Hector's bold charioteer', in

Oswald's poem immediately after Gorgythion, as if the lack of a comparably famous simile to describe his death is also responsible for his anonymity. For Weil, the death of the soldier is the point at which the epic poet's even-handedness is realized; for Oswald, the most meaningful interactions between the soldier and the poet take place only once the soldier is dead.

3.1.2 Remembering and Forgetting

Oswald is acutely sensitive to the interactions between soldiers and between soldiers and the poet, and how these relationships play out on and are circumscribed by the battlefield at Troy. In this section, I will briefly set out the ways in which Oswald engages with the oppositions that the epic poem sets up between who is remembered and who is forgotten and how this is mediated through the scale of death on the battlefield. The disinterest of epic poetics, in which the recollections of Troy are divinely inspired, underlines the precarity of the soldier who fights for glory.⁴¹ If the only recompense for death is literary immortality, then the discrimination of the epic offers little hope for most soldiers.

comparison to *Memorial*'s vague 'someone', and whose death stirs 'dreadful grief' in Hector, in contrast to the immediate obliteration described by Oswald, see *Il.* 8.309-317.

⁴¹ The poet is reminded 'μνησαίαθ' (2.492) by the Muses (cf. 'sing, Goddess' / 'ἄειδε θεὰ', 1.1). For epic distance, see e.g., Redfield (1975, 35-40). For the relationship between Homer, memory, and the Muses, see e.g., Strauss Clay (2011, 16-18). For the relationship between tradition, the Muses, and the poet, see Scodel (2002, 65-89). For the tension between Muse-led inspiration and poetic creativity, see Finkelberg (1990); Ford (1992, 57-89). For the dynamic between the narrator-focalizer

The soldier's pursuit of glory underpins their efforts in war and structures the relationships between warriors for whom killing or being killed marks the difference between achieving κλέος and becoming the means by which your enemy does.⁴² The epic poem transmutes these life-and-death struggles for posterity to offer the soldier a degree of recompense, tempering the finality of death with a kind of textual immortality.⁴³ The grave-marker (or σῆμα) is the material counterpart to the literary monument and functions, like epic,

and passages which are mediated through the narration and focalization of internal characters, see De Jong (2004).

⁴² E.g., at the first clash of armies (4.450-1) there is the description of the killers and the killed, see also 11.83. Odysseus boasts to Socus that his death will give him glory at 11.444-5. Sarpedon rallies Glaucus with: 'Give our enemy glory or win it for ourselves!' at 12.328. See Benardete (2005); Goldhill (1991, 171); Lynn-George (1988); Redfield (1975); Van Wees (1992); Wofford (1992, 29-96).

⁴³ For κλέος as recompense for death, see Lynn-George (1988, 153-159, 213-215); see also Bakker (2002); Graziosi and Haubold (2005, 121-149); J. Griffin (1980, 103-143); Redfield (1975); Wofford (1992, 80-96). See 9.413 for the term 'undying glory' ('κλέος ἄφθιτον'). This phrase only appears once in Homer and is discussed in Finkelberg (1986), (2007); Volk (2002) in relation to epic formulae. Nevertheless, the phrase clearly sums up a central tenet of epic poetry, and a similar formulation, 'fame of which will never die' / 'glory will never die' (κλέος οὐ ποτ' ὀλεῖται), appears at 2.325 and 7.91. Achilles, the speaker of 9.413, is characterized as especially self-aware with regard to his own mortality and the relationship between mortality and fame, e.g., 19.421-423.

‘to fix a heroic exploit so that “those who come after may find out about it”’.⁴⁴ However, the soldier’s investment in the ideology of κλέος is balanced by the fear that they will die forgotten, without recognition. The grave-marker acts as a beacon on which to pin one’s hopes for future fame (cf. Hector at 7.67-91), as well as a potential site of shame, as Agamemnon imagines Trojans jumping on and boasting at Menelaus’ grave (4.176-81).⁴⁵ The prospect of dying without burial haunts the epic from its opening lines, where anonymous dead bodies, stricken with plague, lie out in the open for birds and dogs (1.4-5), while Patroclus elucidates the restlessness of the unburied warrior (23.71-74). The Greeks, fighting on Trojan soil, articulate this anxiety in terms that marry textual and material remembrance, in which dying far from home threatens the dead soldier with namelessness (‘and the Achaeans die here, nameless, far from Argos’/ ‘ωνύμουνους ἀπολέσθαι ἀπ’ Ἄργεος ἐνθάδ’ Ἀχαιοῦς’, 12.70, 13.227, 14.70).

⁴⁴ Ford (1992, 144). For the epic’s monumentality, see De Jong (2006); Lynn-George (1988, 228-29, 256-57); Redfield (1975, 34). For epic, monument, and memory, see Scodel (1992). For lyric and monument, see Fearn (2003). For the tomb, see Goldhill (1991, 70-71); Redfield (1975, 34). The monumentality of the Trojan War is explored in Virgil’s *Aeneid* 1.456-93. The walls of the Carthaginian temple depict scenes from the war, blurring the boundary between the physical monument and epic storytelling. Aeneas, as viewer and subject of these scenes, reacts to them in terms of grief and glory. Aeneas’ evaluation of the scene: ‘*sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt*’ at 1.462 underscores the way in which the monument throws the soldier’s mortality into stark relief. For discussion, see Heffernan (1993, 24-27).

⁴⁵ In these two examples, Hector and Agamemnon co-opt the burial sites of others to reflect on their own respective glory or shame.

One of the tactics used by soldier poets to reject militarism and its justification in patriotism is to resist the discourse of the ‘enemy’ altogether and to describe soldiers from either side as equally at the mercy of their respective governments. For example, Jones’s reflection on his experiences in the First World War, which Oswald praises for its humanity, begins with a dedication, printed in uppercase lettering to resemble a gravestone epitaph.⁴⁶ The final line of the verse reads: ‘AND TO THE ENEMY FRONT-FIGHTERS WHO SHARED OUR PAINS AGAINST WHOM WE FOUND OURSELVES BY MISADVENTURE’.⁴⁷ Oswald’s interest in Jones makes her sensitive to moments in the epic that seem to collapse the distinction between Greek and Trojan. For instance, when Pirous kills Diores only to be speared by Thoas (4.517-38), Homer describes both men ‘stretched out beside each other in the dust’ (4.536).⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Oswald (2013).

⁴⁷ Jones’s dedication appears on an unnumbered page. For the pointed use of the term ‘misadventure’ in anti-war writing, see Dudley (2013, 115). Poole (2013) surveys the shift in the interpretation of *In Parenthesis* as an anti-war poem away from earlier readings, typified by Fussell (2013) [1975]. See also the line ‘I am the enemy you killed, my friend’ (l. 40) in Wilfred Owen’s ‘Strange Meeting’. See Vandiver (2010, 303-8) for Owen’s reworking of Achilles’ address to Lycaon at *Il.* 21.99-113, as well as 6.119-236.

⁴⁸ Discussed in J. Griffin (1980, 106). Kirk (1985, 397) sets out how the form of the lines underpins the simultaneous apartness/closeness of enemy men who die side-by-side at 4.536-38: ‘The runover-word enjambment of 537/8, following on from the whole-verse 536 and the twofold 537, and leading into a brief general statement about all the others who were slain around them’. (ὥς τὸ γ’ ἐν

Oswald's treatment of the pair sees them share one verse to replicate their intimacy in death (p. 16). The perspective in the epic pans out from the bodies of these individual soldiers to the anonymous multitude ('πολλοὶ ... Τρώων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν') beside whom they lie (cf. 4.539-44), an effect that Longley replicates in 'A Poppy', and Homer describes this tableau of corpses through the perspective of an unharmed fighter (There, a man coming upon the scene would not make light of the work of war...', 4.539-40). Oswald gestures to this shift in focalization and the remains of the unnamed dead in the final lines of the verse: 'There seem to be black flints/ Everywhere a man steps' (p. 16). However, Oswald's onlooker is distinct from Homer's as he has no stake in the fighting and visits the scene long after the men are dead and their bodies are gone. In the epic, the almost sentimental portrait of Greek and Trojan side-by-side in the dust is undercut by the men who lie forgotten beside them, as well as the perspective of the imagined onlooker who is moved by the devastation of the scene.⁴⁹ Oswald takes the discrimination of the epic's remembrance a step further as her onlooker does not even seem to distinguish Pirous and Thoas from the rest. So while Oswald's man seems to

κονίησι παρ' ἀλλήλοισι τετάσθην,/ ἦτοι ὁ μὲν Θρηκῶν, ὁ δ' Ἐπειῶν χαλκοχιτώνων/ ἠγεμόνες: πολλοὶ δὲ περὶ κτείνοντο καὶ ἄλλοι'/ 'So the two men were stretched beside each other in the dust,/ both leaders, he of the Thracians, the other of the bronze-clad Epeans;/ and many others were slain around them').

⁴⁹ In light of the discrimination between the few, named soldiers and the nameless multitude, one of the especially poignant things about the interaction between soldier poets and epic is the emergence of a considerable number of men who write themselves into the narrative of the war independent of a rhapsode and his remembrance, see Campbell (2005, 263).

represent one of those from ‘generations to come’ on whom the warrior’s κλέος rests (e.g., 7.87), he instead testifies to the failure of κλέος to secure remembrance.⁵⁰

The men are identifiable, though indistinguishable, by the remains of anonymous spearheads, which recall the finds at an archaeological site. Oswald literalizes her method of literary excavation at other points in the poem, recalling the way in which the epic battlefield is littered with meaningful objects.⁵¹ However, Oswald never makes it clear whether these artefacts preserve the memory of their original owner for anyone but the poet. For instance, Euphorbas leaves ‘his silver hairclip on the battlefield’ (p. 64; cf. 17.50-52), which actually plays down the striking description of the warrior’s hair, which is likened to the Graces’, and the silver and gold clasps that cinched his hair together ‘like a wasp’s waist’ in Homer.

⁵⁰ Hector anticipates the appropriation of the dead Greek’s tomb for his own κλέος at 7.87-91; however, Homer also suggests that material remains do not guarantee remembrance, see e.g., the ambiguous origins of the monument at 23.326-33, which Nestor cannot quite recall properly. For discussion, see Ford (1992, 144-45). For Nestor and Homeric memory, see Dickson (1995).

⁵¹ For Freud’s archaeological metaphor and memory, see Freud (2006b) [1920]. With discussion in Larsen (1987). The archaeological metaphor that Oswald uses to describe her approach to the epic text seems to invite crossover with academic approaches to Homer that emphasize its significance as a resource to reconstruct Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age societies. See e.g. Hope Simpson and Lazenby (1970); Lorimer (1950). The relationship between epic and Mycenaean archaeology seems to have been especially enriching, e.g., Menelaus’ boar’s-tusk helmet described at 10.261-65 and, from archaeology, the mask of Agamemnon. See also Alcock (2002); Grethlein (2008), (2009).

Oswald sounds weary from the scale of war when she likens the dead bodies of Isos and Antiphos to '[t]wo more metal ornaments' (p. 35). She likens the remains of dead bodies to artefacts, for instance: 'Brave HYPSENIOR the stump of whose hand/ Lies somewhere on the battlefield' (p.20). However, Oswald is unable to identify Hypsenor's hand, presumably as one among many, which recalls the epic poet's inability to distinguish between 'the multitude' throughout the poem.⁵²

3.1.3 Lament

Oswald strips away the epic narrative to refocus attention on to the dead but, in so doing, she omits the rare passages, most notably in the city of Troy, in which women take part in the story (and even win renown).⁵³ Helen appears as a cipher for militarism in the biography of Menesthius, as he '[c]ame overland to Troy not quite knowing why/ Until he met Paris running in a love-rage towards him/ With the smell of Helen still on his hands' (p. 30; cf. 7.8-10). Menesthius latches on to the symbolism of Helen's abduction/seduction as the cause of and motivation for the conflict, which is a familiar area for revision in women's

⁵² For the demands of families in the First World War to get information as to the whereabouts of their loved ones' bodies, see Booth (1996, 24).

⁵³ Chryseis, Briseis, and Hecabe are not named in *Memorial*. Andromache is named in Hector's biography (p. 72). For women's generation of κλέος, often through weaving, see Clayton (2004); Mueller (2010); Snyder (1981).

classical reception.⁵⁴ Oswald uses Helen to gesture to the popular narrative that has attached itself to the First World War in which soldiers were mobilized to fight for political reasons of which they were ignorant.⁵⁵ The significant female figures in Oswald's poem are those who share a personal relationship with the dead and they appear in twenty of the sixty-eight biographies in *Memorial*, as mothers (pp. 15, 19, 27, 42-43, 50, 51, 54, 69), wives (pp. 13, 22, 38, 46, 47, 49, 72), and sisters (p 33).⁵⁶ Oswald does not directly reference the γόοι-speeches

⁵⁴ See especially Christa Wolf's feminist reception *Cassandra* (1984) [1983], which reveals that Helen is not in Troy but the lie of her presence was needed to start the war for political reasons, see e.g., (pp. 68-69). Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red* (1998, 15-20) parodies the forensic treatment of Helen's guilt or innocence across the tradition. For Helen's blame in ancient reception, see Maguire (2009, 109-124). For Helen and the literary tradition, see especially Maguire (2009), also N. Austin (1994) for ancient receptions; Blondell (2009) for contemporary reception. For Helen as a figure to which later writers return to 'think with', see Gumpert (2001). Even in the secondary literature, Helen seems to provoke a personal response, as Mihoko Suzuki will reread the epic tradition 'as a woman', see Suzuki (1989, 1); see also Vivante (2001). For the suggestion that the war is caused by Helen in the *Iliad*, see e.g., 2.161, 2.177, 3.128, 3.254, 9.349, 19.325. Although Achilles is the only character to explicitly blame the war on Helen at 19.325. Hector blames Paris at 3.39-57, 13.769-773; Priam blames the Gods at 3.163-170; Diomedes blames Aphrodite at 5.348-351.

⁵⁵ Patrick Shaw-Stewart's 'I saw a man this morning' reacts to the narrative that Gallipoli serves as a second Troy for modern soldiers to test their heroism. Like Menesthius in Oswald, the dead man the poet voice meets 'did not wish to die' (l. 2), as the soldiers find themselves in Hell in their pursuit of a 'Fatal second Helen' (l. 15). Printed in Vandiver (2010, 270-71).

⁵⁶ For mothers, mortality, and the burden of grief in both epics, see Murnaghan (1992). For the relative absence of fathers in *Memorial*, see Hahnemann (forthcoming).

of the *Iliad*, however, the women in her poem are sometimes described in the act of mourning or remembering the dead (pp. 15, 33, 42-43, 50, 69, 70, 72).

Homer refers to two forms of lamentation: the professional θρῆνος and the γόος, though only examples of the latter form, performed by those closest to the dead soldier, are detailed in the narrative (see the πρόθεσις of Hector at 24.718-76).⁵⁷ Oswald locates the origins of Homeric epic in an earlier lament tradition, which suggests additional, metaphoric significance for her method of excavation:

I like to think that the stories of individual soldiers recorded in the *Iliad* might be recollections of these laments, woven into the narrative by poets who regularly performed both high epic and choral lyric poetry. (pp. 1-2)⁵⁸

To Oswald, the epic's γόοι are not just models or speech-acts useful for remembering soldiers without direct recourse to heroism, but the residue of profound expressions of personal loss that are preserved in Homeric poetry. Her attentiveness to female grief is thus part of an attempt to revitalize lament as a meaningful and affective response to the dead.⁵⁹ And in this

⁵⁷ See 24.719-22 for the interplay between the θρῆνος and the γόοι at Hector's funeral. For the classification of the θρῆνος and the γόος, see Alexiou (2002, 102-3). For discussion, see Perkell (2008).

⁵⁸ In scholarship, see Scodel (2002, 65). Oswald also describes the *Iliad* as an 'oral cemetery' (p. 2).

⁵⁹ For poetry as a public expression of grief, and for the poetics of lament, see Holst-Warhaft (2011).

light, the brief appearances of women in Oswald's poem suggest glimpses of the proto-poets and mourners through whom she channels her transformation of epic.⁶⁰

However, the intensity of the mourner's personal loss translates to the kind of fixation on the singular subject of the γόος that is comparable to the epic poet's treatment of his heroes.⁶¹ For instance, at *Il.* 22.477-514, Andromache laments for Hector and points to his excess of manliness (ἀγνηγορίας ἀλεγεινῆς, 22.457) as the root cause of his death. She also reflects on how he always distinguished himself from the multitude (‘ἐπεὶ οὐ ποτ’ ἐνὶ πλεθού μιν ἀνδρῶν’, 22.458), which revisits the self-image that Hector projects at 6.444-46 as he justifies his return to war. Andromache replicates the hierarchy that underpins κλέος as an ideology that discriminates between soldiers, as she refers to the men that Hector distinguishes himself from using the same term (the dative of πληθύς) as the epic poet when

⁶⁰ For the relationship between lament and the emergence of an elegiac tradition, see Nagy (2010).

⁶¹ For the performance of γόοι as women's commentary on the war, see Easterling (1991). Tsagalis (2004) challenges the otherwise widely accepted association between women and the γόος, suggesting that the γόος is not 'gender-oriented' (p. 5 n. 25). See Monsacré (1984, 183-84); Murnaghan (1999, 210-12) for men's use of lament to restate their commitment to κλέος, e.g., Achilles at 18.324-42, 19.315-37 and Agamemnon at 4.155-82. Agamemnon even looks forward to the fall of Troy in his γόος (4.163-65), using a formulation that is repeated, though with tragic inflection, by Hector at 6.447-49, see Kirk (1985, 348). For the interaction between the γόοι of Briseis and Achilles at 19.287-300 and 19.315-37 respectively, see Pucci (1993).

he discriminates between the leaders he will name and the multitude he will not in the catalogue (2.487-88).

The issue of dis/interest is important for Oswald because it strikes to the heart of the dilemmas of contemporary memorial practice that she faces with her reception: how do you grieve for those for whom you have no personal connection and how do you go about remembering the dead from wars that amass casualties in hundreds, thousands, even millions? Oswald situates her performances of the poem in between the *θηῆνος* and the *γόοι*.⁶² She recites the same text at each performance, which recalls how the iterability of the epic poem is central to its monumentality.⁶³ However, Oswald persistently invites and even expects (interiorized) audience response by drawing on a local context to which her audience may not only recognize but feel personal affiliation, which recalls the personal, unscripted responses to the *θηῆνος* and *γόοι* in the epic ('and the women in response mourned' / 'ἐπὶ δὲ στενάχοντο γυναῖκες', cf. 22.429, 515, 24.722, 746).⁶⁴ Oswald directly intervenes to establish the horizon for her audience's reception by comparing her work to village memorials that commemorate

⁶² Stephe Harrop's performance analysis aligns Oswald's performance with the *θηῆνος*, see Harrop (2013, 80-81). *Memorial* is also available as an audio CD, see Oswald (2011b). For the 'translation' of the poem from live performance to recording, see Greenwood (2018). For the reception of epic performance across the tradition, see the essays in Macintosh et al. (2018), especially Harrop (2018). For performance and the discourse of 'authenticity' in modern poetry, see the collection of essays in Kemal and Gaskell (1999), especially Middleton (1999), which looks back to oral traditions.

⁶³ For iterability as a cornerstone of epic poetics, see Scodel (2002, 65).

⁶⁴ For the antiphonal structure of lament, see Alexiou (2002, 131-34).

the First World War, likening her poem to: ‘a village war memorial...that extraordinary stone list of the dead’.⁶⁵ Oswald’s invitation to British audiences/readers to remember the dead at Troy via the First World War helps to crystallize how grief and remembrance engage with rather than simply resist stories of heroism and how the act of remembrance is related to monumentality.

3.2 Local Monuments

The next two sections will examine the significance of Oswald’s reference to the local memorial and its list of names for understanding her remembrance of Homer’s dead. Firstly, local memorials stage the tension between public commemoration and private grief to expose the complications that beset the inclusive monumental practice of name-tallying, which responds to scale by listing the dead.⁶⁶ Secondly, Oswald’s specific reference to provincial rather than national memorials points to how she re-imagines epic monumentality as something local, even anti-monumental, which she associates with women’s remembrance.

The public monuments that commemorate the First World War appear throughout Britain and serve as sites for local communities to remember the deaths of local soldiers in ways distinct from but related to national monuments like the Cenotaph. However, none of

⁶⁵ I attended a performance of *Memorial* by Alice Oswald at the University of Exeter on 5 July 2012 as part of a workshop on contemporary women’s writing and classical reception; also cited in Harrop (2013, 79).

⁶⁶ For name-tallying as commemorative practice, see McLoughlin (2011, 51-82).

the existing secondary literature on the poem has picked up on the significance of Oswald's allusions to the First World War. Instead, there is a clear tendency to draw general parallels between Oswald's use of lists and the ubiquity of name-tallying in national memorialization in the twentieth century. Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington, D.C., which maps the names of its dead chronologically and forgoes making distinctions between subjects according to rank, is the monument with which Oswald's poem is most often compared.⁶⁷ Other comparisons to Oswald's name-tallying as a democratic, indiscriminate approach to commemoration may include the Hall of Names, part of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, or the 9/11 Memorial in New York. These approaches ignore the tension between 'interest' and 'disinterest' that local memorials are best placed to draw out.

The lists on local and some national monuments quantify the effect of war and attend to each dead soldier on equal terms so that the effect of the catalogue in its entirety is a spectacle of loss for the community. However, with local monuments, the uniform treatment given to the name of each dead man is set in tension with the contrary impulse: to fragment the monument into a series of separate names, sensitive instead to the experiences of individual soldiers and the singular grief felt at their deaths by their loved ones. In this way, the local, personal interests that underpin how the village memorial functions as a site of remembrance seem to relocate the exceptionality of the soldier from the battlefield to the

⁶⁷ Most fully in Hahnemann (2014). See also Hahnemann (forthcoming); and, briefly, in Minchin (2015, 205 n. 13); Schein (2015c, 156). The *Iliad* proves a potent resource for thinking about memorial and Vietnam in the work of Tatum (1996), (2003).

family, like the γόος.⁶⁸ Clearly, private interests can also disrupt the communal remembrance evoked at national monuments. However, the local setting of the village memorial effectively stages this tension between public commemoration and private grief, as the dead's next of kin live alongside the monument that commemorates their singular grief in tension with the loss of the many in the community.

Oswald does not resolve the longstanding tension between commemoration for the many and the singularity of loss, and the ethical dilemma – for whom do you grieve and why? – hangs over her audience throughout the poem. The opening catalogue printed in the poem similarly confronts the reader with the effect of their reading practice as active participants in the commemoration of the soldiers. There is a temptation to read the opening list of names as a straightforward exercise in redressing the discriminations of both the epic poet and the bereaved. After all, each name is capitalized and printed on a separate line, redolent of the memorial to which Oswald refers in performance. However, reading the list in its entirety is a long and not particularly inspiring task – it is decidedly anti-poetic, especially in comparison to the biographies - but scanning its contents for familiar names seems contrary to the spirit of memorial. Like the underlying nuance of her reference to the village memorial, Oswald includes this opening list of names to test, rather than simply to reaffirm, the merits or possibilities of wholesale, uniform commemoration.

⁶⁸ The γόος can shine light on life away from the battlefield to add supplementary, domestic details to the epic, see e.g., 19.287-300, 24.767-72. Discussed in Murnaghan (1999, 207).

The response of the women to Patroclus' death in the epic may offer some kind of solution for Oswald, in which mourning appears as a composite act that balances ritual, public expression with private grief. Briseis delivers the γόος and the women answer her speech with a formal refrain that belies their personal reflections: 'So she spoke, crying, and the women in response mourned/ for the sake of Patroclus, but each mourned for their own cares' (19.301-2).⁶⁹ Mark Edwards's commentary suggests that Briseis' γόος models collective grief, so that when Homer describes the civic response to Hector's death that follows Helen's γόος at the end of the poem, the external audience can imagine the concurrent private griefs being remembered: 'So she spoke crying, and in response all the great multitude moaned' (24.776).⁷⁰ Homer's treatment of Hector therefore recalls the Unknown Soldier in modern commemoration, in which the public mourning ritual for Hector at 24.707-804 functions as a forum for the griefs of all the Trojans. However, this conciliatory reading of Briseis' lament and the women's response is not the only possible interpretation. Sheila Murnaghan suggests instead that the women's attendance to their private griefs at the lament for Patroclus is another way in which women's γόος-speech rejects the communal, monolithic response anticipated by epic:

'Far from drawing listeners' attention to the glorious achievements of their subjects, these laments inspire them to think of their own sorrows, fragmenting their audiences into isolated and private mourners'.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Easterling (1991, 146).

⁷⁰ M. W. Edwards (1991, 217).

⁷¹ Murnaghan (1999, 206). For further discussion, see also Dué (2006, 44); Nagy (2010, 22).

Oswald reflects on the interplay between speech and silence in modern commemoration in which periods of public speech, such as when lists of the dead are read aloud, are punctuated by set periods of silence for private contemplation.⁷² Two of Oswald's similes associate cessation, silence, and slowing down – acts that interrupt the march of the epic narrative – with women's creativity.⁷³ The first simile answers the biography of Acamas (p. 25; cf. 6.5-11) and the deaths of eighteen men (p. 25; cf. 5.608-849), which is a version of a simile that likens the inability of the armies to gain the advantage to the equally weighted wool of an old woman (12.433-35). Oswald adds two lines to her loose translation of the simile that introduce a sense of finality to the woman's actions that the original lacks: 'And then she stops/ She soothes the scales to a standstill' (p. 26). In Homer, the battlefield stalemate that the simile describes is on the cusp of being broken, as Zeus intervenes to help the Trojans breach the Greek walls. However, their supremacy will be short-lived, and the image of the scales seems to anticipate Zeus' scales at 22.209-13 and the death of Hector. Oswald's stop at the end of the simile overrides the intervention of Zeus and the oscillations of battlefield fortunes to call attention to the commemorative retrospect of her poem's voice: in which the deaths of the poem's subjects overwhelm their fleeting moments of ascendancy.

⁷² My focus on silence and the reader/mourner extends Harrop's performance analysis, which focuses on Oswald's silences and the figurative and literal silencing of mortally wounded soldiers for whom injury often involves some sort of impairment to the mouth or throat, see Harrop (2013).

⁷³ For creativity and the γόος, see Easterling (1991, 147); Murnaghan (1999, 207); Weinbaum (2001). For male heroism and Homer's craft similes, see Rood (2008).

The second simile follows the biography of the horse Pedasus (p. 60; cf. 16.466-469) and a list of twenty-two soldiers (p. 59; 16.306-465), which likens the speed with which Paiëon heals Ares' battle injury to the effect of fig juice on milk (5.902-4). Oswald thus recovers a simile that describes healing for the commemoration of the dead and changes the stirrer to a woman. While the Homeric simile emphasizes the speed at which the juice causes the milk to thicken and curdle, Oswald's version elicits the opposite effect:

Like a drop of fig juice squeezed into milk
Mysteriously thickens it
As if a drip of lethargy
Falls into the bucket
And the woman stirring
Stops (p. 60)

Oswald turns to the consequence of the thickening for the woman who stirs the mixture, whose stirring motion reaches a standstill as the curdling milk makes the mixture more difficult and tiring to work ('a drip of lethargy'). The final word 'Stop' is Oswald's innovation and, as with the wool simile, shifts the emphasis from motion to its pause. The stops of these two similes intervene in the rhythm of the battlefield narrative to shift attention from the cut and thrust of battle to reflect on the lives that come to an end in the melee.

Both similes are repositioned in *Memorial* to respond to a biography that follows a long list of dead soldiers. While lists speed up the pace of the poem, reflecting phases of battle in which deaths occur in quick succession, similes, especially in their repetition, slow it back down.⁷⁴ The passages from which Oswald's battle lists are taken in the epic are especially

⁷⁴ Page references for lists in *Memorial* and the section of the *Iliad* to which they correspond: (p.25; cf. 5.608-849), (p.28; cf. 6.29-36), (p.32; cf. 8.274-276), (p.40; cf. 11.301-322), (p.42; cf. 11.422-423), (p.43; cf. 11.489-578), (p.45; cf. 12.187-193), (pp.49-50; cf. 13.506-609), (p.55; cf.

inimical to memorial in terms of their pacing. The mass of names and the toing and froing of battle means that attention flits from soldier to soldier without the space for reflection and individual names are too easily lost to memory and overshadowed by heroic narrative arcs. The explicit ‘stops’ of Oswald’s poem reflect the studied attention of her reception practice and evoke the role of quiet contemplation in modern commemoration. Oswald goes so far as to re-gender the stirrer from the epic simile so that both her models for commemorative contemplation that resist the heady unfolding of the battle narrative are women.

The stops of the similes could also evoke the cessation of remembrance and recall the eventual satiety of and turn from grief that is expected in the epic (when the griever has ‘taken his fill of lamentation’/‘γόοιο τετάρπετο’, e.g. 24.513). However, Oswald layers the grief of Laotoë for Lycaon, whom Achilles kills, over the grief of Achilles for Patroclus from epic. She does this to contrast the time-limit of male grief with unending female, especially

15.332-342), (p.56; cf. 15.515-524), (p.59; cf. 16.306-465), (p.64; cf. 17.288-345), (p.68; cf. 20.457-462). These lists may reflect deaths that come in quick succession in the *Iliad* (e.g., p.42 corresponds to 11.422-423), or they may be the product of condensing a slightly more drawn out battle sequence (e.g., p.43 corresponds to 11.489-578). At times, the lists include individual warriors for whom there is enough material in the epic for a biography (e.g., HELENUS at p.25, corresponds to 5.707-710). Overall, however, warriors without biographies are among the most marginal to the epic narrative, appearing in passages in which the body count escalates, and the epic voice only lists their names, the names of their killers, and how they are killed.

maternal, grief.⁷⁵ Oswald pairs Lycaon's biography with the simile that describes Achilles' excessive grief for Patroclus:

Like when a lion comes back to a forest's secret rooms
Too late
The hunter has taken her children
She follows the tracks of that man
Into every valley
With her heart's darkness
Growing darker (p. 69; cf. 18.316-22)

Oswald re-genders the 'full-maned (εὐγένειος) lion' of Homer's simile to a lioness to transfer Achilles' feelings of bitter anger (δριμύς χόλος, 18.322) that drive his revenge to Laothoë. The lion tracks the man in many valleys in Homer ('πολλὰ δέ τ' ἄγκε', 18.321), which is extended to 'every valley' in Oswald. Achilles' speech that follows the epic simile sets out how his revenge is fixated upon a particular goal – finding and killing Hector (18.334-37) – Oswald's female recasting of the simile suggests escalation and irresolution ('Growing darker').

3.2.1 Women and Anti-Monumental Remembrance

In contrast to the epic's monumentality (2.484-93, 7.78-90), the personal, spontaneous laments that characterize the γόος are anti-monumental and undermine the κλέα ἀνδρῶν. As a 'massive, univocal, and celebratory form of high art' they reveal 'epic's more dialogic,

⁷⁵ For mothers, mourning, and wrath, see especially Loraux (1998, 43-56); Slatkin (1991, 85-106); also Murnaghan (1992). For Achilles' excessive, even feminine, mourning, see Derderian (2001, 55-57); Dué (2005); Monsacré (1984). For Achilles' reconciliation with Priam and 'reintegration into the human community', see D. F. Wilson (2002, 132-33), also Redfield (1975, 217-22).

polyvocal dimensions' (similar to how the village memorials' self-consciously local response to war fragments the national, patriotic narrative to focus on the significance of events for the community and/or individuals within the community).⁷⁶ Oswald engages with women's remembrance that not only re-visions commemoration as something anti-monumental but exposes the vulnerabilities of the epic's own monumental vision. However, the biography also calls attention to how rejecting war to fixate on peace can forget the dead.

Oswald frames the shared biography of seven men whom Achilles kills, beginning with Thersilochus, as part of the reminiscences of a group of women. These women are distinct in Oswald's poem as they remember dead men for whom they seem to share no personal connection:

Near the old fig tree the cart track
That runs downhill from windy Troy
Passes two springs where the Scamander
Bubbles over stones the first one warm
The second one ice cold even in summer
Town people come and wash their clothes
In those smooth rock-scooped pools
The river knows their voices
But Achilles killed so many men
Standing downstream with his rude sword
Hacking off heads until the water
Burst out in anger lifting up a ridge of waves
That now this whole river is a grave
Women at the washing pools
When they hear the river running
Crying like a human through its chambers
They remember THERSILOCHUS lying
In a quick-moving never-ending darkness
Between steep steps of echoing rocks

⁷⁶ Murnaghan (1999, 203).

They remember MYDON that frightened face
Falling out of sight under the tamarisks
And ASTYPYLOS blocking the channel
MNESIUS rolled in sand THRASIUS lost in silt
AINOIS turning somersaults in a black pool
Upside down among the licking fishes
And OPHELESTES his last breath silvering the surface
All that beautiful armour underwater
All those white bones sunk in mud
And instead of a burial a wagtail
Sipping the desecration unaware (p. 70-71)

The biography does not follow the usual chronology of Oswald's poem in relation to the epic narrative but treats its intertexts in reverse, so that Oswald looks back through the details of the war via the women who exist at an unspecified point after its completion.⁷⁷ The first seven lines replay the epic description of the route that Hector takes in his flight from Achilles, in which Homer reflects on how the river was used by women during peacetime (22.145-55). Oswald adapts Homer's nostalgia so that she returns to the location to describe how it reverts to its peacetime use some time after the war. Homer inserts this vignette of pre-war Troy to foreground what Hector is fighting for. In contrast, Oswald's reception, which sees a likeness of pre-war life resume sometime after the city's fall, seems to downplay the sense of Hector's death as an end point (for the epic and for the Trojans) and re-vision war and peace as impermanent and cyclical states.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ For Homer's treatment of time and memory, see the work of Bakker (1997), (2002), (2005), (2008); Gehrke (2010).

⁷⁸ I discuss Oswald's use of ring composition and her resistance to closure in relation to Hector's death and her final biography and simile pairing at (pp. 214-18). The discussion also includes a nod to Virgil, as Oswald's suggestion that another Troy will reemerge again in the future is distinctly Virgilian. For Hector's significance for preserving the Trojan way of life, see Kozak (2008, 157-58).

Oswald maintains that the resonance of war persists in the landscape to complicate the simulacrum of pre-war life. The echoes of men's cries are preserved in the river and the sounds that the women hear provoke them to remember, in what appears to replay the dynamics of epic composition and oral reception.⁷⁹ However, the connection that Oswald establishes between local place and memory, with a nod to the contemporary local monuments she evokes in performance, is emphatically anti-monumental.⁸⁰ Oswald displaces the grave-marker with the river ('this whole river is a grave'), which foregrounds the threat that underlies the epic's monumental discourse and the epic's association between the river(s) at Troy and the oblivion of soldiers. This occurs in relation to the Greeks' burial mound and wall whose destruction is guaranteed before they are even complete (7.433-63), and this event is imagined in the future (and recalled by the epic poet) at 12.10-35.⁸¹ Oswald's emphasis on

For closure and the *Iliad*, see discussion in Macleod (1982, 32-35); Murnaghan (1997). For closure in relation to the narrative structure of the epic, see Stanley (1993).

⁷⁹ See Nagy (1979, 16) for the relationship between κλέος and the verb κλύω ('I hear'). Nagy proposes the description of Demodocus' performance at *Odyssey* 8.72-82 as archetypal for the interplay between epic song, its performance, and κλέος. See also Goldhill (1991, 170).

⁸⁰ For place and memory in Homer, see Minchin (2008).

⁸¹ Treatments of the wall and its destruction in the secondary literature tend to fall into two camps. The first, typical of earlier readings and with an eye to oral poetics and the tradition, engages with the strange construction/destruction of the wall as a potential interpolation, see e.g., Tsagarakis (1969); M. L. West (1969). The second approach, to which later scholarship more often turns, looks at the relationship between the construction/destruction of the wall and the wider epic themes of death,

the river in the remembrance of the men in the biography ironically recalls the centrality of the river(s) to the destruction of the Greeks' monuments. Homer lists the eight rivers that make up the deluge that destroys the wall and mound (12.20-22), including the Scamander (who is the unnamed river in Oswald's verse), like an epic list of the dead that displaces the monument of the men that they destroy.⁸²

Oswald's river destroys and preserves the memories of the dead men and reimagines war remembrance as contingent and in a constant process of renewal. The renewal of peacetime Troy in Oswald's biography recalls Poseidon's restoration of the Hellespont to the time before the wall and its destruction ('and he turned the rivers to run/ along their beds, where before their lovely flowing water used to roll', 12.32-33). However, Poseidon wipes out all trace of the Greeks ever having existed (and this kind of annihilation is familiar to the rhetoric of soldiers who fear this fate for themselves and/or hope to enact it on their enemies, cf. 6.59-60). Oswald's biography replays the tension between restoration and destruction,

commemoration, and the epic tradition, see e.g., Ford (1992, 147-157); Lynn-George (1988, 261); Nagy (1979, 159); Redfield (1975, 167-169); Strauss Clay (2011, 58). J. I. Porter (2011) reflects on the wall as a potential historical object or fiction, whose existence tests the 'reality' of the Trojan War and the epic poem.

⁸² The streaming of the rivers also recalls the coming together of the Greek army at the catalogue (who are likened to a wave in a simile at 2.394-97). Moreover, as Ruth Scodel (1982, 37) notes, the passage in book twelve is the only point at which Homer refers to the heroes as 'the race of almost divine men' ('ἡμιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν', 12.23), as if to distinguish them from those who come later (including the audience of the poem).

recreating a pre-war scene for a post-war reality. Oswald fixates on her excavation of these submerged dead men and their armour, which recall the shields, helmets, and men that the epic poet describes submerged by the rivers at 12.22-23.⁸³ The artefacts undermine the men's obliteration and recast the epic poem's re-performance as excavation, in which, at each iteration, Homer recycles the construction/destruction of the wall.⁸⁴

In Oswald's hands, the connection that Poseidon makes between the destruction of the wall (and the memory of the Greeks), the restoration of peacetime, and forgetting takes on a moral inflection. If peace is the priority, and the cessation of war means a reversion back to the time before war broke out, then how do we remember the dead who seem to fall, like the

⁸³ The biography also includes a brief, four-line reference to Achilles' fight with the Scamander. The river characterizes its assault on Achilles, which anticipates the kind of destructive force that the rivers will unleash at the Greek wall, as a kind of mock-burial or anti-burial and imagines Achilles dead and underwater:

'... and his own body
I will wrap around with sand spreading more silted rubble than can be counted,
rubble in abundance, nor will the Achaeans know how to pick out
his bones; so much silt I will cover over him.
His grave-mound will have been built; he will have no need of mound building,
when the Achaeans perform his funeral rites.' (21.318-23)

Achilles escapes the Scamander but the men in Oswald's biography do not escape Achilles and so it seems fitting that the site that the river imagines for Achilles' grave becomes those of men Achilles kills.

⁸⁴ See J. I. Porter (2011) for the wall and the epic as something that can be 'made' and 'unmade'.

title of David Jones's poem suggests, in the parenthesis? Oswald's biography suggests that the act of commemoration will inevitably be unsuccessful to a degree: soldiers will be forgotten. For instance, the men whom the biography commemorates are not the ones who run and cry from Achilles (these named men run but do not cry at 21.206). The cries that the river remembers more likely refer to the entire group of nameless Trojans who fall in the river crying at the start of *Iliad* 21, where the 'banks echoes loud all round' (21.10). Perhaps the armour and bones that help Oswald to recall the men in her biography belong to those among the anonymous multitude too? Moreover, the women's remembrance of the way in which the men die is wrong. Oswald's descriptions of these named men in death (e.g. 'MYDON...Falling out of sight under the tamarisks') bear no relation to how they die in the epic. Oswald's sequence is actually lifted from the reactions of the eels and the fish to the burning river as the bodies of nameless Trojans burn around them (21.343-55). The ignorance of the wagtail that appears in the closing line of Oswald's biography sums up the omissions and mistakes that undermine the women's remembrance. Oswald takes the prospect of forgetfulness in peace to its conclusion: the wagtail does not just not remember the men, he is completely unaware of them. Oswald herself even takes part in erasure, as the soldier Asteropaios, whose death follows Lycaon and so should appear alongside those in the biography under discussion, is left out completely (cf. 21.136-208).

3.3 From Troy to the Trenches

The *Odyssey's* remembrance of the events of the *Iliad* offers a framework for Oswald to involve her readers in the commemoration of the dead. The story of Odysseus' νόστος is punctuated by veterans who look back to the war at Troy in which they fought with grief (*Od.*

4.76-112, 8.83-92, 489-90, 521-31, 11.482-91, 24.27, 24.95-97), in direct contrast to the awed silence by which detached listeners enjoy the tales of the κλέα ἀνδρῶν (e.g., 8.83-92).⁸⁵ In this section, I set out, firstly, how Oswald directly recalls the anti-war rhetoric that surrounds contemporary reception of the First World War in Britain to involve her audience/reader in the deaths in the poem. Oswald's poem is more complicated in its approach to war than earlier readings allow, and I also draw attention to how she engages with the pro-war sentiments that many soldiers expressed but that have become less palatable to the way the public remembers. The *Odyssey* also shows how interest in the war can fade over time once those involved gain some kind of resolution, so that even veterans can begin to enjoy war stories with detachment (cf. *Od.* 15.400-1 and, of course, Odysseus and Penelope once they are reunited at 23.300-43).⁸⁶ The second subsection will therefore examine Oswald's use of ring composition with her first and last biographies to present the events in her poem as unfinished and to maintain the urgency with which her readers engage with the deaths of the soldiers. *Memorial* ends with a series of similes that emphasize the irresolution of her memorial project, which encourage the reader to recognize the ubiquity of war from Troy to the Trenches and on to the present day and the failure of remembrance to stop further wars.

While Vandiver describes classical literature as offering soldier poets 'a field of expression "to think with"', Oswald's imagination goes the other way: translating the Homeric battlefield for her twenty-first century readership using familiar images of and

⁸⁵ For epic poetics and emotional engagement, see J. Griffin (1980, 103-43); Halliwell, (2012); De Jong (2001, 197-98); Peponi (2012, 33-69); J. I. Porter (2012).

⁸⁶ For forgetting painful memories in Homer, see Minchin (2006).

sentiments surrounding the First World War.⁸⁷ Oswald exploits crossovers between epic formula and modern terminology to draw equivalence between Homer's soldiers and the dead of the First World War. For instance, Oswald transforms the thrice repeated cries of cranes (κλαγγῆ, *Il.* 3.2, 3, 5) to the 'clang' of an airplane's wings (p. 45). She transposes the conditions at Troy to the muddy fields of the First World War so that Dolon's decapitated head 'rolled onto the mud' rather than the 'dust' (κονίησιν, 10.457), while victims of Odysseus, who are described 'falling in the dust' in Homer ('ἐν κονίησι πεσῶν', *Il.* 11.425), are reminded that 'this is the mud of Troy' (p. 43).

Oswald evokes female experience in the First World War by juxtaposing and re-gendering Homer's two bee similes that describe armies surging (pp, 78-79). She reworks the simile that likens the Myrmidons' re-entry to war to wasps or bees (p. 78; cf. 16.259-65). However, Oswald's wasps do not pour out of their nests to defend their children; instead, they stay at home and worry about them (recalling the concern of Virgil's bees at *A.* 1.430-36). Oswald does not label her wasps as female but the concern they show for their children aligns them with the focus on motherhood throughout the poem. Oswald takes the sting out of Homer's wasp simile to offer ironic comment on the way in which women's military contribution to the war effort has been underplayed (a point that can be underlined by the opportunity for punning with the Women Airforce Service Pilots of the Second World War).

Oswald departs further from the poem's usual depiction of women as mourners in the simile that is printed on the opposite page, as she refers to their complicity with militarisation

⁸⁷ Vandiver (2010, xi).

as workers in munitions factories. Oswald introduces women to her reception of the *Iliad*'s first extended simile, which likens the assembly of the Greek tribes to the movement of bees that stream out of a rock:

as when there goes a swarm of densely buzzing bees
streaming ever anew from a hollow rock,
in clusters like grapes, zipping towards spring flowers
in a throng on the wing, hither and thither –
... (*Il.* 2.87-93)

Like tribes of summer bees
Coming up from the underworld out of a crack in a rock
A billion factory women flying to their flower work
Being born and reborn and shimmering over the fields (p. 79)

The vignette in Oswald's simile takes place in summer, rather than spring, in a nod to the late July start of the First World War. Oswald appears to reveal the women as the updated tenor of her simile within the verse, however, the exaggeration, '*billion* factory women' (emphasis my own), and the description of their renewal in the final line means that Oswald's women, like Homer's bees (and Virgil's cf. *A.* 6.707-9, *G.* 4.206-9), are figurative. Oswald mixes literal and metaphoric language and meaning throughout the simile, as the 'flower work' of the women seems like a euphemism for the munitions that many women were employed to make and the direct contribution of their labour to the deaths of soldiers. Their work effectively makes flowers out of the men, recalling Gorgythion and his poppy simile, as well as the Flanders poppies that continue to symbolize the dead. From this perspective, Oswald's reticence to describe the women in non-figurative terms may point to the discomfort that

surrounds female involvement in militarism and how this clashes with cultural stereotypes that associate women with peace.⁸⁸

Oswald reframes the shared biography of Peisander and Hippolochus, whom she describes as '[t]wo dazed teenagers trotting into battle' (p. 37), using the concept of the 'Lost Generation', familiar shorthand to evoke the catastrophic, and unjustifiable, losses of the First World War:

Antimachus was bribed this is well known
...
He opened a door in the earth
And a whole generation entered
Including his own young sons (pp. 36-37; cf. 11.122-47)

Oswald infuses the bribery of Antimachus, mentioned in epic, with the issue of inter-generational conflict between the makers of war and those who die to carry it out. The idea that young men die for old is familiar to soldier poetry and anti-war responses to the First World War, such as Wilfred Owen's 'The Parable of the Old Man and the Young'.⁸⁹ Oswald's 'whole generation' recalls Owen's 'half the seed of Europe' and replays the post-war rhetoric that took the disillusionment of the likes of Owen as its model. Owen's verse examines Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac in the Bible, while Antimachus' greed offers to

⁸⁸ I examine the reception of the conceptual link between women and peace in the second chapter of this thesis.

⁸⁹ The poem is dated to July 1918, see Owen (1918). Vandiver (2010, 16) mentions the poem briefly as part of her wider exploration of the issue of inter-generational blame in war poetry and their reception, especially Rudyard Kipling's 'Common Form', discussed (pp. 15-21).

Oswald a classical archetype to make a comparable point. Owen's poem concludes with a couplet that shares with Oswald's biography the idea of young men dying for old, as well as a sense of the scale of loss that includes, but is far from limited to, the older man's progeny: 'But the old man would not so, but slew his son,/ And half the seed of Europe, one by one' (ll. 15-16).

Agastrophus' biography is a good example of how Oswald subtly inflects her translation of Homer with the ethos of glory, competition, and comradeship familiar to the classicism of the First World War to challenge ancient and modern militarism:

And the son of Tydeus with this spear wounded Agastrophos,
the soldier son of Paion, through the hip joint; his horses were not
at hand for his escape; great was his recklessness of spirit;
for his attendant was holding the horses a distance away, while he on foot
kept running through the front lines, until he lost his life. (*Il.* 11.338-42)

Typical competitive pride and madness
Made AGASTRAPHUS get out of his chariot
And walk and keep walking with no back-up
No friend no horse as far as the front line
Of course he was wounded he lay dying
Thinking if only if only the mind
Was more straightforward and efficient
What was I doing thinking I could walk
Through all that iron on my own

And us
Said THOON
ENNOMUS
CHERSIDAMAS (pp. 41-42)

Agastrophus appears for the first time at *Iliad* 11.338, only to die four lines later, making him a minor soldier for whom Oswald's excision of the epic narrative and 'excavation' has a profound effect. Homer describes the soldier's recklessness as a kind of madness (literally

‘madness of spirit’/ ‘ἀάσατο δὲ μέγα θυμῷ’ 11.340), and Oswald revisits and emphasizes the idea that Agastrophus is overcome with the urge to fight by some external force with her own reference to ‘madness’ that ‘[m]ade’ the soldier advance. Oswald explicitly situates Agastrophus in the First World War, as the darting, aggressive movements of the soldier in Homer (‘ἀντὰρ ὁ πεζῶς/ θῦνε διὰ προμάχων’, 11.341-42) become, for Oswald, the slow advance of the man who walks to the ‘front line’ rather than among the foremost fighters (προμάχων).⁹⁰

By stepping down from his chariot, Agastrophus appears to leave the epic scene and enter onto the battlefields of the First World War. In the epic, the death of Agastrophus underpins the hierarchy between soldiers, as his mistake is to think he can compete with better men. He moves to engage with soldiers who fight at the front (‘ἀντὰρ ὁ πεζῶς/ θῦνε διὰ προμάχων’, 11.341-42), as πρόμαχος is typically used to single out preeminent fighters. Oswald focuses instead on the widespread ‘madness’ that characterizes military ethos. He keeps walking before he is injured but no killer is named and instead the soldier reflects in the final line on the disembodied ‘iron’/weaponry as the cause of his death. The soldier’s sense of regret (‘if only if only’) – almost disbelief at his actions (‘What was I doing...’) – is tied up with his isolation. However, in striving for individual glory that leaves him friendless, Agastrophus finds fellowship among the dead. His dying self-deprecation is echoed by the chorus of Thoon, Ennomus, and Chersidamas (‘And us...’) whose deaths follow straight on

⁹⁰ The 2018 co-production of *Memorial* by Brink Productions and the Barbican Centre singled out this verse to make the link with the First World War explicit. The on-stage cast were joined during the recitation of the verse by three men dressed in British military uniforms from the First World War.

from Agastrophus thanks to Oswald's excision of almost one hundred lines (cf. 11.422-25). The sense of comradeship that underpins the pro-war rhetoric of the First World War is thus undone by but at the same time bolstered in the deaths that these men share.

Oswald expands on inferences in the epic narrative to reimagine interactions between soldiers. In her shared biography of Axylus and Calesius, which takes its cue from the Homeric description of the former man as a 'friend to mankind' ('φίλος δ' ἦν ἀνθρώποισι', 6.14), she elaborates on the relationship between the pair:

AXYLUS son of Teuthras
...
Everyone knew that plump man
Sitting on the step with his door wide open
He who so loved his friends
Died side by side with CALESIUS
In a daze of loneliness
Their conversation unfinished (p. 26; cf. 6.12-19)

Homer connects the man and his place of origin, citing Axylus' friendliness as a happy by-product of his house's location on a road ('πάντας γὰρ φιλέεσκεν ὁδῶ ἔπι οἰκία ναίων', 6.15). Oswald similarly uses Axylus' house to communicate his character but sharpens this sense of situatedness to imagine how the man's geniality plays out: he sits outside with 'his door wide open'. Oswald playfully recasts the epic's mention of Axylus' wealth ('ἄφνειός βιότοιο', 6.14) as euphemism – he becomes 'plump' – in a way that adds vividness to the domestic scene. The English translation of Rieu unintentionally nods to this possibility, rendering 'ἄφνειός βιότοιο' as 'man of substance' (compare with Fagles's 'man of means' and Alexander's 'rich man'). The biography draws on these references to Axylus' sociability to transform his relationship with Calesius, whom Homer simply describes as Axylus' attendant and charioteer (6.18-19). Having established the significance of place to Axylus'

characterization, Oswald situates the soldiers ‘side by side’ in death to infer their emotional closeness (and to connect the biography with those other moments in the epic in which Homer distinguishes individual corpses from the masses). Indeed, the enjambed lines describing Axylus’ love for his friends and the introduction of Calesius suggests that the latter soldier *is* one of those friends. Oswald intensifies their relationship in a way that is not wholly alien to the epic, as the term used to describe Calesius in relation to Axylus (θεράπων, 6.18) also describes Patroclus in relation to Achilles (16.653).⁹¹ The final two lines of the biography filter the men’s deaths through their friendship, so that death not only marks a sense of ending for each individual but also an end to connections between individuals. This draws on but softens the description of Axylus’ death in the epic, in which he is abandoned, save for Calesius (6.16-19). Oswald transforms the significance of Calesius remaining with Axylus from an act of service to one that exemplifies friendly loyalty.

The simile that follows Agastrophus’ obituary and the list of men evokes soldiers leaving home for the battlefield:

Like a fish in the wind
Jumps right out of its knowledge
And lands on the sand (p. 42; cf. 23.692-93)

In Homer, the simile describes injury not death as the fish is re-covered by water and the soldier is rescued from the melee by his companions. Oswald transforms the simile from benign to deadly to mirror the disillusionment of soldiers who leave home to go to war,

⁹¹ Autenrieth’s note on the word is clear that while θεράπων signifies a warrior who is inferior to his companion, he is not a servant (1891). ‘Comrade in arms’ seems to be the mostly widely accepted definition, e.g. in Kirk (1990, 157); Liddell & Scott (1940).

buoyed by the ‘madness’ of militarism, to discover horror and death in place of playful competition. Similarly, in a simile that follows a list of eleven names, Oswald weighs up the youthful exuberance of enlisting soldiers with their confusion on the battlefield, in which the reasons for fighting no longer seem so clear:

Like fawns running over a field
Suddenly give up and stand
Puzzled in heavy coats (p. 40; cf. 4.243-45)

In the *Iliad* the simile is part of a speech by Agamemnon, who berates the Greeks for their apparent reluctance to reengage in battle, likening them to ‘bewildered fawns’ who stop running out of exhaustion and thus for whom ‘there is no spirit of resistance in their hearts’ (4.243-5). Oswald’s fawns do not stop out of physical exhaustion like in Homer, so that the comparison shifts exclusively to how the stationary fawns communicate the soldiers’ mental states. The ‘heavy coats’ of the fawns recall the ‘great coats’ of the First World War and emphasize the extreme youth of soldiers in military uniform, something which post-war engagements with the First World War underline.⁹² Their puzzlement suggests not only disillusionment but confusion as to the purpose of the war. Oswald recasts the Homeric fawn simile, which describes cowardice, to commiserate with the dead soldiers and castigate the dubiousness of the war project.

3.3.1 The ‘Old Paradigm’

⁹² Hahnemann (forthcoming) suggests that Oswald exaggerates the youth of Homer’s soldiers in *Memorial*.

Vandiver identifies the limitations of the ‘old paradigm’ that treats war poets as monolithic in their disillusionment with the war, so that ‘war poetry is assumed, by definition, to be anti-war poetry’.⁹³ The secondary literature surrounding *Memorial* consistently recognizes Oswald’s resistance to what Elizabeth Minchin describes as ‘the narrative of victory’ and her refocus instead on to ‘the victim and his experience of death’.⁹⁴ However, what is missing from these accounts is a full appreciation of the complexity of Oswald’s poetic sensibility, which ranges in tone from serious and respectful, to caustic, bathetic, and playful.⁹⁵

Seth Schein complains that twentieth and twenty-first century receptions, including Oswald’s, demonstrate little engagement with the ‘joy’ (χαρμη) of battle and the balance that Homer presents between both the cost of warfare and its enticements.⁹⁶ On the contrary, the extraordinary richness of Oswald’s poetic voice does in fact present the pathos of lives lost alongside the excitement of young men for whom going to war means leaving behind lives of peaceful, and thoroughly unremarkable, domesticity. For instance, there are Isos and Antiphos

⁹³ Vandiver (2010, 2). With the ‘old paradigm’, Vandiver evokes the ‘old Lie’ of Wilfred Owen in ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’. However, while Wilfred’s ‘old Lie’ was in the service of militarism, Vandiver’s ‘old paradigm’ obscures the persistence of militarism across soldier poetry.

⁹⁴ Minchin (2015, 209). See also Hahnemann (2014), (forthcoming), and most recently, Pache (2018).

⁹⁵ For my discussion of Oswald’s comic-seriousness in relation to Hector, see (pp. 144-47).

⁹⁶ Schein (2015c).

who ‘didn’t want to farm any more’ (p. 36) and Iphidamas, ‘a big ambitious boy’, who Homer describes immediately leaving for war after his wedding (11.227-28) in an act that Oswald interprets as evidence of restlessness: ‘She said even on his wedding night/ He seemed to be wearing armour/ He kept yawning and looking far away’ (p. 38). The range of responses to war evidenced in Oswald’s biographies make sense from the context of the First World War: just as the experience of the Somme did not precipitate a blanket response of disillusionment among the soldiers, Oswald’s reception of Homeric soldiers is similarly multivalent.

Oswald’s attentiveness to the joy of battle is important precisely because of the role of Classics in the legitimization of the war project and the glamorization of soldiering. With the biography of Isos and Antiphos, Oswald’s verse suggests that the reception of Homeric poetry is vulnerable to misappropriation, especially in its use to endorse war:⁹⁷

That was ISOS and ANTIPHOS
...
Those were the two boys Achilles kidnapped
Among the wolves and buzzards of Mount Ida
They said it was wonderful to be tied in creepers
And taken to the other side by that gypsy
They said he could talk to horses
They said his mother was a seal or mermaid
And he introduced them to Agamemnon
The great king of Mycenae poor fools
Who came home proud as astronauts
And didn’t want to farm any more
And went riding out to be killed by Agamemnon (pp. 35-36; cf. 11.101-21)

Homer does not detail what happens to the soldiers in between being ransomed and going back to war, so Oswald’s poem fills in the gaps but struggles to rationalize what appears

⁹⁷ See (p. 159 n. 10) above and the poet’s remarks in Crown and Oswald (2011).

entirely irrational. The soldiers respond to Achilles as a heroic, iconic figure, but they mix up the details of his mythology, and look back on their brush with death with delight ('it was wonderful to be tied in creepers'). The boys' enthusiasm for war, after having ransomed their lives, is pitiful and exasperating to the poet, who makes a rare introjection with 'poor fools'. The description of the pair 'proud as astronauts' is alarmingly anachronistic for the First World War let alone Troy and the hint at Argonauts calls attention to the appeal of war as expedition and adventure. The out-of-place-ness of the reference calls attention to the ubiquity of war across the millennia and the contortions to which later readers subject Homer's poem to align its description of warfare with militarism.

Oswald uses the first biography-simile pairing in her poem to test the 'old paradigm' and set the enthusiasm for and repulsion from war in conflict. Oswald opens her poem by matching Protesilaus, who died at the beginning of the war, with a simile from the final year of the battle, and contrasts the named soldier's eagerness to fight (he 'hurried to darkness') with the unnamed multitude who want to go home:

The first to die was PROTESILAUS
A focused man who hurried to darkness
With forty black ships leaving the land behind
Men sailed with him from those flower-lit cliffs
...
He died mid-air jumping to be first ashore
There was his house half-built
His wife rushed out clawing her face
Podarcus his altogether less impressive brother
Took over command but that was long ago
He's been in the black earth now for thousands of years (p. 13; cf. 2.695-710)

Like a wind-murmur
Begins a rumour of waves
One long note getting louder
The water breathes a deep sigh

Like a land-ripple
When the west wind runs through a field
Wishing and searching
Nothing to be found
The corn-stalks shake their green heads (pp.14; cf. 2.144-148)

Oswald foregrounds the epic's remembrance of Protesilaus in his biography to contrast with the multitude who are forgotten. Protesilaus is the only soldier from the earlier phase of war whose memory survives the passage of time, which Oswald makes literal with her metaphor of excavation, so that Protesilaus is recovered after 'thousands of years' in the 'black earth'. Protesilaus is therefore a figure who calls attention to the prospect of being forgotten rather than remembered, through temporal, as well as physical, obliteration (in the epic, the name of Protesilaus' killer is lost and he is simply 'a Dardanian man', 2.701).⁹⁸

Oswald's first simile, which recalls the movement of soldiers enthused at the prospect of returning home, refers to men who are among the forgotten. The 'rumour of waves' and 'the corn-stalks [that] shake their green heads' recall Agamemnon's deception of the men, and Oswald emphasizes the pitiful nature of the men's misplaced desire for homecoming ('Wishing and searching/ Nothing to be found').⁹⁹ The excited cries that the men make as they urge each other to drag the ships back to the sea (*Il.* 1.153) seem to live on, memorialized in

⁹⁸ Oswald's poem includes more explicit reminders of men who die without proper record, their bodies and names lost to excavation (just as the epic proem recalls the bodies of unburied, anonymous men, 1.4-5). Oswald tellingly describes the murders of twelve men during the plot to steal Rhesus' horses as moments of un-naming: 'Twelve anonymous Thracians were killed in their sleep/ Before their ghosts had time to keep hold of their names' (p. 34; cf. 10.488).

⁹⁹ For Agamemnon's test, see E. F. Cook (2003); R. Knox and Russo (1989).

the echoes of the waves (something that Oswald revisits with the Scamander, pp. 70-71).

Oswald's water 'sighs', which recasts the violence of the Homeric simile, with its 'towering waves' (κύματα μακρὰ) and wind that rushes in 'fury' (λάβρος), as melancholic.

Homer's wave simile underlines the distinction between the masses, for whom the call of home becomes overwhelming, and the few, who are aware of Agamemnon's plan ('Thus he spoke and stirred the heart in every breast/ among the multitude, all who had not heard his plan', 2.142-43). The warriors who are conscious of the ruse, and therefore not described in the simile, are precisely those warriors for whom staying at Troy means winning κλέος.¹⁰⁰ Oswald's reference to the 'rumour of waves' emphasizes the division between the many and the few in its allusion to the catalogue and the 'rumour' of κλέος (2.486). Oswald connects the anonymous multitude to Protesilaus, who is named in the catalogue, to underline the disparity in epic commemoration and emphasize the effect of ten years' war on the men. Protesilaus' biography appears alone on page thirteen of Oswald's poem, with the answering simile printed overleaf. The turn of the page necessitates a pause for the reader that sets Protesilaus apart to make literal the temporal distance between his death and what follows.

3.3.2 Remembering Protesilaus and Hector

¹⁰⁰ Homer underlines the futility of the men's longing for home, as another wave simile describes the reassembly of the soldiers and the dissipation of the promise of home (2.209-10), see Kirk (1985, 132).

Oswald depicts Protesilaus as someone whose death is at once one among many and at the same time singularly felt by those closest to him. Oswald borrows most of the material for the passage from Homer but repackages the details to focus attention on to the soldier's wife. The detail of the 'half-built' (ἡμιτελής) house is an exact translation from the Greek, looking out from the battlefield to Protesilaus' domestic life that is prematurely curtailed by his death.¹⁰¹ Oswald adds intensity to the wife's grief by connecting it more directly to the unfinished house and describing her mourning in the process of performance: she rushes out of the house while lacerating her cheeks.¹⁰² The passage reproduces the detail of Protesilaus' inferior replacement Podarcus (cf. 2.707-8); however, Oswald omits the repeated references to the group mourning for their leader (2.703, 708-9). All focus thus falls on to the wife in mourning to create a powerful image of the suffering caused by war.

Oswald's verses for Protesilaus and Hector interact in ring composition so that women's grief begins and ends the sequences of biographies and lists that make up the poem.¹⁰³ The description of Protesilaus' wife rushing out in his biography looks forward to

¹⁰¹ The significance of the description of Protesilaus' house as 'half-built' in the epic (2.701), emphasizing the prematurity of his death and its resonance in the Latin tradition, is discussed in Lyne (2007, 212).

¹⁰² Compare with 2.700-1: 'and his wife, her cheeks torn in mourning, was left in Phylake,/ his house half built' ('τοῦ δὲ καὶ ἀμφιδρυφῆς ἄλοχος Φυλάκη ἐλέλειπτο/ καὶ δόμος ἡμιτελής').

¹⁰³ For ring composition in the *Iliad* and the role of grief in unravelling the finality of the heroic story that ends with the death of Hector, see Wofford (1992, 81-96). For Homer and closure, see Macleod (1982, 32-35); Murnaghan (1997); Stanley (1993).

the description of Hector ‘rushing in’, which is an action that Oswald focalizes through Andromache:

And HECTOR died like everyone else
...
He who was so boastful and anxious
And used to nip home deafened by weapons
To stand in full armour in the doorway
Like a man rushing in leaving his motorbike running
... (pp. 71-72)¹⁰⁴

The reference to Hector ‘rushing in’ appears to reverse Andromache’s reference at 22.459 to her husband’s tendency to rush forward (προθέω) in battle, or even to Hector’s boast at 6.445 that he must take his place among ‘the front rank of Trojans’, or how he rushes through the city gates in his return to war (‘ὡς εἰπὼν πολέων ἐξέσσυτο φαίδιμος Ἴκτωρ’, 7.1). The concordance between the biographies of Protesilaus and Hector evokes the symbiotic relationship between the battlefield and lament: men extend themselves in war in the pursuit of κλέος and women grieve for their loss. However, Oswald positions these episodes of rushing in reverse, as the woman rushes out to grieve before the man fights and dies. For Oswald, Protesilaus’ wife performs her grief in a way that animates the static image of Andromache in the biography. Indeed, in the epic, it is Andromache and not Protesilaus’ wife who effectively rushes out of the house in grief, as the former woman races from her room where she has been weaving to stand on the walls to see Hector’s body (22.460-64).¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ For Homeric focalization and Andromache, see Muich (2010-11).

¹⁰⁵ Andromache’s ‘rushing out’ (διέσσυτο) recalls Hector’s ‘rushing out’ (ἀπέσσυτο) to find her on the walls at 6.390, see C. Segal (1971, 48).

Oswald uses the women to foreground the suffering caused by war, however, she must address the fact that women's suffering in the epic, and Andromache's especially, is integral to men's remembrance and their pursuit of κλέος.¹⁰⁶ There are in fact three references to rushing in Oswald's poem that create a triptych of female grief and suffering and emphasize the interconnection between women's grief and men's glory. The third reference to 'rushing' appears in the simile that answers the biography of Scamandrius and is a translation of the simile at 16.7-10:

Like a mother is rushing
And a little girl clings to her clothes
Wants help wants arms
Won't let her walk
Like staring up at that tower of adulthood
Wanting to be light again
Wanting this whole problem of living to be lifted
And carried on a hip (p. 19)

In *Memorial*, the biography-simile pairing evokes Artemis' inability to save Scamandrius ('Now Artemis with all her arrows can't help him, p. 18), just as the original comparison seems to anticipate the failure of Achilles to prevent Patroclus' death.¹⁰⁷ There are two ways to interpret the lines in the epic: as a domestic scene in peacetime to contrast with Patroclus' resumption of battle, followed by Achilles, or as a reflection on the consequences of war for civilians.¹⁰⁸ In this second reading, the simile looks past Patroclus and then Achilles' re-entry to war, to the fall of Troy (and thus the death of Hector), in which the mother and daughter

¹⁰⁶ Murnaghan (1999, 212-17).

¹⁰⁷ Gaca (2008, 147).

¹⁰⁸ For the former reading, see Taplin (2001, 361); for the latter, see Gaca (2008).

represent defeated Trojans attempting to escape capture. The suffering of the mother and daughter recall Achilles' promise to inflict suffering on women as he wins glory in his own lament for Patroclus (18.121-25).¹⁰⁹ The latter reading makes most sense in the context of the poem and adds a complementary third perspective to the 'rushing' of the two biographies. The 'rushing' of the mother calls attention to the consequences of defeat in war for civilians and describes the fate that Andromache predicts for herself and Astyanax in her final lament (24.725-38).

There is a linguistic connection between the simile and the death of Hector in the epic, as the mother simile describes the woman's urgent motion as ἐσσύμενος, the same term that Paris uses to describe Hector's eagerness to return to battle at 6.518 (and anticipates his 'rushing' at 7.1). Oswald's version makes the causal connection between the simile's scene and the battlefield more overt. The description of the girl who '[w]ants help wants arms', relies on the homonym of 'arms' to look from the mother-daughter relationship to the exchanges of armour between Achilles, Patroclus, and Hector. The dual meaning of 'arms' evokes how the line between the battlefield and the domestic sphere collapses for the fallen city and, more specifically, how the movement of armour between these three men charts the trajectory of Troy's defeat. The simile anticipates how Andromache, just like Artemis in the corresponding biography and Achilles in the epic, will not be able to protect her child from the invading army once Hector dies and Troy falls.

¹⁰⁹ Murnaghan (1999, 211).

These references to ‘rushing’ culminate in the biography for Hector and describe the consequences of the soldier’s pursuit of glory. However, the three verses address the death of Hector and its consequences out of sequence, so that *Memorial* moves from the grieving wife to the fearful mother and child, and on to the death of the soldier. The confused timeline recasts Hector’s detached speech at 6.459-65, revisited in Oswald’s biography (‘I know what will happen’), from the perspective of Andromache to try to resist his ambitions for future κλέος via her suffering in the fall of Troy. The effect offers a compelling crossover with and recasting of the striking sequence at *Odyssey* 8.521-31, in which Odysseus responds to Demodocus’ retelling of his plot with the Trojan Horse with grief that Homer likens to that of a woman in a fallen city. Odysseus’ reaction is born out of his involvement in the narrative, underlined by the simile that imagines the consequences of Greek victory for the Trojans. The ‘rushing’ triptych in *Memorial* does something similar with regard to Hector and uses female suffering to reflect on how the soldier’s actions are memorialized by the wife’s suffering. Oswald takes this a step further, however, as the women through whom Hector’s ‘interest’ in the poem is focalized are in some way ciphers for his own wife. While Odysseus’ grief compromises and interrupts the κλέα ἀνδρῶν sung by Demodocus, Oswald’s poem, which mediates Hector through the γόος of Andromache, may end up realizing the soldier’s κλέος. Hector’s biography looks backwards to and through the suffering of Andromache, which recalls the tears that Hector imagines will inspire men to remember his glory (6.459-65). The ‘rushing’ ring composition foregrounds how grieving women, like Andromache, become monuments to their dead husbands (this is realized most fully in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, 3.294-355) and are trapped in a never-ending cycle of grief (cf. 6.462).

3.3.3 ‘We Will Remember Them’

While village memorials tally the names of the dead, they also enact a one-for-many approach to commemoration, as one monument stands in for absent bodies in marked contrast to, for instance, the vast fields of crosses or tombstones in Normandy. The final biography-simile pairing of *Memorial* considers the dynamic between name-tallying and one-for-many approaches to commemoration. In fact, the biography of Hector interacts with all the similes that follow, to reflect on the tension that Oswald's poem is all about: between the few, like Hector, who are remembered and the many who are unnamed and forgotten. The first eight of the final eleven similes that follow Hector's death all evoke scale, as the individual dead are transformed into amorphous collections of leaves (p. 73; cf. 6.146-49), chaff (p. 74; cf. 5.499-505), birds (p. 75; cf. 2.459-66), flies (p. 76; cf. 2.469-73), crickets (p. 77; cf. 3.150-53), wasps (p. 78; cf. 16.259-67), bees (p. 79; cf. 2.87-93), and locusts (p. 80; cf. 21.12-16).¹¹⁰ Three of these final similes describe the gathering of the Greek army in anticipation of the epic poet's elucidation of epic scale and discrimination in the catalogue.

...

He came back to her sightless
 Strengthless expressionless
 Asking only to be washed and burned
 And his bones wrapped in soft cloths
 And returned to the ground (p. 72)

Like leaves that could write a history of leaves
 The wind blows their ghosts to the ground
 And the spring breathes new leaf into the woods
 Thousands of names thousands of leaves
 When you remember them remember this
 Dead bodies are their lineage

¹¹⁰ For catalogue similes, see W. C. Scott (2005).

Which matter no more than leaves (p. 73)

The final lines of Hector's biography reimagine his burial ritual at 24.783-98 from the perspective of the soldier's relationship with his wife. The focus is firmly on Hector's body rather than the construction of the funeral pyre (cf. 24.784-804), and the verse neglects the soldier's other family to concentrate instead on his wife, ignoring the role of the male mourners (his brothers and comrades specifically) who handle and bury Hector's bones (cf. 24.792-98). The primacy of the husband and wife relationship is a theme throughout Oswald's poem. For instance, she adapts the simile from 19.375-78 so that the shine of Achilles' shield that is likened to fires on land that make lonely sailors think of their friends now sees these men think of their wives (p. 64). Hector's biography details the personal, intimate care given to the dead body to recall the soldier's relationship with Andromache. Hector's dead body is not bathed at the ritual described in the epic, having already been anointed by Achilles and preserved by the gods, so the reference that Oswald makes to bathing must recall instead the bath that Andromache warms for Hector's return before she learns of his death (22.443-44).¹¹¹

The simile that responds to Hector's biography recontextualizes the simile at 6.146-49 as part of the 'many-mouths' topos at 2.488-89, to weigh the remembrance of the individual

¹¹¹ Weil (2005, 4) fixates on the bath that Hector will never enjoy and looks out from Hector to the rest of the fighters: 'Far from hot baths he was indeed, poor man. And not he alone. Nearly all the *Iliad* takes place far from hot baths'.

soldier against the lack of remembrance for the nameless multitude.¹¹² Glaucus' leaf simile underlines the tension of epic κλέος, setting the *telos* of one life from birth to death within the wider recurrence of the population ('As a generation of leaves, so is the generation of men'/ 'οἴη περ φύλλων γενεὴ τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν', 6.146). The blend of the epic simile and the topos strikes a pessimistic note regarding the ability of the poet to commemorate the dead. The deliberate slip in the simile's third line sees the English idiom 'breathe new life' rendered strange, contorted by the comparison in the epic simile (between leaves and life) so that 'life' appears as 'leaf'. The breakdown of the simile in reception, in which the replacement image (leaves) gives way to the thing it represents (lives), lays bare the mechanisms of poetic language and points to euphemism as a kind of evasion. The reluctance to speak of 'life' exposes the tension at the heart of Oswald's commemorative project between the undifferentiated 'thousands of names' and the individual 'dead bodies' that lie unburied and forgotten. The slip between 'life' and 'leaf' signals to an anxiety with regard to poetic remembrance, as these near homophones suggest a third word: λήθη ('forgetfulness'). The

¹¹² Ford (1992, 72-79). The epic simile and the invocation/catalogue offer complementary provocations to the heroic project of κλέος, as Lynn-George (1988, 199-200) examines the pessimism of Glaucus' simile in terms of catalogue-like scale and anonymity:

In this endless cycle of succession loss is of no lasting consequence. All are replaced in an indefinite multitude of generations where no particular dying generation or individual stands out in the midst of a general story of scattering which annuals all possibility of significant story. Numberless, all are namelessly the same.

double meaning of ‘matter’ in the final line – evoking significance and the (absent) material body – suggests remembrance without the dead body.¹¹³

The endless repetitions imagined in Glaucus’ simile underline the transience of each individual life and the finality of death set against the perpetuity of mankind, infecting heroic ambition with a sense of futility that is emphasized by the inability of the poet to recall the names of the multitude in the catalogue.¹¹⁴ Oswald uses the regeneration of largely forgotten soldiers to scrutinize the relationship between memorial and anti-war politics.¹¹⁵ Why, Oswald seems to ask, has memorialization failed to make a dent in the seeming inevitability of war? The ‘leaves who could write a history of leaves’ evoke the popular image of a generation of men who went to war well-versed in their literary ancestors in battle, in which the seeming inevitability of war is blamed in part on the relationship between militarism and

¹¹³ For the response to the decision not to repatriate dead bodies for burial in World War One, see Booth (1996, 21-49).

¹¹⁴ Wofford (1992, 63-66) links Glaucus’ simile with the catalogue similes: ‘As in the simile comparing the soldiers to leaves and flowers in the meadow beside Skamander, here the figural claim that human experience is analogous to natural cycles is undermined by the contrast between these images and the more deadly purpose of battle’.

¹¹⁵ I came across Margaret Postgate Cole’s ‘The Falling Leaves’ (1915) too late for inclusion in this thesis. However, she is a woman writing during the First World War who layers her reception of Homer’s leaf simile with an equally Homeric reference to snowflakes. So the leaves that fall (like men) fall ‘like snowflakes wiping out the noon’ (l. 6). Snow coverage is evoked by Homer at 12.278-86 to describe the missiles launched by both sides. For the poem, see Reilly (1981, 21).

classicism.¹¹⁶ Charles Hamilton Sorley's untitled sonnet emerges as an intertext for Oswald's biography-simile pairing, which reimagines her method of excavation as *catabasis* and suggests another female archetype for Oswald's poetics in the Sybil.¹¹⁷

When you see millions of the mouthless dead
Across your dreams in pale battalions go,
Say not soft things as other men have said,
That you'll remember. For you need not so,
Give them not praise. For, deaf, how should they know
It is not curses heaped on each gashed head?
Nor tears. Their blind eyes see not your tears flow.
Nor honour. It is easy to be dead.
Say only this, 'They are dead'. Then add thereto,
'Yet many a better one has died before'.
Then, scanning all the o'ercrowded mass, should you
Perceive one face that you loved heretofore,
It is a spook. None wears the face you knew.
Great death has made all his forevermore.¹¹⁸

Vandiver situates the classical resonances of the poem in Odysseus' *nekyia* in book 11 of the *Odyssey* and Achilles' reply to Lycaon (*Il.* 21.106-13), as the soldier poet takes a devastatingly unsentimental approach to death and commemoration.¹¹⁹ The poet voice

¹¹⁶ Oswald cautions the reader to rethink what Taplin (2007, 188 n. 26) refers to as the 'organic metaphor for the role of Homer's poetry in literary regeneration' (which he attributes to a question from Emily Greenwood) and the way the epic tradition has been used for, among other things, militarism (and the epic poet's sense of that tradition via moments like the simile at 6.146-49).

¹¹⁷ For receptions of the underworld in twentieth-century poetry, see Thurston (2010).

¹¹⁸ Printed in Vandiver (2010, 294).

¹¹⁹ Vandiver (2010, 292-97). For Homeric *nekyia* in Sorley's 'When you see millions of the mouthless dead' and Wilfred Owen's 'Strange Meeting', see Vandiver (1999).

disabuses its addressee of any hope for communion with the dead, describing ghosts that are not only insensible to, but indistinguishable for, the living.¹²⁰ In terms of commemoration, Sorley cautions against ‘soft’ words, praise, and honour, proposing instead a dispassionate approach to individual loss set against the scale of war.¹²¹

Like the ghosts and mourners of Sorley’s sonnet, Hector’s corpse is insensible to (‘sightless’), and indistinguishable for (‘expressionless’), Andromache.¹²² Oswald’s poem interacts with Sorley’s reception to put forward a critique of Hector’s militarism in epic. Her Hector is ‘deafened by weapons’ as if in recollection of the unsuccessful appeals made to him by family members to hold back from battle.¹²³ Oswald’s description of the dead body as

¹²⁰ Vandiver (2010, 294-96). Vandiver points out that unlike Anticlea at *Od.* 11.141-44 who is temporarily unreceptive to Odysseus, Sorley’s ghosts never regain the powers of recognition.

¹²¹ Vandiver (2010, 296-97).

¹²² On a number of occasions, Oswald describes the death of soldier in terms of forgetfulness: ‘Then PROMACHUS fell forgetting everything (p. 52) and ‘Now he doesn’t recognise himself/ He sees paler than EPIGEUS’ (p. 62). In the *Odyssey*, Homer’s Agamemnon similarly describes Achilles forgetting in death (*Od.* 24.39-40).

¹²³ Priam at *Il.* 22.38-76; Hecabe at 22.82-89. Andromache is the most emphatic, as she insists on Hector’s familial responsibility to her as mother, father, brother, and husband at 6.429-430. In Andromache’s final γόος for Hector, she addresses her son and describes the soldier’s conduct on the battlefield: ‘For your father was no gentle man in sad battle’ (‘οὐ γὰρ μείλιχος ἔσκε πατήρ τεὸς ἐν δαΐ λυγρῆ’, 24.739). The word she uses for ‘kind’ or ‘gentle’ - ‘μείλιχος’ – also appears in Briseis’ lament for Patroclus (19.300) as part of her domestic-focused praise for the soldier. By using a word with

‘sightless’ replays the treatment of Hector’s vision earlier in the biography, so that his commitment to battle is characterized as a kind of blindness:

And an image stared at him of himself dead
And her in Argos weaving for some foreign woman
He blinked and went back to work
Hector loved Andromache
But in the end he let her face slide from his mind (p. 72; cf. 6.456-65)

The passage characterizes Hector’s pursuit of κλέος as a turn from memory and sight.¹²⁴ The absence of Astyanax from the biography is peculiar, though the soldier’s turn from Andromache also recalls his son, whom Hector contemplates in silence when they are first reunited (6.404). Hecabe frames her pleas to Hector to avoid Achilles in terms of memory and sight, as she reveals her breast to her son to entreat him to remember their mother-son bond (22.82-84). The biography is thus critical of Hector’s return to war as his figurative blindness, realized literally in death, seems to evoke English translations of delusion in epic as a kind of metaphoric blindness (e.g., Agamemnon and the effect of Ate at 19.90-94).

Oswald’s strange reference to ‘ghosts’ in the second line of her simile is another point in the simile’s comparison in which the tenor (men) usurps the vehicle (leaves). And while the use of ‘ghosts’ rather than ‘men’ underlines the retrospection of the poem, it also replays the

domestic connotations in the γόος-speech and negating it to describe Hector on the battlefield, Andromache underlines how his return to battle was effectively a rejection of the domestic sphere.

¹²⁴ Oswald’s treatment of Hector contrasts with typically sympathetic readings of his foresight, e.g., Felson and Slatkin (2004, 100), which suggests that Hector prioritises ‘marital devotion over even filial or warrior bonds’. Oswald’s reception seems to recognize the distance between husband and wife that Zajko (2006a, 90) draws out.

classical reception of ‘the mouthless dead’ in Sorley’s sonnet and the episodes by which the hero encounters the dead in the epic tradition. Oswald even describes Hector’s death in terms that appear to anticipate this connection, as the spear punctures the soldier’s body, ‘Just exactly where a man’s soul sits/ Waiting for the mouth to open’ (p. 71; cf. 22.324-25).

Vandiver reads echoes of the ‘multitude’ (οἱ πολλοὶ, *Od.* 11.43) of incoherent ghosts in Odysseus’ *nekylia* in Sorley’s ‘millions of the mouthless dead’. However, the phrase may also engage with and reimagine the ‘many-mouthed’ topos familiar to the *Iliad*’s catalogue and Oswald’s reception. In this light, Sorley collapses the subject and object of the topos, so that the ineffective poet, who is unable to attend to the multitude, is replaced by ‘millions’ of dead who are similarly unable to communicate as they are ‘mouthless’. Sorley turns from the poet of the catalogue to the dead to anticipate only alienation for the mourner for whom their loved one is no longer distinguishable from the mass, resembling the overwhelming ‘[t]housands of names thousands of leaves’ in Oswald’s simile.¹²⁵

The near homophonic relationship between life and leaf, and the inference of λήθη, are textual clues to Oswald’s engagement with the *catabasis* as a metaphor for poetic remembrance. The gnomic final three lines of the simile seem to restage Sorley’s journey to the dead, as Oswald offers herself as a guide to readers on how to remember (and encounter) the war dead. Oswald fashions a persona reminiscent of the Sibyl, as the coupling of leaves

¹²⁵ In a similar vein, Elaine Scarry’s collection of essays on literature, embodiment, and representation evocatively describes the body count in war, which the list of names is an extension, as ‘notoriously insubstantial’, see Scarry (1988, viii).

with ghosts in the simile appears distinctly Virgilian (cf. A. 6.309-10).¹²⁶ Perhaps the slip in figurative language at ‘breathes new leaf into the woods’ could also reference ‘turning over a new leaf’: conflating Sibylline prophetic practice with English idiom. The simile’s reference to ‘[t]he wind that blows their ghosts to the ground’ may nod to the Sibyl’s erratic method of recording her prophecies (cf. A. 3.443-52) as well as the distinct temporal perspective of Oswald’s reception that collapses prescience with *catabasis*: while the Sibyl’s leaves communicate men’s fates, the contemporary poet looks back to ghosts and remembers.¹²⁷

From this perspective, *Memorial* itself could be considered another iteration in the reception tradition of the *catabasis*, with the poem’s opening list and the first biography’s reference to Protesilaus ‘under the black earth’ making literal Oswald’s figurative ‘descent’ to excavate the dead of the epic tradition. In the simile, her invocation – ‘When you remember them remember this’ – may even take Robert Laurence Binyon’s commitment to remembrance in ‘For the Fallen’ (‘We will remember them’, l. 16) as a reference point to

¹²⁶ For the potency of the Sibyl in *Aeneid* 6 for contemporary women’s writing, with reference to the work of Ruth Fainlight, see F. M. Cox (2011, 49-67). The spotlight that Oswald holds on the failure of anti-war poetry and remembrance to prevent future war makes her Sibyl similarly Cassandra-like, see F. M. Cox (2011, 52-53). However, Oswald seems to shoulder some of the blame for her failure to communicate effectively.

¹²⁷ The Sibyl reproduces the many-mouthed motif (Virgil, A. 6.625-27). Emily Gowers (2005, 182) reads Virgil’s engagement with the topos as an apt expression of indescribability: ‘even a witness who does have a hundred mouths would still be incapable of describing Hell’. For ‘shades’ and ‘shadows’ in Virgil, see Theodorakopoulos (1997).

orient her own, belated perspective.¹²⁸ Binyon's poem glorifies the war project and urges collective remembrance of the dead, and, almost one hundred years later, Oswald returns to the poet's exhortation to puzzle out how and to what purpose we continue to remember.

3.4 Conclusion

Oswald's gnomic final simile has several indistinct Homeric intertexts in its reference to a star (e.g., 6.295, 401, 19.381, 22.317-18, although I favour 8.555-59), but also recalls the final verse of Binyon's remembrance poem.¹²⁹ Oswald's poem ends, fittingly, with obfuscation and a sense of irresolution, as she prompts the reader to reflect both on the persistence of war across the millennia and on how the work of remembrance is always incomplete.

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain;
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain. (Binyon, ll. 25-28)

Like when god throws a star
And everyone looks up
To see that whip of sparks
And then it's gone (*Memorial* p. 84)

¹²⁸ Printed in Roberts (2006, 56-57). The poem was published in *The Times* newspaper on 21 September 1914.

¹²⁹ For the special connection between stars, Hector's family, and the fall of Troy, see Moulton (1977, 24-26). The poem could then look forward to the death of Astyanax 'beautiful like a star' (6.401).

Stars are apt vehicles for Oswald's (and Binyon's) retrospection, as they have already 'died' long before they are visible to the observer.¹³⁰ But while Binyon's stars endure, their reception, which is the focus of Oswald's simile, is fleeting. Looking at stars is used by Oswald a metaphor for the act of remembrance, and the brief attention which 'everyone' pays to the shooting star recalls the annual ceremonies of public remembrance and even the role of poems like Binyon's in public memorial. Oswald's star disappears ('it's gone'), and we imagine that everyone's attentiveness to the sky, or war, goes with it. Oswald's stark final simile, with the questions it poses for the possibility of memorial and pacifism, is especially pertinent from the perspective of the First World War to reflect on how the profusion of anti-war writing after the war, along with pacifist treatments of Homer, have failed to prevent further conflict.

Binyon's famous lines: 'At the going down of the sun and in the morning,/ We will remember them' (ll. 15-16) describe remembrance in perpetuity, while Oswald suggests instead that it is war that persists (which is a latent theme in Binyon's pro-war poem). Oswald's final simile refocuses attention on to the men of her poem, after the ring-composition between the first and last biographies foregrounded women's suffering. The final simile looks forward to the inevitable returns to war that characterize moments like the burial of Hector and the Armistice as temporary cessations in the longstanding history of conflict.¹³¹

¹³⁰ For the portentousness of stars in Homer, see Buxton (2004, 144).

¹³¹ Oswald makes no reference to Achilles' reconciliation with Priam and the return of Hector's body. In Hector's biography, she says simply that '[h]e came back' to Andromache. This adds to the poem's sense of irresolution, as it is possible to read the resolution that Homer's Achilles

The simile that most closely resembles Oswald's describes the fires in the Trojan camps as the soldiers prepare for the next day's assault on the Greek ships:

As when in heaven, stars about the bright moon
shine conspicuous when the upper air turns windless,
and all the peaks and jutting cliffs are shown,
and valleys, and from heaven about the boundless bright air is rent with light
and all the stars are seen, and the shepherd's heart rejoices. (8.555-59)

The vision that Homer's simile imagines for the shepherd is expansive ('all the stars are seen'), in contrast with the singular star of Oswald's reception that is seen by 'everyone'. The change in focalization seems to replay the limitations of wholesale commemoration that Oswald implies throughout the poem and the inescapable personal interests of the bereaved. Homer's simile concentrates on the present stillness, as the 'windless' air (νήνεμος) reveals the stars to the shepherd who is looking up at the sky rather than working. Oswald makes explicit that this pause in Homer is only temporary and reworks the scene to look beyond the moment of vision to emphasize the impermanence of remembrance and peace.¹³² And indeed,

and Priam reach as providing closure to the wrath of Achilles with which the epic began, see e.g., Kim (2000). See also DuBois (2012) for forgiveness and the tradition. For Achilles and Priam in reception, see Malouf (2010).

¹³² The lack of wind in the simile distinguishes it from the number of similes that use the effect of wind in various scenarios to evoke motion or to describe the soldiers readying themselves for battle, e.g., 2.144-46, 147-49, 4.422-46, 9.4-8, 11.297-8, 13.795-79. The absence of wind from the simile also contrasts with the similes that use wind to evoke the roar of men in battle (often accompanied by their surge forward), e.g., 14.398-99, 16.765-69. Oswald can thus recast the lack of wind in Homer's simile to evoke the silences in contemporary ceremonies of commemoration. For wind similes in Homer, see Purves (2010).

in a matter of lines at the opening of the next book, Homer returns to the war narrative with a simile in which the wind is very much back in operation and describes the panic of the Greeks as the Trojans advance (9.4-8).

Oswald returns to the simile through the ubiquity of Binyon's poem of remembrance to foreground the pathos of rereading Homer. Oswald sets the anticipation of the men in Homer against the knowledge of the epic audience that success for the Trojans will be short-lived and many of those whose camp fires are lit like stars will not live to enjoy another evening of peace. Her reception of the simile also returns to the theme of experience that marks her self-conscious approach to war writing and commemoration, and she appears to find a solution to her distance from the battlefield by giving the final words of her poem over to the soldiers for whom this simile in particular speaks across the millennia. Bernard Knox, in his introduction to Fagles's translation, describes the passage as the 'most marvellous lines in the *Iliad*':

These are surely the clearest hills, the most brilliant stars and the brightest fires in all of poetry, and everyone who has waited to go into battle knows how true the lines are, how clear and memorable and lovely is every detail of the landscape the soldier fears he may be seeing for the last time.¹³³

Oswald's vision of Troy is coloured by British memories of the First World War, as she invites comparison between the deaths of soldiers in Homer and the men who died at the Front. The poem calls attention to the legacy of the First World War and its significance in the material and cultural landscape to call attention to how and who we remember from Troy to the Trenches. Oswald examines the persistence of epic κλέος into the twentieth and twenty-

¹³³ B. Knox (1992, 30).

first centuries as the ideology that not only creates soldiers but dignifies soldiering, although she struggles to write herself out of the narrative of exceptionalism that persists from epic to lament. Oswald incites her reader to engage in women's antiphonal lament, to revisit the epic narrative with an eye to loss rather than glory. Her metaphor for reception – excavation – is anti-monumental, as she aligns her poetry with village memorials that stage the tension between public and private remembrance. And while soldier poets align themselves with or distinguish themselves from Homer's soldiers, Oswald and her readers become the women who mourn and remember.

4. ELIZABETH COOK'S *ACHILLES*

In this chapter, I examine the poetic novella *Achilles* (2001), Elizabeth Cook's meditation on the eponymous hero and the lives with which his own intersect from Skiros, to Troy, through Georgian London, and on to the twenty-first century.¹ One of the most remarkable things about the novella is its allusivity, as Cook's intertexts reach out from, as well as across, the work in such a way that its engagement with the *Iliad* is marked by a resistance to fidelity and to any conception of the epic as offering the definite word on Achilles.² Cook's engagement with the Romantic poet, John Keats, offers a scaffold on which to organize and interpret the novella's intertextuality. Keats's identification with the warrior, evidenced in his extant letters (cf. *Letters* 1.403-4), and sustained engagement with the classical tradition serve as catalysts for Cook's reassessment of Homer and the epic tradition.³

¹ All page references to Elizabeth Cook's *Achilles* will refer to the UK paperback edition published in 2002. All references to Homer's *Iliad* are from the translation of Alexander (2015) unless otherwise stated. All references to Homer's *Odyssey* are from the translation of Rieu (2003) unless otherwise stated. I follow Cook's spelling of names unless I am quoting directly from translation, in which case I follow the translator's spelling

² The archive collection held at the University of Leeds evidences Cook's exhaustive and wide-ranging reading of classical texts and their receptions. See Special Collections at Brotherton for the holding 'Elizabeth Cook correspondence and papers', which includes multiple drafts of the work dating from 1986 up to publication.

³ For Cook, Keats, and identification, see Zajko (2006b). For Keats's classicism, see Aske (1985); J. N. Cox (1998, 146-86); Roe (1997, 60-71); Webb (2004). For the reception of Keats's

Achilles was originally composed as a performance piece for one actor and won an Edinburgh Fringe Award in 2000 before its publication by Methuen a year later in the UK. While the initial performance script for *Achilles* presents the hero's life story, additions for publication look out from its central subject to examine the impact of Achilles' life and death from the perspectives of Thetis, Helen, Chiron, and finally, Keats. *Achilles* is split into three main chapters, with several sub-sections. The play-text used for performance makes up the first chapter 'Two Rivers' (pp. 3-58), with 'Gone' (pp. 61-91) and 'Relay' (pp. 95-107) completing the published text.⁴

classicism in Cook, see Zajko (2006b). All quotations from Keats's letters will refer to Hyder Edward Rollins's 1958 edition and will be cited *Letters* by volume and page. All quotations from Keats's poetry will refer by page number to Elizabeth Cook's 1990 edition for the Oxford Authors series.

⁴ 'Two Rivers' presents Achilles' life in panorama, beginning and ending with his death. The narrative turns from Odysseus' encounter with Achilles' ghost (again, titled 'Two Rivers', pp. 3-12), back to Peleus' rape or seduction of Thetis and Achilles' birth ('Quicken', pp. 13-20), on to Achilles' stay on Skiros ('His Girlhood', pp. 21-29), the Trojan War and the murder of Hector ('The Choice', pp. 30-40), the retrieval of Hector's body ('Father', pp. 41-49), and ends with Achilles' murder of Penthesilea and his death in the temple of Apollo ('Cut Off', pp. 50-58). The second section, 'Gone', presents the immediate aftermath of Achilles' death ('Urn', pp. 61-70), after which a description of the fall of Troy is interspersed with a character study of Helen ('Fire', pp. 71-82), before turning to Chiron ('Vulnerable', pp. 83-91).

The final section, 'Relay' (pp. 95-107), imaginatively maps points of contact between Achilles and Keats, bringing together excerpts from, and allusions to, Keats's letters and poetry with fictionalized set pieces that centre on two main sequences. The first imagines Keats's participation in a dissection during his medical training at Guy's Hospital, while the second describes the poet on an early autumnal walk that induces poetic inspiration and takes the reader through the composition of his poems 'To Autumn', 'Lines on seeing a lock of Milton's hair', and, albeit indirectly, 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer'. In these final twelve pages of the novella, Cook reveals her reading of Keats as the blueprint for her reading of Achilles, so that reading the novella back through 'Relay' illuminates Cook's classical reception.

This chapter will analyze how Cook reads Keats's reading and rewriting, as well as engaging more specifically with his classicism, to reframe the epic tradition in terms of materiality, corporeality, and eroticism.⁵ I set out how Keats's classical reception marries an appreciation of embodiment with an acute awareness of mortality and Cook uses these features of the poet's aesthetics to frame her reception of Achilles. Keats's theories of reading, writing, and gender, as well as the significance of gender to his reception, suggest ways for Cook, and her reader, to reimagine the epic warrior. Cook redirects Keats's concept of 'negative capability' (cf. *Letters* 1.193) to highlight moments of gender play within the

⁵ For Achilles as a focal point for eroticism on the Homeric battlefield, see MacCary (1982, 137-48); Monsacré (1984, 63-72).

literary tradition that surrounds Achilles, though not just during his ‘girlhood’ on Skiros but also, less obviously, at Troy.⁶

Keats’s personal and bodily response to the warrior, with whom he imagines ‘shouting in the Trenches’ (*Letters* 1.403-4), precipitates the elegiac tone of Cook’s work that laments the deaths of both the warrior and the poet.⁷ Cook’s engagement with Keats identifies two moments in the epic poem that are especially potent for her reading of Homer. The first is Achilles’ period of inactivity in the Myrmidon camp that Homer describes at 9.185-668 and the second is Achilles’ return to battle at 18.165-238, which is the site of Keats’s identification with the warrior ‘shouting in the Trenches’ (*Letters* 1.403-4, cf. *Il.* 18.228). These two passages set out the stark choice on offer to Achilles – longevity, domesticity, and anonymity, or death, fighting, and literary immortality (cf. 9.410-16) – that Cook refracts through the lens of Keats’s writing on mortality and literary ambition.

⁶ For negative capability, see especially Ou (2009). For Achilles, Skiros, and gender, see Barchiesi (2005, 47-48); Fantuzzi (2012, 21-97); Heslin (2005, 274-76); Sanna (2007). For the eroticism of epic, see Monsacré (1984). For a contrasting view, see Fantuzzi (2012), for whom later receptions introduce eroticism via retrospect.

⁷ Nagy (1979, 69-83) uses the etymology of Achilles to propose that grief for the hero is central to the plot of the *Iliad*: ‘We begin by taking note of the numerous morphological details in support of the proposition that *Akhil(l)eus* is derived from **Akhílāyos* ‘whose *lāós* has *ákhos*’ (p. 69-70). Nagy effectively proposes that the epic laments for Achilles within its κλέος-narrative.

Cook establishes Keats as both a model reader and proto-writer for her work and the earlier parts of the novella that deal more overtly with Achilles' biography are best approached from, and through, this perspective. This chapter includes a coda in which I offer a close reading from one of the sequences – the rape/seduction of Thetis (pp. 13-20) – to demonstrate the effect of Keats's poetics on the female reader of classical reception. Cook's reception of Ovid is an erotic tour-de-force that realizes Keats's interest in sensuality, the body, and gender and exemplifies the ambivalent and indeterminate classicism of Virginia Woolf. Cook's work makes the clearest case out of the contemporary receptions that I consider for reimagining an alternative to the model of resistance for women readers of classical literature, which is the central issue of this thesis.

4.1 Reading Keats Reading the Classics

The classicism of the Romantic era in Britain (c. 1770-1830) emerged out of the cultural (re)discovery of ancient Greece, the political upheaval of the French Revolution, and the later militarism of the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815).⁸ The publications of Johann

⁸ For Romanticism and Homeric reception, see Webb (2004). For Romanticism and classical reception more generally, see Graver (2010), though he does focus on Homeric scholarship at (pp. 73-80). For Romantic Hellenism, see Webb (1982), (1993). For the imaginative turn to ancient Greece from Rome as a reaction to the Napoleonic Wars, see Mizukoshi (2001, 72-75). For the impact of the Napoleonic Wars on Homeric reception, see Webb (2004, 290-302). For Rome and Romanticism, with a focus on Byron and Shelley, see Sachs (2010). The essays in Saunders et al. (2012) consider British and German Romanticism, as well as the influence of these movements of classicism on subsequent receptions.

Joachim Winckelmann and the Society of Dilettanti introduced Greek aesthetics to art and architecture, while the expeditions of the Society saw Greece become *the* destination for a generation of wealthy travellers on the Grand Tour.⁹ Closer to home, the middle classes could see and read about the ancient world through the display of antiquities in domestic museums, translations of classical texts, and classical compendia.¹⁰

Cook engages with Keats's classicism in several interconnected ways that will re-emerge throughout this chapter as key motifs for her own classical reception. Firstly, Keats envisions reading and writing poetry as activities that are experienced in and through the

⁹ Tsigakou (1981). See Stuart and Revett (1762-1794); Winckelmann (1765 [1755]).

Mizukoshi (2001, 72-73) describes how, in 1790, the Society of Dilettanti replaced the toga as the official dress of its president with the *χλαμύς*. For Greece as a destination in Romantic Hellenism, see Guthenke (2008).

¹⁰ See e.g., Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary* (1949) [1788]. Mizukoshi (2001, 71-73, 82). Richard Monckton Milnes's biography of Keats describes the poet's classical education, which featured Latin but not Greek. Instead, Keats accessed Greek mythology via works such as Lemprière's. 'The quantity of translations on paper he made during the last two years of his stay at Enfield was surprising. The twelve books of the "Aeneid" were a portion of it, but he does not appear to have been familiar with much other more difficult Latin poetry, nor to have ever commenced learning the Greek language. Yet Took's "Pantheon," Spence's "Polymetis," and Lemprière's "Dictionary," were sufficient fully to introduce his imagination to the enchanted world of old mythology...', see Milnes (2013a, 8) [1848]; see also C. C. Clarke and M. C. Clarke (2014, 124) [1878]. For more on Keats's classical education, see Roe (1997, 60-68). For the transformation of Greek studies in England across the eighteenth century, see M. L. Clarke (1945).

body, which amplifies the empiricism that characterizes Romantic approaches to the imagination more generally.¹¹ Secondly, Keats turns the endurance of ancient Greek art and literature into a trope with which to contrast sites of instability: especially identity, life/mortality, and literary ambition. Finally, Keats calls attention to his temporal, geographic, and linguistic distance from the ancient world to emphasize the transformative and transportative potential of literary identification.¹²

Some of the main themes of Keats's writing are crystallized in the poet's engagement with ancient Greece, including his poems 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer', 'On seeing the Elgin Marbles', and 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'. In 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' (written in October 1816, p. 32), Keats likens his experience of reading Homer in translation to Cortez's belated, though no less magnificent, vision of the Pacific:

...never did I breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific – and all his men
Look'd at each other with wild surmise -
Silent, upon a peak in Darien (ll. 7-14)¹³

¹¹ Graver (2010, 73) underlines the significance of the classical tradition for the emergence of a coherent Romantic movement and suggests that 'what we have called "Romanticism" is a kind of classicism, reinterpreted through the magnifying lens of empirical research'.

¹² See Zajko (2006b).

¹³ Keats's omission of Balboa from the sonnet, and the question of its deliberateness, is a source of contention, see Zajko (2006b, 65). Pollack-Pelzner (2007, 39) reads Balboa's omission by Keats as deliberate, following Rzepka (2002).

Keats presents the classical tradition as something that is made and remade through contact with later readers, in which the Elizabethan translator is one such transformative reader and rewriter who revivifies Homeric poetry for a generation who come even later. Keats describes his reading of Chapman as a discovery to rival Cortez's (displacing the translation of Alexander Pope with a work that predates it by over one hundred years), evoking the kind of archaeological and artistic finds (and thefts) that enlivened the Hellenism of the period.¹⁴

Keats develops his praise for second-hand classicism through an attentiveness to sound, as Chapman enlivens the epic text so that Keats's mediated access to Homer appears no less significant than the direct access of his Greek speaking peers. The sonnet turns from the poet's underwhelming experience of 'goodly states and kingdoms *seen*' (l. 2, emphasis my own) to the aural impact of the translation, which, in turn, revivifies Keats's vision (like the 'eagle eyes' of Cortez, l. 10) as he responds to Chapman's Homer in stunned silence.¹⁵ 'Relay', the chapter title, is one of the many metaphors that Cook uses to characterize Keats's enthusiastic reading practice, which makes a virtue of translation, in terms of communication

¹⁴ For the Romantic reception of Chapman and Pope, see Webb (2004, 303-10). For Pope and Homer, see Shankman (1983). For Pope, Homer, and masculinity, see C. D. Williams (1993).

¹⁵ In 'To Homer' (written 1818, pp. 224-25), Keats modestly compares his 'giant ignorance' (l. 1) with Homer's genius, revisiting the trope of the epic poet's blindness to explore his especial insight ('There is triple sight in blindness keen', l. 12).

and exchange.¹⁶ Cook reconfigures, even rehabilitates, the rhetoric of influence that casts a shadow over some receptions of Keats-the-reader. For instance, Martin Aske considers Keats's Greekless Hellenism as evidence of the poet's 'anxiety of influence', in which Keats's reliance on translation, classical compendia, or the paraphrase of his friends discloses his 'desire to mediate or even to displace his relation to antiquity through other voices, other texts, as though a naked encounter were too painful and importunate'.¹⁷

¹⁶ Cook's use of 'relay' intimates the process of textual transmission as something that is tactile and relational: 'Like a relay. The baton passed from hand to hand' (p. 104). The tension between sameness and difference in translation and reception is thrown into relief by Cook's focus on embodiment. Cook thinks deeply about continuity and change with the phrase 'the same and not the same' that she derives from one of Keats's letters in which he filters the lessons of his medical training through the language of religious veneration:

Our bodies every seven years are completely fresh-materiald ... We are the relict garments of a Saint: the same and not the same: for the careful Monks patch it and patch it: till there's not a thread of the original garment left and still they show it for St. Anthony's shirt. (p. 102; cf. *Letters* 2.208, which has 'fresh-material'd' in the original)

The relics are preserved by the monks, whose interventions transform them. Cook turns to the continuity/change of the human body:

Our bodies – not remade from scratch every seven years but constantly eroding and renewing until the renewal stops. (p. 102).

What does it mean for identity, and a sense of the self's continuity, if the cells of the body renew? And looking out to literature, what is Homeric about Homer, and, as Zajko (2006, 63-64 n. 37) asks, '[t]he question must then be posed of whether Cook's Achilles is Homer's?'.

¹⁷ Aske (1985, 34). In his introduction, Aske establishes Harold Bloom's reception of the poet as the model for his own reading of Keats's Hellenism, in which 'poetic influence is a psychic drama

Keats's desire to shout 'with Achilles' provides Cook with material to downplay the 'silent' awe that he describes in Chapman's translation and recalls instead the account of the poet's vigorous response to Chapman's Homer in the recollection of his friend Charles Cowden Clarke. The mythology that surrounds Keats's exposure to Chapman's translation emphasizes the poet's physical appreciation of literature, as the poet and his friend famously stayed up all night reading aloud from passages of the translation. The two men perform from certain passages, alternating between the roles of actor and audience, and Clarke recalls 'Keats shouting with delight as some passage of especial energy struck his imagination'.¹⁸ Keats's sonnet replays the dynamic between orality and auralty that Clarke describes, in which Keats's performance that night seems to have been inspired – even coached – by hearing the voice of Chapman through his translation ('I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold', l. 8).¹⁹ The sonnet evokes a kind of breathy exchange between Chapman and Keats:

between poet and precursor(s)' (p. 2). Bloom (1975, 144-59) includes Keats in his chapter on 'In the Shadow of Milton'. Cook directly addresses Keats as a reader of Milton, and both poets as readers of Homer, which I discuss at (pp. 278-79).

¹⁸ Houghton (1892, 65). See the recollections of Clarke in C. C. Clarke and M. L. Clarke (2014, 128-30).

¹⁹ A later letter reveals Keats's sustained interest in engaging with Homer second-hand, though this time, he asks his friend, John Hamilton Reynolds, to read aloud from the Greek for his pleasure:

I long to feast upon old Homer as we have upon Shakespeare and as I have lately upon Milton – if you understand Greek, and would read me passages, now and then explaining their

Chapman ‘speaks out’ just as Keats breathes in the ‘pure serene’ of epic in translation.²⁰ Cook emphasizes Keats’s response to literature in terms of embodiment and foregrounds Keats’s attraction to loudness as a measure of vitality: Chapman is ‘loud and bold’, Achilles is ‘shouting in the Trenches’, and Keats shouts too with delight and adds his voice to the clamour.²¹

Cook frames Keats-the-reader on the dialogic model of classical reception in which reading, writing, and rewriting are relationships of exchange. Zajko, whose work on *Achilles* is its only sustained published treatment thus far, examines both Cook and Keats as readers

meaning, ‘t would be, from mistiness, perhaps a greater luxury than reading the thing one’s self. (*Letters* 1.274).

Keats asks Reynolds to translate the content of the lines only sporadically (‘now and then’), in which the poet imagines that the most meaningful connection (‘greater luxury’) with Homer will emerge out of collaboration with Reynolds. Paterson (2012) reads Keats’s references to ‘mistiness’ across his writing as evidence of his conception of reading as a ‘social experience’ born out through collaboration in which, in this instance, the men work together ‘in the creation of a mediated version of Homer in which the essence of the original text is maintained’ (p. 261).

²⁰ Zajko (2006b, 63).

²¹ E. Cook (2013) also describes her creative method of reading aloud to test her writing: ‘if I’m writing anything – I speak it out loud as I’m writing. I test everything on the voice which is a bodily thing. It’s not a disembodied voice, it’s a physical voice and that’s how I can work out whether it sounds alright or not, or whether it works’.

and rewriters of Achilles who negotiate identification via corporeality.²² Keats's attentiveness to the body forms both a cornerstone of his poetics and is the means by which Cook imagines Keats, in Zajko's words, 'forging a connection with Achilles on the basis of a heightened sense of their shared corporeality'.²³ Zajko's exploration of Keats's identification with Chapman and Homer's Achilles crystallizes the significance of Cook's emphasis on Keats and embodiment to make the case for understanding Keats's reading in terms of exchange, interdependence, and classical reception.

Keats's 'On seeing the Elgin Marbles' (written March 1817, p. 56) contrasts the clarity of his poetic vision ('eagle eyes') in the sonnet to Chapman with his current state of impairment, as the endurance of the frieze reminds Keats of his own mortality:²⁴

²² Zajko (2006b). There is a marked lack of secondary literature on Cook's *Achilles*. There is an unpublished Ph.D chapter in MacDonald (2017, 52-107) and an unpublished MPhil dissertation in Toney (2012). See also Stoker (forthcoming). There are extremely brief nods to the novella in Hardwick (2004b, 345-47), (2011, 47). The reception of Cook's work is especially disappointing in contrast with the extensive critical reception of Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005), a work of similar length to *Achilles*, which also has a performance life. For a selection, see Braund (2012); Hauser (2018); Howells (2006); Richards (forthcoming); Rousselot (2011); Šlapkauskaitė (2007); Staels (2009); Suzuki (2007).

²³ Zajko (2006b, 49).

²⁴ For 'eagle eyes' and poetic capacity in Keats's poetry, see Pollack-Pelzner (2007, 41). In 1816, the so-called Elgin marbles went on display at the British Museum, responding to and enhancing contemporary interest in ancient Greece. Keats composed his own poem in response to the display, which he reportedly visited repeatedly, sitting 'for an hour or more at a time beside them rapt in

My spirit is too weak – mortality
Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep
And each imagined pinnacle and steep
Of godlike hardship tells me I must die
Like a sick eagle looking at the sky. (ll. 1-5)

Keats's inward-looking response to the Marbles overwhelms the content of the relief, as the poet does not describe their display in *ecphrasis* but focuses instead on how the Marbles make him feel. Keats returns to the material remains of ancient Greece in 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' (written 1819, pp. 288-89), in which the urn's funereal association reminds the poet of his own mortality, while the changelessness of the scenes that he describes contrasts with his own sense of life's transience (e.g., 'When old age shall this generation waste,/ Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe', ll. 46-47). However, the urn's permanence also precludes passion and intensity, as Keats describes the urn's enduring scenes in suspended animation, most notably fixing the lover in pursuit of his beloved so that his desire is never fulfilled: 'Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,/ Though winning near the goal' (ll. 17-18).

Cook redirects and enlivens the fossilized 'mad pursuit' on Keats's Grecian urn (l. 9, cf. ll. 11-20) to her reception of the epic battlefield. Cook chooses to reimagine Achilles and

revery', see Sharp (2013, 32). Keats's fixation on the marbles is described in Sharp's biography of Joseph Severn which gives a lovely sense of the significance of Keats's classical reception among his contemporaries. Sharp quotes from Severn to elucidate the effect of 'On First Reading Chapman's *Homer*': "I confess that at that moment he recited it to me I also felt like Cortez when he stared at the Pacific with a wild surmise, for the young poet in me realised the truth and beauty of *his* words" (p. 29-30). The influence of Keats on Severn described here illustrates the kind of communal chain of reception out of which Cook's relationships with Homer and Keats emerge.

Hector's showdown on the battlefield as if it was their first and last meeting (compare with *Il.* 9.352-55) to concentrate the intensity of their relationship to a single life and death struggle.²⁵ Cook's Achilles 'dreams' of Hector while on Skiros (p. 26) in anticipation of the epic simile that will describe Achilles' relentless pursuit. Cook's novella invites the reader to look back to Homer through Keats and, from this perspective, the epic simile appears Keatsian and erotic: 'As in a dream a man is not able to pursue one who alludes him,/ nor is the other able to escape, nor he to pursue' (22.199-200). Cook's reception of Achilles' return to battle (the 'shouting in the Trenches' moment to which Keats responds) is remarkably coy with regard to the visual spectacle of the warrior. Homer translates the visual impact of Achilles for the reader/audience with an extended simile that likens the flash of the halo that Athena gives to him in lieu of a helmet to the glare of beacons fires (18.207-14, 226-27, cf. Achilles' star similes at 22.25-32, 317-20). Cook nudges her reader to appreciate the remarkable nature of Achilles' appearance by foregrounding his effect on the Trojans who see him: 'Achilles of the loud war cry lets out his war cry ... The Trojans shit themselves' (p. 33).²⁶ When Achilles and

²⁵ This omission is deliberate. In her principal notebook for *Achilles*, Cook makes a note that: 'Achilles remembers fighting Hector by oak tree outside Troy – so they have fought before last fight'. See E. Cook (1986-2003).

²⁶ MacMasterson and Sypniewski (2009) read this kind of 'second' or mediated sight into Keats's Chapman sonnet. They examine Chapman's translation of *Il.* 24.477-84 (which corresponds to lines 24.419-31 in Chapman) to suggest that Chapman implies that the Myrmidons' wondrous look at 24.484 is in reaction to Achilles' wondrous look at Priam and is not in direct response to Priam himself. From this angle, the 'wild surmise' of the men in Keats's sonnet is in response to Cortez's vision.

Hector meet on the battlefield, Cook transforms Achilles' visual brilliance into somatic, and erotic, connection between the warriors who look at each other: 'They look at each other and, just for a moment, time stops, eyes blazing into eyes as each takes in the form and splendour of the other' (p. 38).²⁷ In fact, the only time the reader really gets to 'see' Achilles in the novella is when he is dressed as a girl on Skiros (pp. 21-22).

Keats's historically attested fellow-feeling for Achilles serves as the catalyst for Cook's re-reading of Homer. Cook begins 'Relay' by citing the relevant passage from Keats's letter, in which two of the main themes of Keats's poetics – embodiment and identification – emerge in his appreciation for Achilles.

'I feel more and more every day, as my imagination strengthens, that I do not live in this world alone but in a thousand worlds ... According to my state of mind I am with Achilles shouting in the Trenches or with Theocritus in the Vales of Sicily.' (p. 95; cf. *Letters* 1.403-4)

And standing there he shouted, and from the distance Pallas Athena
cried out too; unspeakable was the uproar he incited in the Trojans.
As when a clarion voice is heard, when cries the trumpet
of life-destroying enemies who surround a city,
such then was the clarion voice of Aeacides.

...

Three times across the ditch godlike Achilles cried his great war cry
and three times the Trojans and their illustrious allies were thrown in panic. (*Il.*
18.217-27)

Keats's poetic sensitivity to sound makes clear the attraction of Achilles 'shouting in the Trenches'. Achilles' shout in Homer is amplified by Athena and the response of the terrified

²⁷ This may even place the reader at a double-remove. The blazing eyes of the warriors could refer to the reflection of Achilles' breastplate (following Homer) in the eyes of Hector which is then reflected back to Achilles.

Trojans is so extreme – it is ‘unspeakable’ – that it escapes description by the epic poet (‘unspeakable was the roar he incited in the Trojans’/ ‘ἀτὰρ Τρώεσσι ἐν ἄσπετον ὄρσε κυδοιμόν’, 18.218). From her belated perspective, Cook reads another of the central themes of Keats’s poetry into his response to Achilles: mortality. Cook reflects on Keats’s enthusiasm for Achilles ‘shouting in the Trenches’, which is the moment that Achilles precipitates his death at Troy, as a prescient point of identification for the poet who will die in less than three years.

Cook inflects Keats’s response to Achilles’ return to war with Keats’s interest in reading, writing, and their effects on the body. Cook, through Keats, encourages the reader of Homer to reconsider Achilles’ return to war as less a break from and more an extension of his time in the Myrmidon camp, as both spaces serve to call attention to the warrior’s body. Cook layers the central moment of identification between Keats and Achilles ‘shouting in the Trenches’ with the echoes of the Myrmidon camp in *Iliad* 9 refracted through its later reception in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*.²⁸

*The large Achilles (on his prest-bed lolling)
From his deepe Chest, laughs out a lowd applause*

²⁸ See Shakespeare (2009) [1609]. For the reception of Shakespeare’s classicism in Romantic Britain, see Sachs (2010, 179-220). Cook gives us Keats reading Shakespeare reading Chaucer reading Boccaccio and so on, while, within Shakespeare’s play, Achilles, in this passage, appears second-hand, via the report of Ulysses. For Shakespeare’s engagement with Troy via the Latin tradition, see James (1997), especially (pp. 85-118) for Shakespeare’s re-politicization of Homer and critique of the warrior ethos in *Troilus and Cressida*. For Shakespeare’s reception of Rome more generally, see Miola (1983).

As Keats reads these lines he feels a little flood of satisfaction. He strokes them appreciatively with his thumb ...

'Ah,' he breathes in a low voice, 'that's nice.'

He triple scores the margin too, marking this place, his book, his own. (pp. 99-100)

Cook describes Keats reading from Shakespeare, using historical evidence from the poet's marginalia to imagine his reaction to Achilles in the camp. Cook brings Homer into conversation with Shakespeare to suggest that what moves Keats about Achilles 'in the Trenches' is not his anticipation of the warrior's battlefield prowess but his sheer physicality. Shakespeare's Achilles is 'large' and 'lowd' like his martial counterpart, and Keats invites the reader to look back to the camp in the *Iliad* as a place that Homer describes with remarkable attentiveness to sensation and even sensuality:

And Patroclus bade the companions and servant women
lay out a snug bed for Phoinix forthwith;
and they in obedience laid out the bed as he commanded,
with fleeces covering cloth and fine nubbed linen.
There the old man lay down and awaited the shining dawn;
but Achilles slept in the inner recess of his well-built shelter,
and with him lay a woman, one he had taken from Lesbos,
the daughter of Phorbas, Diomedes of the lovely cheeks;
and on the other side lay Patroclus, and by him
Fair-belted Iphis, whom godlike Achilles gave him
when he took steep Seyros, the high city of Enyeus. (*Il.* 9.658-68)

Homer's attention to the luxury of the textiles foregrounds the presence of women in the camp and Achilles seems unperturbed by the absence of Briseis, despite his complaints to the embassy, as he and Patroclus settle down, side-by-side, with Diomedes and Iphis. The formulaic, three-line description of bed-making is supplemented with the sensuous details of

material comfort, bodies touching bodies, and implied sensual pleasure (cf. 24.643-45; *Od.* 4.297-29, 7.336-38, 10.352-53).²⁹

Cook imagines the process by which Keats marked his copy of the play in reaction to Ulysses' narration of the failed embassy (Shakespeare, *Tro.* 1.3.162-63).³⁰ Cook's Keats fixates on the tangible quality of the description of Achilles' size which evokes voluptuousness rather than martial dominance.³¹ Keats responds to the page on which Achilles is described as if it were the body of the warrior, as he cultivates a physical connection with Shakespeare's Achilles, performing something like a lover's caress ('He strokes them appreciatively with this thumb'). Cook presents Keats's delight at Achilles in Shakespeare's couplet as palpable, as he sighs in appreciation ('Ah,' he breathes in a low voice, 'that's nice.'). Cook blends historical fact and fiction to imaginatively recreate Keats's response to the play, which picks up on Keats's attentiveness to breath in his marginalia with reference to a later passage of the same scene: 'One's very breath while leaning over these pages is held for fear of blowing this line away'.³² Cook's focus on Keats's breathing calls attention to the poet's conception of reading as a somatic experience, something that Zajko

²⁹ Hainsworth (1993, 145).

³⁰ For Keats's markings and marginalia, see Spurgeon (1928, 155). For marginalia as a way for readers to rewrite, see Jackson (2001).

³¹ Keats also underlines the phrase 'broad Achilles' at *Tro.* 1.3.190, see Spurgeon (1928, 155).

³² Spurgeon (1928, 47-48).

recognizes as a key element of Keats's identification, in which, as noted, Keats can 'breathe' Chapman in his sonnet to evoke 'the inter-penetrability of the literary and real worlds'.³³

4.2 Reading Keats as a Woman

Zajko tentatively proposes that a 'feminist "edge" [to *Achilles*] arises at least in part from the sensual focus on concerns of embodiment' in the novella, and I consider Keats's role as central to Cook's project of calling attention to the latent, and at times not so latent, sensuality of the classical tradition.³⁴ Cook's focus on Achilles via Keats clearly contrasts with the female-focused revisionism that typifies more straightforwardly feminist treatments of classical literature. However, Cook's focus is not as androcentric as it may seem, as she achieves her destabilization of Achilles' masculinity by setting Keats up as a female, or at least feminine, reader of Homer.

For instance, Cook's opening sequence layers martial, albeit regretful, Achilles from the *Odyssey* with the lover from Dante's *Inferno* ('there the great Achilles,/ who with love fought to the end', 5.57-58), while pointing to Francesca de Rimini as a model for the female reader that Keats (and perhaps she) can follow. Cook calls attention to Homeric Achilles as one of many possible incarnations for her hero, as Odysseus sees the warrior among the dead but he is not with Antilochus and/or Ajax as in the epic, he is standing 'apart with Patroclus,

³³ Zajko (2006b, 63). For the importance of breath and breathing to Keats's poetics, see Bari (2012, 30-58).

³⁴ Zajko (2006b, 48).

his beloved through all eternity' (p. 6; cf. *Od.* 11.467-69).³⁵ Cook's posthumous Achilles is thus a lover, more familiar to his erotic, post-Homeric incarnations than to Homer.³⁶

However, it is not until 'Relay' that Cook shows her hand, as she recalls Keats's reading of Cary's translation of the *Divina Commedia*:

He takes from a pocket a small book – a volume of Cary's Dante – slips it in between the leaves for safe-keeping.

He forgets about it until later that day when he takes out his Cary again and it falls open at the same place. It is the passage where Dante sees Achilles in Hell. In the second circle, with Paolo and Francesca. With the lovers. (p. 101)

Achilles-the-lover in Dante bleeds back through to the opening pages of the novella, in another instance of Cook reading Homer through Keats reading someone else (and in translation). However, Cook's infidelity to tradition marks her reception of Dante too, if we notice that her Achilles stands apart in the underworld with Patroclus, not Dante's Polyxena. Keats's reception of Paolo and Francesca is suggestive of embodied, transformative reading, as Dante's Francesca describes their kiss in imitation of Lancelot and Guinevere (cf. *Inferno* 5.73-142).³⁷ Francesca exemplifies the potential for slippage between literary representation and experience brought about by identification, in which literary enchantment can induce the reader to act in a like fashion ('The book and writer both/ Were love's purveyors'). Francesca

³⁵ The proliferation of the epic tradition recalls H. D.'s Achilles as the 'High Priest of love rites'. However, Cook, unlike H. D., suggests that the martial and erotic traditions of Achilles can coexist. Compare with the 'transgendered' reading of Virgil's *Aeneid*, in McManus (1997, 91-118).

³⁶ For Achilles and the erotic post-Homeric tradition, see Fantuzzi (2012).

³⁷ Keats wrote his own poem in response to the canto, 'A dream, after reading Dante's Episode of Paolo and Francesca' (written in April 1819, pp. 272-73).

stands as a beacon for Cook as well as Keats for the female or feminine reader who reads with an eye to the personal.³⁸

Cook's relentless focus on embodiment, which she inherits from and inflects with Keats's writing, shapes her approach to classical literature. For instance, H. D.'s approach to Homer echoes Sappho 16 and its turn from militarism to eroticism, with the refrain 'can one weigh the thousand ships/ against one kiss in the night?' (*Helen in Egypt* pp. 37, 64, 177, 230), and H. D.'s Helen looks to the *Odyssey* to expose the hollowness of Achilles' epic fame ('But Achilles in life, in legend, is already immortal – in life, he is invincible, the hero-god. What is left for him after death? The Achilles-heel', p. 9). Cook also foregrounds Achilles' repudiation of his choice in the opening sequence of the novella, as the warrior calls attention to the cost of choosing κλέος over νόστος (*Od.* 11.482-91). However, she reworks the warrior's speech in the style of Keats so that Achilles longs not just for life per se but for embodiment: "What's that to me? Don't you know it's sweeter to be *alive* – in any shape or form – than lord of all these shadows?" (p. 12, emphasis in the original; cf. *Od.* 11.488-91). The reference in Cook to 'any shape or form' is deliberately vague, so that it can transpose Achilles' preference in Homer for an impoverished life in addition to emphasizing the bodyliness of the living. Cook underlines the corporeality of the living to call attention to the comparative emphasis that Homer places on the dead as disembodied (something that

³⁸ Vinken (1988).

translation can underplay), in which Homer's Achilles literally refers to the dead as wasting corpses: 'νεκύεσσι καταφθιμένοισιν' (11.491).³⁹

H. D. uses the tradition of Helen's guilt to frame her lyrical re-vision of Homer and Achilles, while Cook's reception of Helen helps to crystallize how she conflates Keatsian and Homeric aesthetics to refocus the epic tradition on to the body of Achilles. Helen makes an, albeit brief, appearance in Cook's reception and there is work to be done beyond the scope of this chapter to address her significance to the novella's themes.⁴⁰ Cook's starkly different treatments of Helen and Thetis as potential rape victims primed for feminist rescue gesture to the direction that a longer treatment of Cook's Helen could take, while the Achilles-Helen pairing in Cook suggests further points of contact and contrast with H. D.'s reception. Cook displaces the motif of Helen's consent to which H. D. returns with a deliberately modern and straightforwardly feminist reading of the tradition that surrounds Theseus' abduction of Helen as a child. Cook draws a line from Helen's rape by Theseus to her treatment at Troy and she evokes the clinical language of dissociation (Helen 'slips [sic] out' of her body, p. 72) and the play-centred therapy of child abuse victims (pp. 77-78) to align the significance of Helen's rape and objectification with the historical (and present day) treatment of women.

³⁹ For other translations of *Od.* 11.491, see e.g., E. Wilson (2018) simply gives 'all the dead'; Rieu (2003) gives 'the lifeless dead'. Fagles (1997) perhaps comes closest with 'the breathless dead' and offers a nice crossover with the discussion in this chapter regarding breath/life, ψυχή, and θυμός at (pp. 265-69).

⁴⁰ My very brief mention of Helen here is part of a much longer piece of writing on Helen and Cook's classical reception that is forthcoming.

Cook's receptions of the rapes of Helen and Thetis evoke an aesthetic that marries the principles of Homeric poetics with Keats's keen interest in embodiment. Thetis' response to Peleus, which I will discuss in full in this chapter's coda (section 4.6), is driven by, and written to evoke, her desire, and the twists and turns of the narrative reflect the difficulty of transposing the fluctuations of desire to a feminist political framework of sexual consent. Sexual consent is something that is, broadly speaking, established and re-established before and during sexual acts according to desire and the re-negotiations of desire come to an end once consent is revoked. Cook presents Helen as the unequivocal victim of sexual abuse throughout her life and her lack of consent is evident despite the muddled pleasure that her body feels at her rape ('Hot, muddled, excited, angry', p. 79). However, Thetis' desire waxes and wanes in Cook's reception, and Cook transposes the tension between consent and desire that Thetis exposes to grapple with the question of how to reintroduce desire and its uncertainties into the retelling of a story that has perhaps calcified in retelling.

Cook approaches both Keats and Achilles as characters who experience and respond to the world first and foremost through sensation and desire. She responds in turn to their empiricism and reads their experiences by punctuating her narrative with the question: 'what would it be like?'. The question, like a prompt, sets the tone for the experiential, even empirical, focus of her reading and rewriting and Cook acknowledges its structural importance to her work:

I suppose I just had to imagine something step by step quite literally as a kind of physical experience. I know I used the phrase: 'what would it be like', probably more

than once but I think that's what I'm always asking myself. You know - what was it like, what was it like, what was it like? What would it feel like?⁴¹

The question first appears in the opening sequence of the novella, as Odysseus conjures the spirits of the underworld, and Cook's reception of the *nekyia* spells out what is latent in Homer, in which the perfunctory description given by Circe ('the souls of the dead and gone will come flocking there', *Od.* 10.529-30) does not prepare Odysseus for the sheer force of what follows:

They arrive suddenly. So many of them, jostling and pushing – elbows, knees, necks – forcing their way forward, their mouths leading. Their mouths aflame.

Only at the very beginning did the living outnumber the dead. Now, as the dead press forward, Odysseus has great difficulty in standing his ground. Circe had told him what would happen. But not *what it would be like*. (p. 5, emphasis in the original)

...the souls of the dead came swarming up from Erebus – brides, unmarried youths, old men who had suffered greatly, once-happy girls with grief still fresh in their hearts, and a great throng of warriors killed in battle, their spear-wounds gaping and all their armour stained with blood. From the multitude of souls, as they fluttered to and fro by the trench, there came an eerie clamour. Panic drained the blood from my cheeks. (*Od.* 11.36-43)

Cook underlines how Circe's instructions are overwhelmed by Odysseus' experience of carrying them out and their inadequacy is felt most acutely in, and communicated to the reader through, the green fear (*χλωρὸν δέος*) that seizes Odysseus (11.43). The point that Cook's reception makes explicit is not that Circe lies, or what she anticipates will happen does not – linguistically, the start of Odysseus' account mirrors Circe's ('*ψυχὰι...νεκύων*

⁴¹ E. Cook (2013). The question also nods to Keats's famously pithy statement that 'axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses' (*Letters* 2.279) and its earlier expression as: 'Nothing ever becomes real 'till it is experienced' (*Letters* 2.81)

κατατεθνηώτων’ at *Od.* 10.530 and 11.37) – it is that that her words of preparation for Odysseus are unable to fully anticipate and/or communicate the experience of carrying them out.

4.2.1 Cook, Keats, and Female Re-Writing

The concept of ‘negative capability’ has proved especially attractive to modern feminist writers and critics, and Keats defines the term as when ‘man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason’ (*Letters* 1.193).⁴² Generally understood as both an aesthetic experience for the reader and a quality of writing, negative capability chimes with feminist critiques of universality and objectivity, proposing a resistance to fixed meanings and a feminine ‘receptive openness’ to experience and sensation.⁴³ Keats’s concept of negative capability provides an aesthetic framework for Cook to renegotiate her dual interests in embodiment and gender. Detaching the body from identity it reimagines its materiality as something that proliferates rather than closes down meaning. Keats only makes explicit mention of negative capability once; however, he returns time and again to think about the re/creation of identity in reading and writing.

⁴² See e.g., Mellor (1993, 174-78); Ou (2009); Wolfson (1998, 103). However, for negative capability as the appropriation of femininity for masculine ‘power and pleasure’, see Homans (1990, 344-47).

⁴³ Ou (2009, 5).

The poetical Character has as much delight conceiving an Iago as an Imogen A poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity – he is continually in for – and filling some other body. (*Letters* 1.387)⁴⁴

Keats's 'chameleon poet' can shift between hero(ines) and villains, women and men, while Keats describes the poetic imagination as fleshy and embodied but also borderless and mutable.

Keats responds to characters in literature (and in this he includes authors) personally and socially, and he envisions reading and writing as exercises that create ephemeral moments of identification that transgress boundaries of sex, gender, time, and place.⁴⁵ The imaginative mutability that negative capability demands seems to lend itself to feminist treatments of the female or feminine reader. For instance, Elaine Showalter's response to the male bias of the literary canon in American universities uses 'negative capability' to describe the contortions of the female student who is forced to read like a man.⁴⁶ Adrienne Rich and Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi, in turn, transpose Keats's term to elaborate on Nancy Chodorow's

⁴⁴ There is perhaps a nod to Tiresias here, as Keats read Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in Dryden's translation. Keats turns to Arachne as another metaphor, likening the creation of poetry to a spider spinning its web (*Letters* 1.231-32).

⁴⁵ Zajko (2006b).

⁴⁶ Showalter (1971, 856).

psychoanalytical work on differentiation and ego in relation to women readers and writers, declaring that: ‘John Keats had weak ego boundaries’.⁴⁷

As noted in the introduction, Keats imagines reading, writing, and re-writing as a kind of creative co-production to which Cook responds. However, Keats’s desire to be a part of and cultivate a community of readers, for whom classical literature acts as a kind of *lingua franca*, is not without its complications for female readers and rewriters. Margaret Homans uses Fetterley’s framework of the resisting reader to examine her, and other women readers’, resistance to Keats, as well as Keats’s resistance to women readers and writers.⁴⁸ Keats’s letters evidence the poet’s misogyny, as he polices the boundaries of gender and writing, criticizing women for taking up unfeminine tasks such as translating Greek (e.g. *Letters* 1.163-65) and railing more generally against women’s literary and intellectual pursuits (e.g., on Bluestockings, see *Letters* 1.163, 2.139).⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Gelpi and Gelpi (1975, 115). Homans (1990, 342-343) cites the transcribed conversation and remarks: ‘These two women, readers of Keats, make him an honorary woman by praising that in him which resembles what they have defined as feminine’. Adrienne Rich comes at the Homeric battlefield via Keats in her poem ‘Reading the *Iliad* (As If) For the First Time’ (2011).

⁴⁸ Homans (1990).

⁴⁹ For an overview of feminist responses to Keats, see Wolfson (1998); see also Homans (1990); Mellor (1993), (2001). Whale (2004) provides a reassessment of Keats from the perspective of masculinity. See Comet (2013) for a rereading of Romantic Hellenism and its traditional associations with masculinity, which sheds new light on women’s Romantic classicism.

Keats's denigration of women readers and writers sits awkwardly alongside his own struggle with exclusion from the literary establishment. The poet's association with the so-called Cockney School saw his Greekless classicism, that evidenced his lack of public school and university education, become a source of derision. The review in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* defined Cockney poetry as vulgar, degenerate, and effeminate, and likened its proponents' literary aspirations to the scribblings of footmen and governesses.⁵⁰ Keats takes part in the gendered narrative that builds up around his work, and maintains the conflation of writer and writing, as he struggles to align his creative output with what he envisages as the proper, epic pursuits of the male writer. In one letter, the poet complains that he writes diminutive 'little thing[s]' that compare to the works of the female gothic writer, Ann Radcliff, with ease, but struggles to complete his epic 'Hyperion' (*Letters* 2.62).

The act of gendering Keats continued in earnest after the poet's death in 1821, with Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats, Author of Endymion, Hyperion, etc.* (1821) appearing as the first of many treatments to emphasize the poet's

⁵⁰ For the review, see Z (1818); discussed in J. N. Cox (1998, 16-37); Mizukoshi (2001, 81-86). See also Stead (2015, 269-302) for Keats, Catullus, and the Cockney School. For an extensive account of the feminization of Keats in criticism, see Wolfson (1990). Mizukoshi points out that the gendered language of the attacks on the Cockney School mirror the accusations made by Leigh Hunt to dignify the Cockney's pursuit of classicism against the upper classes (pp. 81-82). Even contemporary critics who are largely sympathetic to Keats, such as William Hazlitt, respond unfavourably to the apparent femininity of his work. Hazlitt (1891, 355) characterized Keats's poetry by its 'deficiency in masculine energy of style'. For the 'anxiety of reception' that surrounded book reviewing in the Romantic period, see Newlyn (2000).

femininity. For instance, Shelley foregrounds Keats's delicacy and vulnerability: '[l]ike a pale flower by some sad maiden cherish'd,/ And fed with true-love tears, instead of dew' (VI.3-4).⁵¹ Shelley defends Keats against the censure of critics and blames the negative reviews of Keats's reworking of the classical myth *Endymion* (1818) for the poet's worsening health.⁵² Shelley's *Adonais* makes the link between Keats's work, its reception, and his frustrated ambition with his illness, so that the fortunes of Keats's writing and his body seem inseparable. Keats's death from tuberculosis invites the kind of aestheticism that Shelley's treatment of the poet's frail body evidences and anticipates the feminization and fetishization of the consumptive's body that would emerge over the nineteenth century.⁵³ The elegy's, albeit sympathetic, treatment of the dead poet paved the way for the crueller, archer reflection in the eleventh canto of Byron's *Don Juan* (1823): "'Tis strange the mind, that fiery particle/ Should let itself be snuffed out by an article'.⁵⁴

⁵¹ For the impact of Shelley's elegy on Keats's later reception, see Wolfson (1995). For Keats's feminization, see Wolfson (1990). For Shelley's *Adonais* and the Bloomian 'influence' of Keats, see e.g., Epstein (1999). For Keats's posthumous treatment in the literary tradition, see Wootton (2006).

⁵² See e.g., QR (1818).

⁵³ For the 'tubercular aesthetic' in Victorian literature, see Byrne (2011).

⁵⁴ For Byron's reception of Keats, see Keach (2001).

Keats's reputation underwent a period of masculine 'rehabilitation' during the Victorian period, when his friends began to publish their own recollections of the poet.⁵⁵ Charles Cowden Clarke, John Hamilton Reynolds, and Charles Lamb, among others, reminisce about their time with Keats and emphasize his vigour and robustness.⁵⁶ Richard

⁵⁵ See e.g., C. C. Clarke and M. C. Clarke (2014, 120-57); Lamb and Lamb (1978).

⁵⁶ Perhaps in her own reaction to Keats's posthumous feminization, Cook does not include the letter from which the excerpt: 'if I had had time I would have made myself remember'd', which is one of the opening quotations in 'Relay' (p. 95), derives in her own edition of Keats's poems and correspondence. Written in February 1920 to Fanny Brawne, it coincides with a haemorrhage suffered by the poet on his return to Hampstead from London that signaled a worrying turn in his health. By September, Keats would be considered too unwell to survive an English winter and so set sail to Italy, accompanied by his friend, the painter Joseph Severn. A year on from that letter to Fanny, residing in Rome, he would be dead. Cook explains her apprehension towards the publication of Keats's later correspondence in her introduction to the Oxford Authors volume:

Keats's letters are his best biography. But what we learn from them is not only about Keats's life; it is also about life.

This is not so true of the final letters, written by a man cornered between fervent love and the certainty of imminent death in a manner with which he was all too familiar. It is with some misgiving that several of these letters – and the last poems to Fanny – are included in the present volume since they represent not so much Keats's work as his un-work, an unmaking not for a public to witness.

See E. Cook (1990, xvii). We see this sense of restraint to a certain extent with *Achilles* too, in which the focus of 'Relay' largely coincides with the blossoming of Keats's creativity, with the year commencing from late September 1818 typically singled out for especial attention. Gittings's influential literary biography concentrates on the year from 21 September 1818, describing this year as

Monckton Milnes published a collection of Keats's letters in 1848 and, in the preface, describes his sense of obligation to correct the reputation of the poet, having seen 'how grievously he was misapprehended even by many who wished to see in him only what was best' (in a clear reference to Shelley).⁵⁷ As if in reaction to the feminized body of the consumptive, Milnes goes on to recast Keats's appearance in masculine, even heroic terms, comparing the poet in his youth to none other than Achilles. He describes Keats's countenance as creating 'an impression as the ancients had of Achilles, - joyous and glorious youth, everlastingly striving'.⁵⁸

Cook adds to the longstanding connection between, and conflation of, Keats's life and work, and, as has so often been the case with Keats, she engages with the poet's reputation through the framework of gender. Cook's engagement with Keats as the editor of his work coincides with the earliest drafts of *Achilles*, and early correspondence about the latter work evidences the cross-over between her projects:

the pinnacle of Keats's poetic achievements: 'Nearly all the greatest poetry was written in the 365 days of a single year', see Gittings (1954, xi).

⁵⁷ Milnes (2013a, xvi). For instance, Milnes quotes from a letter from Keats's brother George in his biography of Keats: 'His writings were fair game, and liable to be assailed by a sneaking poacher, but his character as represented by Blackwood was not. A good cudgelling should have been his reward if he had been within my reach. John was the very soul of courage and manliness...', see Milnes [1848] (2013b, 44).

⁵⁸ Milnes (2013a, 7).

I'll go so far as to say that what I love about Achilles is his whole-heartedness. He is what he does and his early death is a result of his *unmisgiving* commitment to being alive. This is a piece about incarnation: about being there.⁵⁹ (emphasis my own)

The term she uses to describe Achilles: 'unmisgiving', is an antiquated expression that brings the Homeric hero into the orbit of Keats, his poetry, and its gendered reception. Keats's early mentor, Leigh Hunt, uses the word to evoke the sensuous vitality and candidness of the poet and his verse, in which the complexion of his genius emerges in the 'energy and voluptuousness' of his style.⁶⁰ Hunt's praise of the poet uses the same kind of language that the detractors of Cockney poetry would use to render their writings indecent, and Cook overlays Achilles with these associations in a nod to the gender play and subversion that will characterize her reception of Homer. The exchange between Achilles and Keats in Cook's imagination seems to go the other way too, as she describes the poet's imagination in decidedly masculine terms as a 'muscular phenomenon', in which 'reading, writing, [and] the experience of the imagination, did not involve a turning away from physicality; there was a direct continuity between them'.⁶¹

Keats's sensitivity to what he memorably called his 'posthumous existence' (*Letters* 2.359) appears dignified and Achillean in the light of the epic warrior who knows he will die

⁵⁹ E. Cook (1997). In email correspondence, Cook writes similarly: 'I was interested in the committed energy and in Achilles' unmisgiving, whole-hearted nature as phenomena. He is so good at being human it almost makes him good!', see Cook and Poole (2003).

⁶⁰ Bayley (1962, 100). See also Barnard (1987, 18); Bayley (1993); Ricks (1974, 7).

⁶¹ E. Cook (1996, 12, 14).

(e.g., *Il.* 9.410-16, 17.401-9, 19.421-23; 21.110-13; 21.277-78).⁶² Cook reads Achilles like others have read Keats to emphasize his mortality and she resists a linear approach to Achilles' biography and introduces him via his posthumous reception in the *Odyssey*. Her account of Achilles' life is therefore mediated for the reader through the certainty of his death and this also comes across in her reception of Ovid and his birth. She follows the *Metamorphoses* in looking out from Achilles' conception to his time at Troy, however, while Ovid anticipates Achilles' heroism ('mighty Achilles' / '*ingenti ... Achille*', *Met.* 11.265), she foregrounds his mortality: 'For weeks, using all the skill that Chiron had given him, he tends the poor burnt flesh of his child./ Till Achilles is as mortal as he' (p. 20).

In the reception of Keats's life and work it is not uncommon to reread the poet through the dynamic that he establishes in 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', in which his keen sense of mortality appears to amplify his vigour for life.⁶³ Cook elaborates on the connection between Keats and Achilles through the tension between vigour and mortality. She draws a line

⁶² Burgess (2009, 43-55).

⁶³ For Keats, the prevalence of tuberculosis in his family appears to render his sense of mortality particularly acute (e.g. *Letters* 2.359). Cook's perspective on the Romantic poet is clearly shaped by the hindsight of his early death to tuberculosis in February 1821 at the age of twenty-five. In the introduction to the Oxford Authors *John Keats*, for example, she muses on the relationship between illness, death, and creativity: 'It is as if his cells had intimation of the tuberculosis that would kill him and his whole organism accelerated his work in response', see E. Cook (1990, xviii). See Strachan (2003, 7) for what he describes as the 'psychobiographical' tendency for readers of Keats to connect his illness with his work.

between Keats's responsive reading and the relationship between breath and mortality in Homer. The connection is even anticipated somewhat in Keats, who reflects on mortality via sensuality and embodiment to describe the human condition as 'sublunary' in which man 'eats like a chimney-sweeper, drinks like a gingerbread baker – and breathes like Achilles' (*Letters* 1.151). The word ψυχή has especial associations with Achilles and his death, which accommodates Cook's inflection of his Homeric character with Keats's quality of 'unmisgiving'. The word can refer to 'life', as well as describe the moment at which life ends, in which it is the breath that leaves the body. The deaths of Patroclus and Hector, which precipitate and explicitly look forward to Achilles' own, are described using the same formulaic lines which appear nowhere else in the epics: 'and his soul flying from his limbs started for Hades,/ lamenting her fate, abandoning manhood and all its young vigour' ('ὡς ἄρα μιν εἰπόντα τέλος θανάτοιο κάλυψε,/ ψυχή δ' ἐκ ῥεθέων πταμένη Ἄϊδος δὲ βεβήκει', 16.856-57, 22.362-63).⁶⁴ The lines call attention to the tragedy of war, in which young men die in their prime and seem apt for Keats who anticipates his own premature death.

In a sequence imagining Keats's attendance at a human brain dissection, Cook appears to tie together a later use of the word ψυχή, in which it comes to mean 'butterfly', with its earlier, epic meanings to connect the early deaths of Keats and Homeric warriors.⁶⁵ She prepares the reader for the connection between Keats and the warrior via ψυχή with subtle

⁶⁴ Janko (1992, 418). At Patroclus' death he predicts the death of Hector (16.651-54) and at Hector's death he predicts the death of Achilles (22.358-60).

⁶⁵ See reference in LSJ for ψυχή which gives the following references for the word meaning 'butterfly': Arist., *HA*551a14; Thphr., *HP*2.4.4; Plu. 2.636c.

references to Keats's classical reception. Cook describes the work of the surgeon in language familiar from Keats's Chapman sonnet, as the students are instructed to work with 'the eye of an eagle' (p. 96), which, in this new context, now appears as a nod to the Greek meaning of the English rendering of autopsy: 'αὐτοψία' / 'to look'. In addition to 'the eye of an eagle', the surgeon must also possess 'the heart of a lion' (p. 96) and Keats displays his own 'lion heart' (p. 97) when he speaks up in class to identify the *os sphenoidis*. The epithet describes Achilles in Homer ('Ἀχιλλῆα ... θυμολέοντα', 7.228) and appears as part of a speech in which Ajax contrasts the warrior's potential ferociousness with his current idleness. Ajax describes Achilles' current inactivity in the Myrmidon camp in a way that seems to call attention to what the warrior is doing, or rather is not doing, with his body away from the fight. He uses the verb κείμαι (7.230) to evoke an image of Achilles lying in repose, as if in anticipation of Homer's description of the Myrmidon camp (and Shakespeare's reception of Achilles on his 'prest-bed'). Cook goes on to imagine Keats's train of thought after the dissection, in which working with the cadaver seems to make him hyper-conscious of his own body:

He remembers the *os sphenoidis* from Bell's engravings. It reminded him of a giant butterfly with ragged, opulent wings. He touches his temples to feel the furthest reach of the wings that span his head. (p. 97)

Cook's Keats likens the *os sphenoidis* to a butterfly which recalls the famous letter to Fanny in which the poet embraces a vital but short life and, to my mind, she exploits the polysemy of ψυχή to link the vigorous lives and deaths of Achilles with Keats:

I almost wish we were butterflies and liv'd but three summer days – three such days with you I could fill with more delight than fifty common years could ever contain.
(*Letters* 2.123)

Cook appears to reconsider Achilles' vigour by way of Keats's treatment of passion and mortality in his own writing, which also gestures to the connection with Achilles and

θυμός in reception and the use of the word to evoke spiritedness.⁶⁶ Cook pits Odysseus and Achilles against each other in her opening chapter in a set up that is familiar to Homer (and the reception of Homeric θυμός in Plato).⁶⁷ Odysseus' μητις seems antithetical to Cook's reading of Achilles as unmisgiving and the tension between the two men, and their versions of Homeric masculinity, recalls Achilles' rejection of the embassy during the war where he denounces the persuasive cunning exemplified by 'Odysseus of many stratagems' (πολυμήχανος): 'for hateful to me as the gates of Hades is that man,/ who hides one thing in his mind, but says another' (*Il.* 9.312-13). However, in Cook's treatment of the embassy in an earlier sequence in the novella, she condenses the warrior's quarrel with Agamemnon to the barest of bodily gestures: 'He lays off his men and folds his arms' (p. 31).⁶⁸ The epic presents Achilles' distaste for Odysseus' rhetoric with irony, as his rejection of Odysseus is part of a

⁶⁶ See especially Hobbs (2000, 119-249) for Achilles and θυμός in Plato. Hobbs reads *Republic* 4 and 8 as critiques of Achillean, passion-driven masculinity (pp. 119-219). See also Saxonhouse (1988).

⁶⁷ Hobbs (2000, 199-219) describes Plato's turn from Achilles as a turn to Odysseus. For Achilles vs. Odysseus in Homer, see e.g., De Jong (2001, 290-91); Nagy (1999, 42-58). For classical philosophy and heroism, see Kohen (2014).

⁶⁸ Cook links Achilles' plain-speaking/even taciturn nature and his unmisgiving-ness in a way that chimes with the reception of Chapman's Homer among Keats's peers. Charles Lamb compares the translations of Chapman to Pope and prefers the former partly on account of the 'certain savage-like plainness of speaking in Achilles – a sort of indelicacy- the heroes in Homer are not half civilized, they utter all the cruel, all the selfish, all the *mean thoughts* even of their nature, which it is the fashion of our great men to keep in', in Lamb and Lamb (1978, 17); also cited in Webb (2004, 307-8).

speech that is not exactly lacking in rhetorical flourish.⁶⁹ Cook renders the comic potential of Homeric irony more explicit, as she introduces physical comedy to the scene in the slightly ridiculous posture that her Achilles adopts to refuse the embassy: folding his arms like an indignant child.⁷⁰

4.3 The Performance of Mourning

In this section, I will consider the final sequence of ‘Relay’, which sees Keats perform the part of Achilles at the funeral of Patroclus to mourn for the former warrior. I will show how Cook reconsiders Keats’s death from the perspective of Homer to reconfigure Keats’s death as Achillean. In sub-section 4.3.1, I will show how Cook establishes Keats’s mourning for Achilles as a model for her reader to mourn for Keats. Jane Griffiths’s self-reflective work on acting in Greek drama offers a useful framework to identify how Cook’s attentiveness to Keats’s performance of Achilles in mourning creates an engaged, Keatsian readership who can act in a like fashion.⁷¹ Griffiths describes performance as initiating a

⁶⁹ Achilles’ speech lasts over one hundred unbroken lines (9.308-429) and the epic poet notes the effect of his words and their force: ‘So he spoke, and all the men were hushed in silence/ amazed at his words; for he had spoken very powerfully’ (9.430-31).

⁷⁰ Achilles’ silence is given tragic and then parodic, comic treatment by Aeschylus and Aristophanes respectively, see Arisoph., *Frogs* 911-15. See discussion in Sommerstein (2009, 134).

⁷¹ For Keats’s enthusiasm for the actor Edmund Kean, see his review in *The Champion* dated to 21 December 1817, reprinted in Wells (1997, 51-52). For discussion see Roe (1997, 231-32). Keats praises the ‘indescribable gusto in his voice, by which we feel that the utterer is thinking of the past

situation of ‘besideness’ in which identity is made and re-made by the actor who brushes up against the part she plays for a group of spectators who are, in turn, moved:

... through this phenomenological ‘besideness’ which is at the heart of the actor’s relationship with the audience, the actor’s body becomes both the recipient of the character, and the conduit through which it will be received by others. The actor’s body becomes, in other words, the core of performance reception.⁷²

The dynamics of acting, re-enactment, and spectatorship replay some of the key issues that Cook draws from Keats’s poetics: namely identity, identification, and mutability. For instance, an actor may play the same part at each performance but she will inevitably play it differently each time, and the repetition of a role brings about a kind of accumulation in which the actor builds on but differs from each iteration of the part. The relationship between an actor and their part seems to replay the interaction between anticipation/experience that

and the future, while speaking of the instant’. For the influence of Hazlitt and Keats’s use of ‘gusto’, see Mulrooney (2003, 242-43). The appraisal of Kean’s acting uses similar language to the contemporary reception of Chapman’s Homer, in which the translation reveals that ‘the heroes in Homer are not half civilized’ in Lamb and Lamb (1978, 17). Kean’s performance of Coriolanus in 1820 was directly contrasted with John Kemble’s patrician performance from 1811, in which ‘Kean played Coriolanus not in the manner of Kemble, as an elegant Roman of later times, but rather as a rough soldier of the early republic; a proud, impetuous, primitive creature of absolute *virtus* colliding with a temporizing society’, as described in Sachs (2010, 206, cf. 206-9). Cook includes a short excerpt from Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus* in ‘Relay’ (p. 105) and there is some nice serendipity with the performance life of *Achilles*, as the original actor to embody Cook’s text, Greg Hicks, eventually handed over the role to Colin Mace so that he could rejoin the RSC to play Coriolanus.

⁷² Griffiths (2010: 226, 228). In the same volume, see Fischer-Lichte (2010) for performer/onlooker interaction. See also Griffiths (2007).

Cook's work emphasizes: two actors will embody and perform the same role in a different way, in which the nuances of acting exceed the parameters of the performance-text.⁷³

*'...since I never more
Shall see my lov'd soil, my friend's hands shall to the Stygian shore
Convey these tresses.' Thus he put in his friend's hands the hair.*

Keats remembers the lock that landed on him that day on the Heath and tugs again at his hair. He would like to shear some off this time in honour of Achilles and place it in his hands. To pave his own way to the Stygian shore. And, though he cannot place it in Achilles' hands, he cuts his hair anyway, enjoying the crunch of the scissors on it, realising that Achilles would have used a knife or the edge of his sword. He holds in his own quite delicate hand a hank of auburn hair, not yet made dull or lank by illness ... The same colour as Achilles' hair and, though the hand which holds it may be smaller than that of the large Achilles, it is made in the same way, the same number of small bones. It holds and releases ('*Thus he put...*'). It is prompted by similar nerves. Fed by a like heart.

It gives him pleasure to know this. (p. 107)

Keats reads from Chapman's translation and imitates Achilles, moving from a reader of, to actor in, the epic's scene of ritual mourning. Keats's re-enactment transforms Achilles from the mourner to the mourned and makes literal what James Redfield interprets as the space of liminality that the mourner and the dead body share:

⁷³ The theme of imitation and its connection to reception also emerges in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and Cook's reception of Keats's reception of the retelling of the scene with Achilles on his 'prest-bed' by Ulysses. Ulysses reports Achilles' amusement at Patroclus' imitation of the Greek leaders (1.3.150, 185) pointing to the multiple versions of Troy on offer to the playwright and his subversive, anti-heroic treatment of the heroes at Troy. For *Troilus and Cressida* and imitation, see James (1997, 97-106).

The hair (along with the nails) is unique among body parts in that it grows and yet is inert and can be lost without pain or injury. Furthermore, the hair continues to grow after death.⁷⁴

Achilles' ritual for Patroclus is thus exemplary from the perspective of Redfield's model for epic mourning, as he makes it clear that the death of Patroclus will precipitate his own and cuts his hair in recognition of this fact. Keats remains attentive to how his re-performance of Achilles is not an exact replica: there is no hand for him to place his hair, he uses scissors instead of a knife or a sword, and Achilles' hand is large while his is small. And yet the hair colour that the poet and the warrior share and the essential likeness of human bodies enable him to sustain the performance.

Keats's imperfect performance of the warrior in mourning recalls the reader's (and Achilles') mediated access to his death and burial in the epic. Achilles plans a burial mound in the foreknowledge of his own death, envisioning the site for him and his friend (23.125-26). Cook makes the connection between Achilles' plans for the mound – a monument that he will not see come to fruition – and the fall of Troy, and channels the connection through the literary tradition, in works like the *Aeneid*, as she provocatively condenses the shield of Achilles to one line and renders it distinctly Virgilian: 'The metal is stamped with the future he won't see' (p. 34; cf. *Il.* 18.478-608). Achilles will, however, be granted the strange privilege of experiencing his own burial second-hand via the *Odyssey* (24.36-97), another work that follows the narrative after the war, as Agamemnon's recollection enables Achilles to experience second-hand the culmination of his earlier plans:

⁷⁴ Redfield (1975, 182).

Over their bones we soldiers of the mighty Argive force built up a great and glorious mound, on a foreland jutting out over the broad waters of the Hellespont, so that it might be seen far out at sea by the men of today and future ages. (*Od.* 24.80-84)

The mound that Achilles imagined for the future is now described to him in recollection and Agamemnon anticipates that it will endure to both fix Achilles' fame and project it for those who come after.

Cook reworks some of the posthumous reminiscences of the poet that were put into circulation by his friends to manufacture an Achillean meeting for Keats with his dead self. Cook describes how Keats's friends remark on the 'likeness' of the poet to a portrait, hung at the Dulwich Picture Gallery:

Soon it was an established joke among his friends – 'Go to Dulwich to see Keats done by Rembrandt.' Keats went and looked.

It looked like a self-portrait though not, to him, a portrait of himself. (p. 98)

The portrait still hangs in Dulwich and remains something of an enigma, as there has been no definitive identification of its sitter.⁷⁵ The work predates the poet by over a century, so that its likeness seems to pre-empt Keats's birth and foreshadow his death. And while the historical record suggests that Keats's friends did remark at the resemblance, they did not do so until

⁷⁵ The Dulwich Picture Gallery's online catalogue explains 'the sitter was thought to be the artist Philips Wouwerman but, born in 1619, he would have been in his forties at the time this was painted, not the age of the young man depicted here. The sitter has since been identified as Rembrandt's only son Titus, but the presence of books just discernable in the background, makes it more likely that this is a portrait of a scholar.' This last observation is fortuitously apt for my interest in Keats as a reader, as it suggests that Keats may be more like the subject of the painting than its actual sitter! See Dulwich Picture Gallery.

after the poet's death. Keats's response to the likeness in Cook is actually a reworking from Clarke's published recollections:

It is just so much of a resemblance as to remind friends of the poet, although not such a one as the immortal Dutchman would have made had the poet been the sitter.⁷⁶

Clarke suggests that there is something intangible activated in the fleshy encounter between painter and sitter that overrides, or skews, the significance of bodily resemblance. Clarke's curious remark and its reworking for Keats by Cook ('It looked like a self portrait though not, to him, a portrait of himself') points to the enigmatic quality of identity, as well as recalling how Homer contemplates the physical continuity of the self after death.⁷⁷

Clarke suggests that there is also something intangible in the fleshy encounter between friends who look at and remember each other's likenesses, and this is a theme that looks back to Homer. Achilles is moved to begin the burial of Patroclus, at which he makes plans for his own death, after his visitation in a dream by the ghost of the dead warrior. Homer describes the appearance of Patroclus as an exact replica of his living self ('like to him in every way his great stature, his fine eyes,/ his voice, even the clothes such as his body wore', *Il.* 23.66-67) and Achilles remarks on the visitation's 'wonderful...likeness' ('ἔϊκτο δὲ θέσκελον αὐτῶ', 23.107) to his friend. However, Achilles' personal, intimate relationship with Patroclus means

⁷⁶C. C. Clarke and M. C. Clarke (2014, 154).

⁷⁷The motif is replayed in the *Odyssey* as Penelope recalls seeing Odysseus or, more exactly, someone 'like him' ('εἴκελος αὐτῶ', *Od.* 20.88). However, Penelope's image of Odysseus in her dream recalls the likeness of the man that left twenty years before and so is no longer the likeness of the man who returns twenty years later.

that he is sensitive to the smallest of gaps between his friend and his friend's likeness in death in a way that the epic poet is not. Achilles identifies the change in Patroclus with reference to an embodied, but not solely corporeal, quality, after he fails to make physical contact with him:

There is after all even in the house of Hades
some kind of soul and image, though the power of life is not altogether there (*Il.*
23.103-4)

The inscrutable quality – ‘the power of life’ (φρένες) – that Achilles misses in the likeness of his dead friend recalls the almost-likeness that Patroclus and Hector achieve when they wear Achilles' armour, and Patroclus had framed his costuming as a deliberate act of imitation:

And give me your arms to wear upon my shoulders,
with the hope that likening myself to you the Trojans will hold off
from fighting, and the warrior sons of the Achaeans draw breath
in their extremity; for respite in war is brief. (16.40-43)

The death of Patroclus dressed as Achilles will provoke Achilles to return to war and to his death, and Iris rouses the warrior to show himself to the Trojans at the trench (the site of Keats's identification) by replaying the lines of Patroclus at 16.41-43 (cf. 18.199-201).⁷⁸ Iris casts Achilles, who returns to war to avenge Patroclus, in the role that his dead friend set out to play in imitation of him. However, the difference in Iris' speech is that she tells Achilles to display himself to the Trojans without armour (‘But go as you are to the ditch and show yourself to the Trojans’/ ‘ἀλλ’ αὐτως ἐπὶ τάφρον ἰὼν Τρώεσσι φάνηθι’, 18.198). Patroclus' disguise does fool the Trojans, who react to the sight of the warrior as if he were Achilles (16.278-83), just as Homer is taken in by the likeness of Patroclus because he is dressed the

⁷⁸ Janko (1992, 320).

part at 23.67. However, Iris' intervention makes the distinction between Achilles and these likenesses, as Achilles does not need to dress up as Achilles to be Achilles.

Cook encourages her reader to imaginatively 'travel' to Keats via the posthumous tradition that follows the poet, and there may be some defensiveness to the line that underplays the distinction in size between the hands of Keats and Achilles to emphasize instead their shared anatomy (for instance, Cook implies that even Achilles' hand bones are small). However, Cook's Achilles is not the ultra-masculine warrior that would offer clear rebuttal to the likes of Shelley's *Adonais*. As noted, Cook's Keats enjoys affinity with Achilles, in part, by their shared hair colour, which Cook describes in the passage as auburn. However, the passage of Chapman that she cites on page 106 describes Achilles' hair colour as 'golden', from the Greek ξανθὴν (cf. 23.141). Colour perception engages with questions of likeness and difference and how these measurements are mediated by subjectivity, to which Cook's reading of Keats reading of Achilles responds. Cook does appear to align the hair colour of Chapman's Achilles and Keats earlier on page 101 when she remarks that Keats's hair 'will sometimes flash gold in the sun'. However, when Cook describes Keats's hair as straightforwardly auburn at the mock funeral she looks back to the warrior on Skiros. The origin for Achilles' auburn hair in the novella is the description of his appearance, dressed like a girl, on Skiros ('Auburn hair in tight coils down to the collar bone...', p. 21). And if Keats's auburn hair can appear golden in the sun then perhaps Achilles' can too: was Chapman's golden-haired warrior (and even the golden headed Achilles who returns to battle at *Il.* 18.205-6) Statius' Pyrrha (Πύρρα/ 'red-haired') all along?

4.3.1 Remembering Keats

Keats performs Achilles in mourning and, like Achilles, he intimates his own death, while Cook's description of the performance anticipates the worsening of the poet's health.⁷⁹ Cook readies her reader for the role of hair in exploring the dynamic between endurance and decay in an earlier sequence in 'Relay'. Cook describes Keats finding a lock of hair, which is the same 'deep auburn' colour as his own:

Leaves are falling and he watches them: the way the air holds them as if reluctant to let them drop. A lock of hair hangs here too. Like another leaf, red-gold. And because the air itself is gold in this light, and warm and comfortable as exhaled breath, it falls slowly

...

The floating hair looked lighter in the sunlight as Keats' hair will sometimes flash gold in the sun.

... *the same and not the same.*

Whose head shed this? Whose vital force gave body and colour to this hair so like his own? Hunt surprised him the other day with a real authenticated lock of Milton's hair. Keats wrote an ode on it. (pp. 100-1)

The sequence centres on Keats watching leaves as they fall from trees and recalls Keats's ode 'To Autumn' (composed September 1819, pp. 324-25) via Homer, drawing on the tradition stretching back to epic that links the brevity of life and the ineluctability of death to the shedding of leaves with the seasons (6.146-49).⁸⁰ However, Cook's Keats's turn from leaves

⁷⁹ See Van Nortwick (1992) for the hero's second self as the projection of subjectivity; for Achilles and Patroclus, see (pp. 39-88). In these terms, Keats displaces the Achilles-Patroclus relationship and sets up Achilles as his second self.

⁸⁰ Abrams (1998) reads the ode in terms of Keats's biography in which the shift in seasons ('Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?', line 23) indicates the poet's prescience of his worsening health. For the seasonality of the epic hero, see Schein (1984, 69).

to shorn hair intimates an imaginative and/or emotional turn from thoughts of impermanence to endurance as Cook's novella is testament to the legacy of Keats's poetry.

Historically, the poetry of Milton inspired in Keats the greatest sense of self-doubt, with *Paradise Lost* looming over Keats's ambitions and reminding the poet of his failure to successfully write epic poetry. With this sequence in 'Relay', Cook deploys Homer to hold in check the power of Milton's literary legacy to intimidate, for it is to the *Iliad* not *Paradise Lost* that we turn at the mention of Autumnal leaves.⁸¹ And instead Cook presents Keats as Milton's co-reader and they are companions for whom Homer occasions literary encounters. This also involves a rereading of Keats's 'Lines on Seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair' (p. 101; cf. *Letters* 1.211-12), and Cook prints one verse from the poem below the passage that I cite above. Cook shears the Milton poem to its final eight lines in her excerpt, omitting the earlier part of the work, with its contemplation of Milton as a monumental literary forebear ('Thy Spirit never slumbers,/ But rolls about our ears/ For ever, and for ever', ll. 3-5). For what is important in the final lines that she does transpose to the novella is the literary record of Keats's sensory reaction to the lock ('I feel my forehead hot and flush'd, l. 34; cf. *Achilles* p. 101). In a democratic gesture, the line from Keats's Milton poem that imagines the dead poet's hair as radiating with creative genius ('simplest vassal of thy power', l. 35; cf. *Achilles* p. 101), is redeployed to consider the anonymous lock: 'But whose power's vassal was this?'

⁸¹ For Milton's reception of Homer, see Martindale (1986, 53-106). P. Wilson (2004, 279) describes the way in which '[i]n a surprisingly literal sense *Paradise Lost* becomes in effect a primer for reading Homer'.

(p. 102).⁸² The answer proposed to this question: ‘Someone taking advantage of the sunshine to get a little barbering done on the Heath’ (p. 102), punctures, with levity, the comparison with Milton. Cook draws bathetic equivalence between Milton and the anonymous owner of the hair to suggest that the difference between the two locks of hair is that to one there is attached a narrative of genius: it is in reception that the poet’s ambitions are realized.

Cook primes her reader to take part in the chain of mourning, so that her work serves the same imaginative purpose for the reader as Chapman’s translation does for Keats, facilitating the move from reader to actor to mourner. Cook gestures to the almost directorial influence that Keats ascribes to the translator in his experience of Homer in the Chapman sonnet and marries the textual influence of Chapman with Keats’s fixation on relics like Milton’s lock of hair. Cook presents Chapman’s text as scripting Keats’s practice of ritual mourning in epic.⁸³ Cook exploits the nuances of Chapman’s translation to enable Keats to synchronize his movements with Achilles. The relevant lines are *Iliad* 23.152-53 (or 23.138-39 in Chapman):

Homer: So speaking he placed the hair in the hands of his beloved companion
and in the hearts of all he stirred desire for weeping.
ὡς εἰπὼν ἐν χερσὶ κόμην ἐτάροιο φίλοιο
θῆκεν, τοῖσι δὲ πᾶσιν ὑφ’ ἡμερον ὄρσε γόοιο.

⁸² On Keats’s unusual use of ‘vassal’ here, see Stillinger (1982, 436): ‘Apparently Keats (perhaps misunderstanding “vassals of his anger” in *Paradise Lost* II.90) meant something like “manifestation” or “reminder”; there is no *OED* definition of “vassal” that fits the context here’. E. Cook (1990, 579): ‘The lock of hair, subject (‘vassal’) to Milton’s vital force’.

⁸³ The line reference for Patroclus’ funeral in Chapman is 23.118-39.

Chapman: Thus he put in his friend's hand the hair.
And this bred fresh desire of moan, and in that sad affair

The Greek text uses 'ὤς' to refer to Achilles' speech, distancing the accompanying action from the epic poet's narration. Chapman's version, on the other hand, shifts attention from what Achilles says to what he does. Cook intensifies Chapman's change in emphasis by italicizing 'thus' ('*Thus* he put...', p. 107) and, with this, there is even the implication that Chapman takes part in the same process of embodied identification, acting out the gesture that he simultaneously transcribes.

Cook's emphatic repetition of '*Thus* he put' across the Chapman citation and the passage of re-enactment takes the reader first from Achilles and then to Keats and intimates their own participation. Cook's citation of Chapman in the sequence omits line 23.153 from Homer (corresponding to Chapman 23.139) and with it all reference to the response of those who hear Achilles' speech. The absence of the line leaves the reaction to Achilles unscripted from Homer and Cook invites her readers to fill this imaginative space and look back to Homer via Keats to use the deaths of both the warrior and the poet to engage with their own mortality. Erica Jong's poem 'Dear Keats' (1975) models the personal response to Keats's death that Cook's work tries to invigorate. Keats's letters serve as material reminders for the poet and Jong fragments and reorganizes the letters to create her own, personal simulacrum of the poet. Jong foregrounds Keats's death as a way to contemplate her own and, with her final two lines, she characterizes her reading of the poet as a way to preserve and perpetuate his memory ('Since flesh can't stay,/ we pass the words along.').

Patrick Shaw-Stewart's poem 'I saw a man this morning' offers another intertext with which to consider the personal relationship with Keats and Achilles that Cook cultivates for

her reader in her reception.⁸⁴ The traditional response to the poem aligns Shaw-Stewart's approach to Homer with Keats's, in which he reimagines Achilles 'in the Trenches' to think through his own death.⁸⁵ However, there is evidence that Shaw-Stewart actually approaches Achilles *via* Keats, so that the central figure for the soldier poet's meditation on his mortality is not Achilles but Keats. The poem draws on the geographic link between Gallipoli and Troy to recast the soldier's period of leave, and his inevitable return to the front, in the light of Achilles' return to battle.⁸⁶ The verses culminate in the image of Achilles shouting in the trenches, as the soldier poet relates the epic battlefield to his own experience of trench warfare:

Achilles came to Troyland
And I to Chersonese:
He turned from wrath to battle,
And I from three days' peace.

Was it so hard, Achilles,
So very hard to die?
Thou knewest, and I know not –
So much the happier I.

I will go back this morning
From Imbros over the sea;
Stand in the trench, Achilles,
Flame-capped, and shout for me. (ll. 17-28)

⁸⁴ Printed in Vandiver (2010, 270-71).

⁸⁵ For Keats and the soldier poets (although with no mention of Shaw-Stewart), see Vandiver (2010, 111-12).

⁸⁶ For Shaw-Stewart's classicism, see Vandiver (2010, 263-77). For 'I saw a man this morning' as classical reception, see Vandiver (2010, 270-77).

Shaw-Stewart makes explicit the connection between Achilles returning to war and the warrior's death, which is an association that comes across in Keats's reception of the hero only via the intervention of Cook. The First World War poem thus offers an appropriate lens through which to view Cook's conflation of Keats's identification with Achilles and his sensitivity to mortality. Shaw-Stewart engages with Achilles across both Homeric epics to reflect on his time of military leave as a liminal space between life and death. The poet addresses Achilles among the dead, drawing on the *Odyssey*, before reanimating him on the battlefield from the sequence in the *Iliad*. The pertinence of Shaw-Stewart's reception only intensifies with later reading (in the same way that the prescience of Keats's work is constructed out of its reception), as the soldier was indeed killed when he returned to the front and the poem was found among his belongings, written on the back cover of A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*.⁸⁷ Like Cook, Shaw-Stewart presents Achilles' withdrawal from and return to war as the central dynamic through which to view the warrior. However, the poet turns from identification with Achilles to emphasize instead their apartness, as he asks the warrior to shout on his behalf, 'so that even as the speaker summons Achilles the poem simultaneously recognizes the unbridgeable gap between them'.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Vandiver (2010, 270).

⁸⁸ Vandiver (2010, 277).

I think that Shaw-Stewart's rejection of identification with Achilles is because the poet's reception borrows from and rereads Achilles via Keats.⁸⁹ Vandiver calls attention to Shaw-Stewart's reference to Achilles standing 'in the trench', as opposed to shouting 'over the trench' from the Greek ('ὐπὲρ κεφαλῆς', *Il.* 18.227). Vandiver suggests that the change in Shaw-Stewart's reception of the *Iliad* is a rejection of Tennyson's 'Achilles Over the Trench'.⁹⁰ However, Shaw-Stewart's amendment of the line from Homer and Tennyson surely also evokes Keats (for whom the origin for imagining Achilles 'in' the trench seems to be Pope).⁹¹ The soldier poet thus anticipates Cook's reception by revisiting Keats's moment of identification with Achilles with the hindsight of Keats's death. So while Shaw-Stewart does not identify with Achilles this is because he instead identifies with the (dead) poet.

Shorn hair in 'Relay' recalls the importance of materiality to remembering the dead, in which mourners can mitigate for the absence of the dead body with their own bodies in re-performance or with relics of the dead. And Cook shapes her reader's familiarity with Keats

⁸⁹ Hardwick (2003, 93), albeit very briefly, notices the allusion to Keats in the line. Vandiver (2010, 111-12) emphasizes the enthusiasm for Keats but only in relation to middle and working class classicists, such as Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, and J. W. Streets, who shared Keats's mediated access to literature via translation.

⁹⁰ Vandiver (2010, 277).

⁹¹ Chapman's translation of the line does not describe where Achilles is in relation to the trench: 'Thrice great Achilles spake,/ And thrice (in heat of all the charge) the Trojans started back' (18.194-95), while Pope situates Achilles in the trench: 'Thrice from the Trench this dreadful Voice he rais'd' (18.269).

throughout ‘Relay’ to point to ways in which they can ‘access’ the poet via his material remains. For instance, Cook reworks the chronology in the Dulwich Gallery sequence to enable Keats to see the likeness that will inspire the recollections of those who mourn him. Cook’s readers can visit Dulwich, or they can see the likenesses (which is appropriately plural) of Keats painted by Joseph Severn, Keats’s companion in Rome when he died.⁹² Severn’s miniature portrait of the poet hangs in the National Gallery, while he composed ‘Keats on his Deathbed’ and ‘John Keats at Wentworth Place’ from memory after Keats’s death. The latter painting depicts Keats reading, creating a satisfying ‘likeness’ loop with the Dulwich portrait, whose sitter is shown with books faintly visible in the background. ‘Keats on his Deathbed’ is on display at the Keats-Shelley House in Rome, along with a lock of Keats’s own hair on which the reader can fixate like Keats with Milton.

4.4 Gender and Performance

Finding common ground between feminine voluptuousness and masculine vigour in the body, Cook is able to engage with both traditions of reading Keats as masculine and feminine to reimagine a non-binary Achilles. Cook uses the tradition of Achilles’ stay on Skiros to look back to Homer through the warrior’s performance of femininity. Cook resists the resolution that Statius and Ovid give to his stay on the island, in which he rapes Deidamia to reclaim his masculinity before taking up arms at Troy.⁹³ Cook instead presents the

⁹² See G. F. Scott (2009).

⁹³ See especially Statius, *Achilleid* 1.592-674; Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 1.681-704. For discussion of Statius, see Barchiesi (2005, 47-48); Fantuzzi (2012, 21-97); Heslin (2005, 274-76); Sanna (2007).

relationship between Achilles and Deidamia as consensual, in which it is the latter who initiates their love-making: ‘Deidamia embraces him – or rather Pyrrha – with cold, fresh-watery kisses’ (p. 25).⁹⁴ Cook gives Deidamia a female erotic experience that is absent from Statius; and while her desire has precedent in Ovid (*Ars Amatoria* 1.700), Cook’s Deidamia is no *puella* and the relationship does not gender the pair in any straightforward, heteronormative sense.⁹⁵

Cook brings together Achilles’ cross dressing with Keats’s camelionic approach to literature, as the soon-to-be-warrior loses himself in his lover. Achilles does not remove his dress until after their first sexual encounter, queering the scene in a way that chimes well with the ancient material.⁹⁶ Cook takes the gender confusion of Statius further, however, to

And Ovid, see Myerowitz (1985, 68-72). Statius playfully presents his erotic epic as a necessary supplement to Homer. In its opening lines, he notes that ‘The hero’s deeds, ‘tis true are much famed in Maeonian song, but more are yet to celebrate’ (*Ach.* 1.3-4).

⁹⁴ See Richlin (1992a, 168-69) for the rape of Deidamia in Ovid’s *Ars*, which completely negates female subjectivity. With reference to *Ars* 1.673-78, Richlin states that: ‘Women’s emotions are consistently unreal throughout this passage – “unwilling” (674) must describe a feigned emotion; “naughtiness” (676) must be feigned scolding as in 665; even their facial expressions are artificial (678)’ (pp. 168-69).

⁹⁵ For the potential role of women writers in correcting the silence of women’s eroticism in ancient texts, see Myerowitz (1985, 68-72).

⁹⁶ Statius’ presentation of the rape is complicated by the fact that Achilles remains in drag long after the incident, see Fantuzzi (2012, 89-90).

imagine an identity for Achilles beyond and between the concepts of masculinity and femininity. Cook's approach to this radical reconfiguration of gender is concentrated less on the overtly feminist theme of the sexed body and its relationship to gender expression and more on the more nebulous quality of pleasure. Achilles' relationship with Deidamia uncovers a certain fluidity that defies the gender binary, as desire for her body melds into pleasure at his own, and Achilles experiences a sensuousness that complicates identification – Achilles experiencing himself as Deidamia – with (auto)eroticism:

Delighting in Deidamia he becomes adept at Pyrrha. He borrows Deidamia's dresses, wanting to feel how her body feels – not just to his hand but to herself – when her soft silks drift over it. (p. 26)

Cook's reception of Statius encourages the reader to reconsider the significance of Skiros in Homer. Homer gives tantalizingly little away about Achilles' connection to Skiros, although the epic does connect the island with the warrior's libido: as a site of conquest (*Il.* 9.666-68) and as the present location of Neoptolemus (19.326-27; also *Od.* 11.506-9).⁹⁷ The place therefore appears to foreground the masculinity of the warrior and his heterosexuality, evocative of the Achillean epithet 'sacker of cities' (πολίπορθος, e.g. *Il.* 8.372) and the attendant boast that his proficiency in conquest precipitates female enslavement (cf. 6.450-55, 9.590-94, 9.663-68).⁹⁸ Cook does reflect on how Skiros prepares Achilles for Troy, however, she is more interested in Skiros as preparation for the sensuality of the Myrmidon camp than for the battlefield. Cook borrows this from Statius who uses the language of love elegy to describe the men at Aulis as they wait for Achilles' arrival: 'all the warrior host burns for

⁹⁷ Fantuzzi (2012, 23).

⁹⁸ See Gaca (2015, 284-86).

absent Achilles, Achilles' name they love' (*Ach.* 1.473-75).⁹⁹ Statius suggests that Skiros readies Achilles for his time at Troy as an object of the Greeks' desire and recalls how in Homer Achilles boasts that his withdrawal to the camp will be felt keenly by the Greeks who will yearn for him: 'some day a yearning for Achilles will come upon the sons of the Achaeans,/ every man' (ἢ ποτ' Ἀχιλλῆος ποθὴ ἴξεται υἷας Ἀχαιῶν/ σύμπαντας, *Il.* 1.240-41).

Cook reframes Skiros as a rehearsal space for Achilles to be desired and anticipates the warrior's withdrawal from and then return to the battlefield in the *Iliad*. Achilles' first appearance on Skiros is observed by Deidamia while she is 'half-concealed by a pillar' (p. 21) and arouses the interest of the other girls at court:

Achilles knows perfectly well that the girl is watching him. Not just this one; all of them ... These twenty-five pairs of girls' eyes on him make him less free to move ... He fiddles with the bracelets on his arm; turns them, draws them up to the wrist and lets them fall back towards his elbow. The gentle clash of metal.
With these eyes on him he burns. Senses his power. (p. 22)

In Statius, Achilles is also observed by the girls (*Ach.* 1.366-69) but only after he spies on Deidamia (1.301-3) and his immediate passion for her causes him to blush (1.304-10). In the novella, what at first appears to be a reversal of the male gaze (complicated by Achilles' female dress) becomes something else, as the narration of the 'gentle clash of metal', with the strange juxtaposition of 'gentle' and 'clash', is suggestive of Achilles as both a lover and a fighter, someone equally at home on Skiros as on the battlefield.¹⁰⁰ Cook links the sound of

⁹⁹ Moul (2012, 293).

¹⁰⁰ For a reading of 'the gaze' in relation to this episode in *Achilles*, see MacDonald (2017, 90-92). For concept of the male gaze, see Mulvey (2009).

Achilles' bracelets, and its evocation of an Homeric soundscape, with his bodily pleasure at being looked at ('he burns'), and the ambiguous reference to a burgeoning sense of power.

Cook does not resolve the question of what this power refers to: is it to do with his erotic allure – enjoying the girls' enjoyment at looking at him – or his future pre-eminence as a warrior during which time he will, disturbingly, enslave women like those who now look at him? Cook's nod to Achilles' blush ('he burns') on Skiros anticipates and feminizes Achilles' eventual return to war (and the site of Keats's identification with Achilles), while complicating his femininity on the island with martial echoes from Homer.

...

the most divine of goddesses encircled round his head a cloud of gold, and from it blazed bright-shining fire.
And as when smoke rising from a city reaches the clear high air from a distant island, which enemy men fight round, and they the whole day long are pitted in hateful warfare around their city walls, but with the sun's setting the beacon fires blaze, torch upon torch, and flaring upwards the glare becomes visible to those who live around, in the hope that they might come with ships as allies against destruction, so from Achilles' head the radiance reached the clear high air (*Il.* 18.203-14)

Homer likens the visual impact of Achilles in his return to war to the blazing distress signals of people whose cities are sacked. The simile anticipates the fall of Troy (and thus also the death of Achilles), as well as recalling earlier models for besieged cities such as Skiros.

However, Cook blends the final part of the Homeric simile, which describes the ships that the men hope their fires will attract, with a simile from Statius that describes the assembled Greeks to refocus the tenor of Homer's simile from the fall of Troy to Achilles' death:

He finds a tall pine to climb from where he can look out over the island and across the sea. The number of ships is growing. In a hollowed-out tree nearby some bees have built a nest. He speaks to them, observes how they organize themselves. Steals their honey for Deidamia.

From his pine tree lookout he sees the ship with the rust-coloured sails. It is still a long way off but he senses it is aiming at him. He feels the circle tightening. (p. 26)

Her reference to the ‘circle tightening’ nods to Statius’ simile, which is part of the sequence in which the men long for Achilles, that likens the Greek army to wild animals captured during a hunt who grow tame (*Ach.* 1.454-66). Achilles experiences a ‘tightening’ in Cook’s retelling, as she turns the strangeness of Statius’ simile, which likens warriors to passive beasts, to suggest that the battlefield at Troy to which Achilles is headed will be a place marked by similar dynamics of activity-passivity and desire.¹⁰¹ The connection with Homer’s simile maintains the link between the battlefield and constriction (recall how Athena ‘encircles’ Achilles’ head with gold and fire at *Il.* 18.205-6: ‘ἀμφὶ δέ οἱ κεφαλῇ νέφος ἔστρεφε δῖα θεάων/ χρύσεον’) and underlines how the ships in the simile at *Il.* 18.213 and the ships that arrive at Skiros figuratively encircle Achilles by taking him to his death.

Cook engages with the latent and explicit eroticism of the Greeks who long for Achilles across Homer and Statius by transposing the language of love elegy in Statius to the relationship between Achilles and Deidamia while proposing another Greek model in Sappho. Cook’s juxtaposition of ships alongside bees replays Achilles’ periods of activity and inactivity at Troy respectively. The hive that Achilles raids, in a ‘hollowed-out tree’, recalls Homer’s first simile, which describes the surge of the Greek army to the swarm of bees ‘from a hollowed rock’ (*Il.* 2.86-94) and thus looks forward to Achilles’ return to war at Troy (or the martial suggestiveness of *agmine facto* at 1.434 that complicates Carthage’s peace in Virgil’s

¹⁰¹ For the simile, see Moul (2012, 292-93).

bee simile at A. 1.430-36).¹⁰² There is also the bee simile that likens the Greeks to bees who do not swarm in order to guard their homes and children (*Il.* 12.165-72). Achilles will leave for Troy like the first set of swarming bees and leave Deidamia and his child unlike the second set of bees. The connection between Homer's bee similes and Achilles' abandonment of Deidamia also recalls, to my mind, Sappho 146, which shifts the perspective of Achilles' commitment to go to Troy to Deidamia ('neither for me honey nor the honey bee' / 'μήτε μοι μέλι μήτε μέλισσα').¹⁰³ Reading Sappho via Cook gives the fragment a literal rendering, in which its statement of impatience with love's vicissitudes finds expression in the experience of Deidamia, for whom Achilles steals honey but will soon abandon.

Homer's Hector is another warrior for whom others feel desire, as he turns down Helen's invitation to stay in Troy in response to the Trojans: 'who have great longing for me when I am away' ('οἱ μέγ' ἐμεῖο ποθὴν ἀπεόντος ἔχουσιν', *Il.* 6.362). In my chapter on contemporary receptions of *Lysistrata* I called attention to the striking gender play of the passage in which Hector imagines removing his armour and meeting Achilles naked to make peace and flirt like a girl and youth (22.123-28).¹⁰⁴ The patch of 'naked' flesh that Cook's Achilles identifies as the point of weakness in Hector's armour looks back to this speech (p. 40), although Achilles' stay on Skiros pleasingly complicates the identities of the girl and

¹⁰² For Virgil, see Giusti (2018, 103).

¹⁰³ I use the translation of Anne Carson (2002).

¹⁰⁴ For a full discussion of the passage see (pp. 122-27). See Balmer (2004c) for another erotic reception of the meeting between Hector and Achilles, relayed through Hector's viewpoint.

youth. Keats's reading of Shakespeare adds another layer of eroticism to the showdown between the pair, as Achilles' licentiousness and his erotic inaction are addressed directly by Shakespeare's Ulysses in a turn of phrase that becomes fortuitously apt for Cook's erotic retelling 'better would it fit Achilles much/ To throw down Hector than Polyxena' (Shakespeare, *Tro.* 3.3.207-8).¹⁰⁵

Cook's treatment of Achilles and Hector maintains the confluence between the martial and the erotic that she anticipates in the scenes on Skiros and, by entering into erotic dialogue with Homer via Keats, she maps the tradition of erotic reading and rewriting onto her reading of Homer. Cook renders Achilles' fixation with the desecration of Hector's body (22.395-405) as glib, romantic cliché: 'He has eyes for only one man' (p. 42), which maintains Cook's tendency to complicate violence with eroticism while complicating eroticism with violence.¹⁰⁶ Homer's Achilles rejects Hector's appeal for the victor to respect the loser's burial rites:

Hector, doer of unforgettable deeds – do not to me propose your agreements.
As there are no pacts of faith between lions and men,
nor do wolves and lambs have spirit in kind,
but they plot evil unremittingly for one another,
so it is not possible that you and I be friends, nor for us two
will there be oaths (*Il.* 22.261-66)

¹⁰⁵ John Barton's 1969 production of the play for the Royal Shakespeare Company made Achilles' bisexuality explicit. See Greenwald (1985, 73-75).

¹⁰⁶ Kozak (2008, 156) makes the point that the violence of Achilles' speeches to Hector are so visceral because of the peaceful and romantic possibilities to which they gesture, e.g., *Il.* 22.261-72, 22.345-54. See also C. Segal (1971).

Achilles likens his relationship to Hector as one ‘between lions and men’ which recalls the earlier lion simile that is used to evoke his mourning for Patroclus and crystallize his resolution for revenge (18.316-22).¹⁰⁷ However, Achilles’ refusal to contemplate friendship (‘so it is not possible that you and I be friends’/ ‘ὡς οὐκ ἔστ’ ἐμὲ καὶ σὲ φιλήμεναι’, 22.265) belies a latent eroticism that is realized in tragedy and revisited by Cook when she records Achilles’ frustration at the preservation of Hector’s body and notes that his corpse ‘has only one mark: a stain like a kiss at Hector’s throat’ (p. 42). The verb that Homer uses to imagine the cultivation of this friendship – φιλέω – has erotic connotations for Achilles in reception. Aeschylus’ *Myrmidons* fragment 135 gives us a glimpse of Achilles rebuking Patroclus for wanting to help the Greeks: ‘And you did not respect the sacred honour of the thigh-bond,/ ungrateful that you were for those countless kisses’ (‘σέβας δὲ μηρῶν ἀγνὸν οὐ κατηδέσω,/ ὧ̃ δυσχάριστε τῶν πυκνῶν φιλημάτων’).¹⁰⁸ Aeschylus shifts the meaning of φιλέω from the bestowal of friendship to kisses and it is in this way that we can understand the mark ‘like a kiss’ on Hector’s body in Cook.

Cook interweaves the threads of the epic narrative and Achilles’ vengeance with Aeschylus’ erotic reception to transform Achilles’ avenging actions against Hector into the kisses that recall the loving relationship between Achilles and Patroclus. Homer’s Achilles

¹⁰⁷ For revenge and lament from epic to tragedy, see Loraux (1998, 43-53).

¹⁰⁸ I use the translation of Sommerstein (2008). See Balmer’s recently published creative response to *Myrmidons*, in *The Paths of Survival* (2017).

almost invites this intertextuality as he describes Hector as ‘unforgettable’ (ἄλαστος).¹⁰⁹ Alexander’s translation suggests that the deeds of Hector are unforgettable, but what we get in the Greek, perhaps with the inflection of reading Cook, is a focus on Hector’s body that Achilles is looking at while he speaks (“Ἐκτορ μή μοι ἄλαστε συνημοσύνας ἀγόρευε”). Hector’s body thus becomes a kind of monument to the death of Patroclus and the focus of Achilles’ revenge. In this way, Cook’s description of Achilles contemplating the body of Hector ‘[l]ike a lover’ is provocatively ambiguous and seems to refer not only to the body of Hector but, through Hector, to the body of Patroclus.¹¹⁰ The doubling of the two warriors is, of course, further compounded by the fact that Hector is wearing the armour that Patroclus wore into battle, so that the erotic kisses that Aeschylus’ Achilles tells us he shares with Patroclus become martial kisses on the body of Hector.¹¹¹

4.5 Conclusion

Cook considers Keats only briefly, in the final twelve pages of the novella, however, Keats – as a writer, a reader, and a thinker - exercises a profound influence over the whole work. ‘Relay’ is crucial to an understanding of Cook’s response to Achilles in reception, in

¹⁰⁹ Loraux (1986, 99).

¹¹⁰ Cook borrows this phrasing from Keats, who looks ‘upon fine phrases like a lover’ (*Letters* 2.139).

¹¹¹ Achilles’ use of Hector’s body as a stand in for Patroclus also seems in defiance of Hecabe’s lament at 24.754-56 in which she makes the point that mistreating Hector’s body did not bring Patroclus back, discussed in Murnaghan (1997, 39).

which Keats's expression of admiration for the warrior is the catalyst for Cook's reception of Achilles. Keats calls attention to reading and writing as idiosyncratic and embodied activities that expose the sites of fracture, fragmentation, and plurality that exist within Homeric poetry. Keats's historically attested anxiety over gender and genre offers to Cook a way to unravel the masculine, epic pose of Homer. Keats enables her to strip away – figuratively and literally – the armour of the Homeric hero and get beneath the surface of the epic text and its tradition to uncover the tensions that underlie Achilles' trajectory to Troy. Keats involves himself in the story of Achilles and Cook presents his interest in the hero as a way to reimagine the Homeric warrior. The passage of Chapman that describes Patroclus' funeral looks forward to Achilles' death, while its reception in Cook looks back to Achilles' death and forward to Keats's. Cook imagines Keats mourning for Achilles to foreground how mourning in the epic shares her own interests in materiality and embodiment. Cook presents Keats as a non-binary reader and rewriter of classical literature through which she can imagine a non-binary Achilles. The warrior's trajectory to Troy is primed by his experience on Skiros but not in the way that Statius suggests, in which sexual violence trains the warrior into masculinity. Instead, Keats's performances of Achilles and Achilles' performance of Phyrria anticipate the erotic meeting between Achilles and Hector.

4.6 Coda: Peleus and Thetis via Keats

The 'emerging strategies' for classical reception that I identify in this thesis suggest a new aesthetic that marries feminist politics with ambivalence, irony, and/or indeterminacy. I believe that Cook's work, which engages with Keats to foreground intertextuality, embodiment, and sensuality, comes closest to provoking the blissful reading experience that

Barthes identifies in the writerly text. To foreground the differences that Cook makes as a reader and to the reader I compare her reception of the rape of Thetis (Ovid, *Met.* 11.221-65) to those of three near contemporaries: Jo Shapcott, Carol Ann Duffy, and Ted Hughes.

The ubiquity of sexual violence across Ovid's oeuvre, with rape serving as one of the central metaphors of his poetics, means that his work provokes feminist academics to think through their own critical practice as readers.¹¹² No other ancient author excites the same level of self-scrutiny, in which engaging with Ovid seems to necessitate engaging with one's feminism.¹¹³ The classic way to resist Ovid's fascination with sexual violence is to detect, draw out, or transpose female subjectivity into his poetry (although the proliferation of

¹¹² Ovid occupies an exceptional place in the history of feminism in the discipline, in which the dilemma of reading, or not reading, his poetry as a woman reappears time and again as the test case for how to go about the practice of feminist Classics, see e.g., Richlin (1992a); also the WCC panel on Ovid, discussed in Liveley (2006b). The bibliography for the intersection of Ovidian studies and feminist approaches to classical literature is vast. There are examples that approach Ovid's work using a feminist methodology, often concerned with how literary representations of gender express Roman power dynamics, see e.g. E. Greene (1998), Sharrock (2002b). Within this subfield are works that map Ovid's portrayal of women against contemporary Roman culture to measure the extent to which his work supports or inverts existing hierarchies. There are those for whom Ovid's treatment of women reveals a kind of proto-feminism, critical of mainstream misogyny, see e.g. Curran (1978). While there are also those for whom Ovid's fixation with female suffering in his poetry smacks of misogyny, see e.g. Richlin (1992a). For a good overview, see Sharrock (2002a). Interesting avenues in Ovidian criticism include the elaboration of desire as 'intersubjectivity' in Ovid, see Rimell (2006).

¹¹³ See especially Joplin (2002) [1984]; Richlin (1992a).

modern female-authored receptions of Ovid may evidence growing diversity).¹¹⁴ While Shapcott and Duffy employ strategies of resistance to expose the rape and to connect the representation of violence with women's lives, Cook treats feminist resistance with ambivalence and re-visions the narrative with an eye to the body, pleasure, and the perverse.¹¹⁵ In Cook's retelling, what we find is an account of voyeurism, violence, and rape

¹¹⁴ For resisting reading as critical strategy in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, see Liveley (1999). The proliferation of feminist readings of Ovid is mirrored by the abundance of contemporary women writers who return to the poet in myriad ways and these interventions call attention to the close relationship between critical and creative practice. See e.g., Ranger (2016) for the central role of women's reading and rewriting for the politicization of the poet across the twentieth and into the twenty first centuries; see also F. M. Cox (2018). For Ovid in reception more generally, see e.g., Brown (1999); Hardie et al. (1999); Martindale (1988); J. F. Miller and Newlands (2014).

¹¹⁵ There are surprisingly few treatments of Thetis' rape among the wave of feminist responses to the *Metamorphoses*. Leo Curran's sweeping survey of rape in the poem does not give a sustained reading of the episode, see Curran (1978). However, Curran, who suggests that Ovid sympathetically responds to and exposes female suffering in his poetry, does use the rape to point to wider themes and tropes, such as sleeping victims and those who are trapped by their assailant (as Thetis is bound by Peleus, at *Met.* 11.260) (1978, 218, 232). When the episode appears in a work without an explicitly feminist agenda, it is treated unambiguously as rape. Peter Heslin (2005, 262) contrasts the lack of consent in Ovid's narrative with Catullus' treatment in poem 64. To Heslin, the matter of Thetis' consent in Catullus remains unresolved, while there is no equivalent lack of clarity in Ovid. Although I would add that Heslin ducks the matter of consent in Catullus somewhat, stating of poem 64: 'Thetis marries Peleus willingly, or at least without disgust (*non despexit*)'. See also Fantham (1993, 22-29).

that becomes, over the course of several transformations, something else entirely.¹¹⁶ By setting the resistance of Shapcott and Duffy against the ambivalence and indeterminacy of Cook, the latter's alternative, and altogether more compelling, approach to thinking through women's writing of classical reception and its relationship to feminist politics begins to emerge.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ For the issue of voyeurism in Ovid's poetry, see e.g. Salzman-Mitchell (2005).

¹¹⁷ For closure and the *Metamorphoses*, see Theodorakopoulos (1999). By way of some brief background to Ovid's treatment of the myth: the episode begins by setting out how Jupiter, frustrated by his own desire for Thetis, sends Peleus to 'embrace' (*amplexus*) the sea goddess in his place (*Met.* 11.224-28). The poet describes the scene, rather than the goddess herself, in sensual detail as *ecphrasis*, before remarking on Thetis' habitual nakedness (11.229-37). Peleus arrives to find Thetis asleep in her cave (11.238) and after trying, and failing, to seduce her, he turns to violence ('and then, since she wouldn't respond to his wooing entreaties...'/ '*quoniam precibus temptata repugnas/ vim parat...*', 11.239-40). Thetis begins to transform: from bird, to tree, to tiger, at which point Peleus retreats to seek the advice of Proteus (11.241-46). He instructs Peleus to return to Thetis while she sleeps, to tie her up, and to not let go until she stops changing shape (11.247-56). Peleus returns and follows Proteus' instructions, rendering Thetis' metamorphoses ineffective (11.257-62). Thetis eventually relents under the assumption that Peleus clearly has divine support (11.263). Peleus has sex with the goddess and, in so doing, 'mighty' Achilles is conceived (11.264-65). For the context of Ovid's retelling within the *Metamorphoses* and for his response to the mythic tradition, see A. H. F. Griffin (1997, 129-33). All references to the text are taken from the translation of David Raeburn (2004).

I begin with Ted Hughes's engagement with the same myth in his poetry collection *Tales of Ovid* (1997) to show how the centrality of the female reader to my re-vision of classical reception studies also offers a corrective to the male readers and writers who currently dominate the field.¹¹⁸ Cook's exemplary retelling of the myth may also offer a more robust critique of Hughes's retelling. For while Shapcott and Duffy's readings will call attention to the latent misogyny of Hughes, Cook's reception will demonstrate that Hughes's treatment is fairly unremarkable. The kind of equivocations and ironies that characterize classical reception in the model of the female reader are absent from Hughes's rather more straightforward version that maintains the collusion between the poet voice and Peleus and neglects the untapped potential of Thetis' viewpoint. The main contribution that Hughes makes to the Ovidian tradition is in his emphasis on the violence of Thetis' transformations, which results in greater sympathy for Peleus.

His every soft word hardened her colder.
If they had been two cats, he was thinking,
She would have been flattened to the wall,
Her mask fixed in a snarl, spitting at him.
He took his cue from that. Where argument
Fails, violence follows. (p. 102)

The first five and a half lines of the passage are Hughes's invention and anticipate Peleus' change of tack, where Hughes crisply translates the cause-and-effect of Ovid's Latin in the final one and a half lines (cf. '*et quoniam precibus temptata repugnas,/ vim parat, innectens ambobus colla lacertis*' *Met.* 11.239-40). Hughes suggests that Peleus' turn to violence is in response to and modelled on the imagined violence of Thetis. Hughes continues in this vein as

¹¹⁸ For Hughes's classical reception, see Rees (2009).

Thetis begins to transform, describing her form as a lion in martial terms to perhaps anticipate Achilles ('As her paw hit him with the impact/ of a fifty-kilo lump of snaggy bronze', p. 102), and emphasizing the mismatch between Thetis-as-lion and Peleus (in the same way, though for different ends, as Jo Shapcott discussed below). Hughes's description of Thetis' eventual surrender to Peleus is perhaps even less convincing than Ovid's and is wholly inattentive to the equivocation implied by Thetis' turn from resistance to consent.

... 'Heaven has helped you,'
She panted. 'Only heaven
Could have given me to you, and made me yours.' (p. 104)

Hughes sexualizes Thetis' groan or sigh from Ovid (*ingemuit*, 11.263) before going on to invent an oddly sentimental, even romantic, sequence in which Peleus massages her hands and feet before '[s]he was content to let them take possession/ Of her skin, her heart, and, at last, of her womb' (p. 104)

In Jo Shapcott's contribution to Michael Hofmann and James Lasdun's collection *After Ovid: New Metamorphoses* (1994), 'Peleus and Thetis', the poet wrests back narrative control for the shapeshifter. However, Thetis' empowerment soon unravels and the poem turns to deliver a harrowing indictment of male-on-female violence and its fetishization in the tradition. In Shapcott's poem, Thetis meets Peleus' assault with provocation, 'No man frightens me' (l. 1), and directly responds to the gaze that establishes the *mise en scène* for Peleus' assault in Ovid. She appropriates the authority of the poet voice to demand the attention of her audience (and Ovid and Peleus) as she begins to change: 'Watch as I stretch/ my limbs for the transformation' (ll. 1-2). In this way, transformation becomes a kind of self-aware performance and the experience of metamorphosis is relayed by Thetis in terms that flesh out the Ovidian narrative, which is more interested in the challenge for Peleus than the

dynamism of Thetis, to offer a sense of what the turn from bird, to tree, to tiger feels like (e.g. ‘Low tremendous purrs start at the pit/ of my stomach’, ll. 22-23).¹¹⁹

However, as the transformations continue, Thetis’ tone of defiance shifts to betray an undercurrent of disquiet. In the middle section of Shapcott’s poem, Thetis speaks out to accuse her audience (and Ovid and Peleus) of voyeurism:

My name is Thetis Creatrix and you,
voyeur, if you looked a little closer, would see
the next ripples spread up my bloody tail, to bloom
between my spine as the bark begins to harden
over my trunk... (ll. 13-17)

The self-assurance of her performance falters, as she exposes the failure of Ovid and his readers to realize the reality of her transformations (‘if you looked a little closer’).

Significantly, Thetis makes this statement that calls the accuracy of her literary representation into question at the point at which she changes into a tree. Shapcott appears to overlay Thetis’ transformation with the misattribution of consent for female resistance exemplified by Ovid’s treatment of Daphne’s ‘nodding head’ (cf. *Met.* 1.556-67). Issues of perception and interpretation are central to a feminist response to the passage, with Apollo’s reading of Daphne’s consent an obvious target for rereading.¹²⁰ Shapcott implies that Thetis is another Daphne, so that the self-assured posturing by which Thetis opens the poem is undermined.

¹¹⁹ At Peleus’ second attempt in Ovid, the narrative does not even detail the specifics of her transformations, simply stating that she ‘started to take new shapes’ (11.261), see Fantham (1993, 28).

¹²⁰ Curran (1978, 229-30). For the reception of Daphne and Apollo in the poetry of Jorie Graham and Eavan Boland, see R. Fowler (2006).

Just as Apollo fails to notice (or care) how Daphne continues to recoil from his caress (*Met.* 1.556), Thetis' audience is alerted to the limits and partiality of representation.

In the *Metamorphoses*, Peleus' first attempt to rape Thetis is unsuccessful after she turns into a tiger, though he releases her out of fear rather than in reaction to harm (11.246).¹²¹ In Shapcott's poem, the impotence of Thetis' transformation is underlined, as Thetis-the-tiger is far from ferocious, 'dabbing' at inanimate objects, tiny insects, and small animal corpses: 'Put out a paw/ to dab a stone, an ant, a dead lamb' (ll. 26-27). Shapcott's poem ends with Thetis' final metamorphosis, as she reveals the reality of the rape victim with graphic detail:

...Life
my life, is all play even up to the moment
when I'm tripped up, thrown down, bound,
raped until I bleed from my eyes,
beaten out of shape and forced to bring forth War. (ll. 27-31)

The tone is bitter with sarcasm ('Life/ my life, is all play...'), forcing the reader to reevaluate their reception of Thetis' earlier bravado against an Ovidian tradition of amatory games (or play) in which women incite male desire with feigned coyness (e.g. *Ars* 1.673-78). The shift in the poem's final four lines harness the potential of 'shock' as a powerful literary effect, in which reversals in tone and/or content heighten the emotional response of the reader.¹²² Not only is it now clear that Thetis' transformations were attempts to resist and evade a violent attack, but the reversal that the poem executes also calls attention to the reader's complicity in

¹²¹ Fantham (1993, 27).

¹²² For 'shock' as a catalyst for political consciousness in feminist criticism, see Felski (2008, 105-31).

rape narratives. Similarly, Thetis' trajectory through the poem, from bluster to brutalization, issues a note of caution to writers who attempt to re-vision and overturn, rather than expose, literary misogyny. Shapcott, through Thetis, guides us through the failure of a literary strategy of empowerment, as the violence of Ovid appears just as inescapable for the women writer as the assault of Peleus is to Thetis.

Carol Ann Duffy's 'Thetis', the second poem in her feminist collection *The World's Wife* (1999), follows Shapcott's poem in its resistance to Ovid. Both receptions begin from the moment of Thetis' first transformation and the poems unfold from her perspective. Duffy's eight verses follow a pattern, with Thetis' transformations detailed in the opening three lines of each, before the neutralization of her efforts by an assailant in the final three. In Duffy's reception, the pursuit for her Peleus-figure is just as transformative as for Thetis, as he responds to her changes in kind:

So I shopped for a suitable shape.
Size 8. Snake.
Big Mistake.
Coiled in my charmer's lap,
I felt the grasp of his strangler's clasp
at my nape. (ll. 13-18)

Thetis' metamorphoses exceed those of Ovid, as she also takes on the forms of a snake, various marine animals, a number of mammals, hot air, and fire. In this way, Duffy acknowledges Proteus, the source of Peleus' instructions in Ovid (11.250-54), whose own changes of form in the *Metamorphoses* see him become a snake, water, and fire (8.732-37). Lacking the explicit violence of Shapcott's poem, Duffy's 'Thetis' pairs extraordinary transformations with the domestic, even the mundane, so that it is not just the sexual act that

is the focus of Thetis' resistance but the unfolding of an undesired relationship.¹²³ She turns into: 'Mermaid,...big fish, eel, dolphin,/ whale' (ll. 27-28), only to be caught by a fisherman 'with his hook and his line and his sinker' (l. 30) in a pun on romantic cliché that imaginatively plays off Peleus binding Thetis in Ovid. Duffy's Thetis maintains her resistance throughout the poem until she gives birth and, in the final three lines, her tone changes:

Then my tongue was flame
and my kisses burned,
but the groom wore asbestos.
So I changed, I learned,
turned inside out – or that's
how it felt when the child burst out. (ll. 43-48)

Duffy takes in Catullus' treatment of the myth and its focus on the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, in which the groom's indifference to the resistance underlying Thetis' burning kisses seems like a wry reference to the burning love that Thetis is said to feel for Peleus in Catullus 64 (64.19). The anonymization of 'the child' demurs from subsuming Thetis' experience into the wider epic narrative of the Trojan War as the mother of Achilles. Her final transformation is thus into a reluctant wife and mother, as Duffy renders her violation and dissatisfaction unremarkable in the context of heterosexual relationships under patriarchy.

Finally, Cook's retelling takes place in the second chapter of *Achilles* and begins with Peleus' calculated assault on his sleeping victim, in which '[s]o he stalks her' (p. 14) serves as a thrice-repeated refrain (cf. Ovid, *Met.* 11.221-65).¹²⁴ The narrator watches Peleus watching

¹²³ For the strategy of domestication in women's classical reception, see Braund (2012).

¹²⁴ For the 'sleeping beauty' trope in Latin love poetry, though with a focus on Propertius, see Tatham (2000).

Thetis and anticipates her resistance: ‘The last thing she wants is some man clambering all over her’ (p. 14). It takes two pages of description outlining Thetis’ undisturbed contentment on the beach before Peleus launches his assault (pp. 14-15). And once Peleus does attack, Thetis begins to transform from fish, to fire, to water, to lion, and to snake (pp. 16-18). In this, her fifth transformation, she becomes ‘[s]o narrow she could slip away if she chose’ (p. 18); but it seems that she does not. Her final metamorphosis, into a cuttlefish, sees Thetis no longer resisting: ‘[s]he needs him to find her’ (p. 19) and it is now Peleus’ desire that is under scrutiny: ‘He has no choice’ (p. 19). Thetis, as a cuttlefish, reaches orgasm: ‘Hit. Met. The stars dissolve’ (p. 19) and she, now joined by Peleus, returns to sleep on the beach: ‘Neither of them wake until the sun has removed itself from the beach’ (p. 19).

Thetis’ initial metamorphoses are unambiguous efforts to evade and escape, while narrative interjections such as ‘she could slip away if she chose’ find unsettling crossover in and appear to expose the rhetoric of rape myths. Thetis’ volte-face in Cook, from resistance to consent, seems potentially just as troubling as the resignation of Ovid’s Thetis (‘At last she gave in, as she sighed, “You win! Some god must be helping you.”’, *Met.* 11.263-64) and little more persuasive than the unconvincing enthusiasm in Catullus (‘Thetis did not despise human hymeneals’, 64.20). The final juncture in the Peleus-Thetis narrative appears to add further misgivings, describing the moment after Thetis’ orgasm in such a way that tenderness is undercut by bathos:

Thetis, a woman, under him. He draws himself up for a moment to look on his new wife with tenderness. Then he turns her over, enters her again, and empties himself of all the forms he has ever been. (p. 19)

Cook’s Peleus finds ‘Thetis, *a woman*, under him’ (p. 19, emphasis my own), which is a subtle, though significant, addition in the summation of the encounter (Ovid’s Peleus

‘discovers’ Thetis once she stops shapeshifting, ‘*exhibita estque Thetis*’, 11.264). By making sure to emphasize her human form, Cook seems to invite readings that recognize the extra-literary significance that give representations of rape their feminist potency.

And yet such an easy alignment of feminist politics with Cook’s work flattens the layers of her reception. In an interview in *Practitioners’ Voices*, Cook acknowledges but withholds from clarifying the complicated dynamic that underpins her retelling:

I think there is ... a moment in the Peleus and Thetis where it does change and suddenly he can’t get away from her and I think that’s interesting about, you know, the complications of sex.¹²⁵

To Cook, it seems, Thetis’ authenticity, the ‘real woman’ that Peleus finds under him, renders her less a modern parable of sexual violence and more an exemplar for the messiness of sexual relationships. Cook’s reading of Ovid is challenging in this respect, more so than Shapcott or Duffy’s, whose works combine poetic language with the communication of a clear political message and reify the relationship between feminist reading, resistance, and women’s writing. While the modern equivalences that Shapcott and Duffy draw in their poems make for shocking reading, their art is in some ways compromised by its instrumentalization, in which form is secondary to content. Once the reader gets the gist of the message, it is doubtful that multiple readings will reward with ever deeper resonances.

Cook does not so much resist as respond to Ovid, drawing out and building on the ancient material, and as I continue to analyze her reception, it should become clear that these moments of ambivalence and indeterminacy enhance the text in ways that reward reading and

¹²⁵ E. Cook (2013).

re-reading. Moreover, while her work is irreducible to political ideology, it is radical nonetheless.¹²⁶ In this way, Cook's reception of Ovid proves a useful test case for rethinking not only women's classical reception but also the work of the feminist classicist. The tantalizingly brief mention of Peleus and Thetis in Zajko's critical response to *Achilles* points to what can be done in this regard. Zajko recognizes that part of the value in Cook's reception lies in the fact that she does not reduce reading Ovid to an exercise in mitigating for or exposing misogyny. She even points to the episode as indicative of the ('by no means uncontroversial') 'feminist "edge"' of the novella, describing the encounter as 'mesmerizing and highly erotic', in which Cook transforms 'the rape of Thetis into a sensual celebration of mutual sexual struggle and orgasm'.¹²⁷

Cook's retelling retains the episode's third person narration and far from reacting against the voyeuristic build up to the assault, she draws it out further. Cook's Thetis is not just imagined naked and riding a dolphin, she *is* a naked seacreature who delights in her play, as the reader is invited to 'see' her body in ways far more immediate and intimate than Ovid:

The sea and the air make love to her daily, know each fold and whorl of her, every line of foot and hand, every cleft and dimple. (p. 14)

¹²⁶ See the letter of Keats, which asserts: 'We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us' (*Letters* 1.224). E. Cook (2013) also shrinks from flattening her work to a feminist agenda: 'I don't know, I mean I think it might be useful for other people thinking about it. I can't say I self-consciously decided to enter that line but I'm a woman and I'm a feminist but it's not for me a deliberate agenda.'

¹²⁷ Zajko (2006b, 48 n. 6). See also MacDonald (2017, 66-77).

Cook adapts Ovid, interspersing references to his poem with lines of her own invention, and maintains the eroticism of the scene but redirects the narrative tension between rapist and victim in anticipation of a more complicated encounter:

Picture a sickel-shaped bay on Thessaly's coast, with its arms
Jutting out like the ends of a bow. If the water inside it were deeper,
there'd be a harbour; but only a film of sea spreads over
the top of the sand. The shore is so firm that it shows no footprints,
it's easy to walk on and isn't bestrewn with squelching seaweed.
Nearby is a coppice of myrtles, laden with black and green berries.

...

One day she was lying there fast asleep, when Peleus surprised her
as ordered, and then, since she wouldn't respond to his wooing entreaties,
he clasped her neck in his amorous arms and attempted to rape her. (Ovid, *Met.*
11.229-40)

She has come to this place for eight days now. A little bay, shaped like a new moon,
cradling the sea between the delicate horns of its headlands. The sand on the beach is
shockingly white: if a crab moves across, denting the drift with heavy claw, its
darkness can be seen from the cliffs above. You don't need eagle eyes to see like an
eagle here, everything is so sharpened and magnified ... A cave, sandy-floored, cool,
its entrance screened by myrtle.

A good lookout.

Only Thetis does not look out.

While she sleeps Peleus watches her, the myrtle his screen too. (*Achilles* pp. 14-15)¹²⁸

Cook's sand emphasizes rather than obscures trespass, while the myrtle is recognized for its potential to enable Thetis, and not just Peleus, to look out unobserved. The narrative interjection: 'You don't need eagle eyes to see like an eagle from here', is Cook's invention and seems to suggest multiple intertexts or ways at 'looking in' to the narrative scene. On the

¹²⁸ C. Segal (1969, 20-23) suggests that Ovid uses landscape to set the scene for Peleus' attempted seduction.

surface, the rejection of the need for ‘eagle eyes’, set against Thetis’ obliviousness and Peleus’ watchfulness, enhances the sense of Thetis’ vulnerability and establishes a tone of anxious anticipation. The phrasing evokes Iliadic similes of predators and their prey (e.g. *Il.* 17.673-81) and there is a nod to Keats’s sonnet to Chapman’s Homer here too, in which the ‘eagle eyes’ of Cortez are central to the poem’s theme of literary enchantment in belatedness. Keats’s first use of ‘eagle eyes’ appears in the Chapman sonnet and the poet uses the motif throughout his poetry to celebrate poetic capacity (or bemoan its lack in the case of ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’).¹²⁹ Cook’s rejection of eagles eyes in the passage with Peleus-Thetis prepares the reader for the equivocations of what will follow, in which the main thing to note is not what you see but what you intuit or feel.

Cook draws on the Greek tradition in which it is Chiron, not Proteus, who instructs Peleus, as the hero seeks advice before pursuing Thetis.¹³⁰ Cook gives us the centaur, detailing the best way to overcome Thetis’ resistance, seduced by his own description: ‘He

¹²⁹ Pollack-Pelzner (2007).

¹³⁰ Cook’s use of Chiron as advisor follows Pindar, *Nemean* 3.56-68 and Apollodorus 3.13.5. This may, in part, be a practical decision as Chiron will figure in his own section later in *Achilles* (‘Vulnerable’, pp. 83-91). Furthermore, the tradition of Chiron as a teacher is explored by Mary Renault in *The Bull from the Sea* (2004) [1962], which E. Cook (2013) identifies as an early influence. However, Chiron’s involvement in Peleus’ rape of Thetis also connects the episode with the novella’s treatment of Helen and her rape by Theseus (pp. 72-73, 77-79), another of Chiron’s pupils, see e.g. Statius, *Achilleid* 1.157. As noted, Helen’s childhood abuse, and her victimhood, is not subject to the same ambiguity.

too would like to pin her under his hooves' (p. 13). He imagines himself in Peleus' place, and Cook falls back on the question that acts as her marker for a responsive reading and writing practice, as Chiron wonders: 'What would it be like?' (p.13). In an early draft for *Achilles*, Cook makes explicit the connection between the episodes of Odysseus and Peleus and Thetis, and she notes next to Chiron's question: 'this picks up on Circe in the last section – O does not know what it will be like' (emphasis in the original).¹³¹ What then follows is significant for the way in which Peleus' rape/seduction both is and is not like what Chiron had anticipated. Chiron can foresee Thetis' opposition: "She will do everything she can to throw you..." (p. 13) but not her eventual participation, nor the complicated emotions that will be felt by Peleus: 'He is very near to losing himself – and if he does so he'll lose her, though just now he doesn't have the mind to care' (p. 18). Thetis' expectations are similarly defied; from an initial reluctance, to the enactment of desire. Indeed, while we are told at the start of Cook's chapter that '[t]he last thing she wants is some man clambering all over her' (p. 14), what Thetis goes on to experience with Peleus is something very different:

So they ride for a while, she fast around his body, covering him with her coils; he fast around the fine pulse of her tongue, intent on extracting its bag of nectar. (p. 18)

The tradition of Proteus' metamorphoses from which Ovid draws for Thetis is characterized by surprise: the changes for which the advice-giver primes the hero fail to anticipate the full gamut of Proteus' forms in both Homer and Virgil.¹³² Ovid adds a new

¹³¹ See E. Cook (1986-2003).

¹³² Fantham (1993, 27). In Homer, Eidothee tells Menelaus to expect transformations into water, fire, and, rather vaguely, every kind of beast (*Od.* 4.416-19). In practice, Proteus changes from a lion, to a snake, to a panther, to a bear, to water, and a tree (4.455-59). In Virgil, Cyrene tells

layer to this tradition of uncertainty, as Peleus' initial assault on Thetis is a task for which he is completely unprepared. Peleus seeks out Proteus for advice only after failing to rape Thetis in the first instance. Cook takes this tradition of indeterminacy one step further. For not only does Chiron leave Peleus ignorant as to the likely shapes Thetis will take, but Peleus and Thetis both undergo what could be described as emotional and libidinal metamorphoses during their encounter, oscillating between resistance and desire. Their indeterminacy makes for a disorientating experience for the reader on whose attention the narrative demands an equivalent readiness to change. The narrator voice speaks to Peleus, either in recollection of Chiron or as a reflection of Peleus' interior monologue, but the imperatives are relayed as if to the reader: 'Close now. Move with it. Let it tune you' (p. 17).

The trajectory and tone of Cook's narrative hinge on Thetis and her response to Peleus. Thetis' shapeshifting in Ovid is an obstacle to the consummation of desire that Peleus must overcome and the pair do not have sex until after Thetis stops changing. In Cook's reception, the struggle between Peleus and Thetis *is* their first sexual encounter and Thetis only stops resisting and responding to Peleus at the point of orgasm. As in Duffy's poem, Peleus changes in response to Thetis ('Has he become fish to meet her?'), however, in Cook, Peleus' changes do not overpower or neutralize the forms that Thetis takes. Thetis burns Peleus as she becomes fire, a '[r]oped flame' (p. 16), but then turns to water in a change that soothes Peleus and renders her opposition less clear ('She cools him. Restores him to his

Aristaeus to expect a boar, a tiger, a serpent or a lion, water, and fire (*G.* 4.407-10). In the event, Proteus only attempts fire, an indeterminate 'fearful beast', and water (*G.* 442).

edge', p 17). Thetis' transformation into a lion is not undercut with the same sense of redundancy as in Shapcott, but neither is her lion a threat to Peleus as in Hughes.

A lion now, she straddles him; would maul him between her huge paws but he wraps himself around her, legs and arms clasping her trunk as she tries, at this awkward angle, to take his head into the cave of her mouth. She can't reach and his wrap around her tightens. The lion Thetis feels herself squeezed almost to beyond bearing. Held now, she wants not so much to escape as to fight. (p. 17)

The pair reach a kind of stalemate, as Thetis' desire to fight seems ready to spill over into eroticism, which foreshadows how Cook will recast Achilles and Hector's relationship on the battlefield.

The eroticism of Cook's reception calls attention to pleasure as an unruly phenomenon that overwhelms an approach that measures literary representation against feminist politics, in which Thetis' initial reluctance can only ever categorize Peleus' actions as rape. In the build up to Peleus' attack, there is a playful nod to female desire as something hitherto unexplored or misunderstood and it is striking to note that Ovid's treatment of Peleus and Thetis was left out of the 1907 edition of G. A. T Davies who deemed its sexual explicitness 'unsuitable for school reading'.¹³³ In Cook, Thetis' resistance to Peleus is not framed as virginal propriety but instead expresses a reluctance to engage with male sexuality. Thetis is already fulfilled, as her eroticism plays out in ways that are distinct from having a male partner: 'She, on her own, is perfectly happy, unpenetrated by man or god. The sea and the air make love to her daily...' (p. 14). Thetis' most significant transformation in relation to Peleus in *Achilles* is arguably

¹³³ Cited in A. H. F. Griffin (1997, 5). The other passage that Davies excludes from his translation is *Met.* 11.303-17, in which Apollo and Mercury both rape the same girl, Chione, who then becomes pregnant.

from desired object to desiring subject but to recognize this any reader sensitive to the feminist potency of representation may have to undergo her own metamorphosis: opening up her politics to indeterminacy and pleasure.¹³⁴ The ambiguity inherent in Cook's narrative makes what is, to my mind, an arresting point about the ability of literature to tease apart and expose the messiness of embodiment and desire that political conviction – and the readings of texts they inspire – may fail or refuse to acknowledge. Thetis' rape-seduction invites the reader – the female and feminist reader especially – to meditate on the ways in which our experiences exceed and confound the strictures of our politics and how, in this way, our desires and our bodies make conflicted shapeshifters of us all.

¹³⁴ The turn to emotion, subjectivity, and pleasure in feminist literary criticism is a theme to which I would like to return as I think it could further enrich the theoretical framework for the female reader. See e.g. Chabot Davis (2007); Felski (2008), (2015).

5. YAEL FARBER'S *MOLOGRA*

In this chapter I examine *Molora* (2008a), a response to Aeschylus' *Oresteia* by South African playwright and director, Yael Farber. The play recasts the House of Atreus mythology as a series of confrontations between Klytemnestra and Elektra, whose speeches look back to the events that led up to the matricide in the tragedies by interweaving passages from *Agamemnon* and *Libation Bearers* with the *Electras* of Sophocles and Euripides.¹ Farber does not follow Aeschylus' trilogy through to its conclusion, as she resolves the conflict between Klytemnestra and her children before the act of matricide and the events in *Eumenides*. The women reopen old wounds and re-enact past violence by revisiting and remembering the

¹ When referring to *Molora* (2008a), I follow Yael Farber's spellings of Ayesthus, Elektra, Ephigenia, and Klytemnestra. For clarity, I then use Aegisthus, Electra, Iphigenia, and Clytemnestra to refer to their appearances in the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. I follow the translations used by Farber for *Molora*, unless otherwise stated. For Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Farber uses the translations of Robert Fagles (1977) and, to a lesser extent, Louis MacNeice (1967); I use Fagles, however, my line references refer to the Greek edition of Herbert Weir Smyth (1926). For *Libation Bearers*, Farber uses Ian Johnston (2005); I follow this, with line references corresponding to the Greek edition of Herbert Weir Smyth (1926). For Sophocles' *Electra*, Farber uses the translations of Richard Claverhouse Jebb (online) and David Grene (1957); I use Grene, however, my line references refer to the Greek edition of Francis Storr (1913). For Euripides' *Electra*, Farber uses Edward Paley Coleridge (online); I follow this with line references corresponding to the Greek edition of Gilbert Murray (1913). Farber uses Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* sparingly, following the Edward Paley Coleridge translation (online); I follow this with line reference corresponding to the Greek edition of Gilbert Murray (1913).

ancient plays until Orestes, whose role is significantly reduced in Farber's retelling, pleads with Elektra to 'rewrite this ancient end' (p. 76). Orestes' evocative phrase, which reacts to Elektra's statement that the 'night's end is already written' (p. 74), calls attention to Farber's intervention in the trajectory of the tragedies, as well as to the emphasis she places on the plays as resources to read and rewrite. Farber lifts passages directly from selected translations of the plays for Klytemnestra and Elektra to recite, and they use the play-texts as written testimonials to their past. Farber places content from the ancient plays alongside new set pieces that recall and respond to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (hereafter TRC). The tentative reconciliation that the characters reach at the play's close, which precludes the establishment of the Areopagus, holds a spotlight on South Africa's own efforts to heal the wounds of colonialism and apartheid government without retributive justice.

Farber presents the tragedies as plays about memory, in which the reminiscences of and recriminations between characters, preserved in and documented by the play-texts, work against the *telos* of the *Oresteia* trilogy.² Her own version seems to miss the triumphalism of Athena's resolution, as the uneasy reconciliation between the characters recalls the ancient

² For remembrance across the Greek plays, see e.g., the murder of Iphigenia (Aeschl., *Ag.* 184-249, 1415-21, 1432-33), (Soph., *El.* 525-51); the murder of Agamemnon (Aesch., *Lib.* 94-104), (Eur., *El.* 150-66); the murder of Clytemnestra (Aesch., *Eum.* 94-104), (Eur., *El.* 1177-225). For discussion, see e.g., Torrance (2011).

association between women's public speech, lamentation, and revenge.³ Farber explains in the foreword to the published version of her play that its title, 'molora', comes from the Sesotho word for ash, and she is drawn to the substance as something that bears witness to the past:

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 ... is the truth we must all return to, regardless of what faith, race or clan we hail from (p. 8).

The remains of the dead body after cremation, the rubble of houses destroyed in war, and the remnants of the campfire belie the finality of death, destruction, and narrative closure. In the play's ninth scene, which anticipates Orestes' return, Elektra refers to ash as 'the spirit of revenge' (p. 46), and even after the matricide is averted, Klytemnestra recognizes 'the residue of revenge', as '[a] fine powdery substance gently floats down' on to the actors and the audience (p. 79). Farber fixates on the women's memories as resources that bring the past into the present and she stages the struggle between Klytemnestra and Elektra to reexamine the compulsion to remember against institutional pressures – from the resolution orchestrated by Athena in the *Oresteia* to South Africa's transitional government – to forget.

Helene Foley notes the tendency for African adaptations to buck the trend in responding to Greek tragedy through contemporary gender politics and there have been no sustained engagements with *Molora* from the perspective of gender to date.⁴ While many analyses do recognize the dominance of Farber's female characters, her striking interpretative

³ For the trilogy, see e.g., Steiner (1961, 169), challenged by Zeitlin (1978). For lament and revenge, see e.g., Loraux (1998). For tragedy, lament, and irresolution, see Foley (1993).

⁴ Foley (2004, 77).

choice is framed simply as a response to the TRC's historically attested neglect of women.⁵ To my mind, Farber's sensitivity to women's memories of apartheid enriches, but does not displace, her engagement with the stories told by and about women in the tragedies. Farber entrusts the work of remembrance to women in her play to pick up on the potency of women's public speech in tragedy via lament, which sees the genre carve out a potentially radical space that preserves echoes of the female voice in tension with the legislative control of graveside lamentation.⁶

In this chapter I will demonstrate that Farber's preoccupation with women's performance of memory works to frustrate reconciliation. Homer's Penelope offers an instructive model for Klytemnestra and Elektra's never-ending remembrance, which allows us to rethink the play's engagement with memory and gender to identify points of contact and conflict between the Greek tragedies and the TRC.⁷ Doing this addresses the critical blind spots that affect existing scholarship on the play which shows a tendency to overemphasize the cultural context of Farber's restaging and to neglect her work as a reader and rewriter of

⁵ See Van Weyenberg (2013, 106-7); Vellino and Waisvisz (2013). For data on the gender bias of TRC hearings, see Ross (2003); Sanders (2007, 59, 82).

⁶ See e.g., Honig (2013); Loraux (1986, 44-46); (1998, 9-28). Alternatively, for the displacement of women's voices in tragedy, see Case (1985). For the institutionalization of lament in tragedy and the funeral oration, see discussion in Holst-Warhaft (1992); Loraux (1986). For women's speech in the *Oresteia*, see e.g., McClure (1999, 70-111).

⁷ For Penelope's irresolution, see especially Clayton (2004).

the play-texts.⁸ Farber resists the closure on offer in, and staged through, the *Oresteia* trilogy so that Klytemnestra and Elektra remain ‘stuck’ remembering the events of the past by reciting and reenacting scenes from *Agamemnon*, *Libation Bearers*, and the *Electras*. The omission of *Eumenides* from the play-text belies its thematic importance to Farber’s reception, in which her sensitivity to memory as something inexhaustible and ever present exposes the vulnerability of even institutional redress.⁹

5.1 The Play

The play does not follow a linear trajectory and unfolds over nineteen episodic scenes, which see testimonies interspersed with reenactments. Klytemnestra and Elektra look back to

⁸ Wetmore (2017, 481) notes the overwhelming emphasis on the TRC in treatments of *Molona*. See Dugdale (2013, 139-61); Odom (2011); Steinmeyer (2009), (2017); Van Weyenberg (2008b), (2013, 91-140); Van Zyl Smit (2010). The bibliography is quite extensive; however, most of the literature discusses the play in brief, as part of a thematic chapter or article, see e.g. Goff (2016, 446-63); Hardwick (2010, 199-204); Wyles (2010, 176-79). I also think it only fair to distinguish between publications from academics working as classicists (and/or publishing in Classics journals and/or with a Classics focus) and from publications in areas such as literary history, comparative literature, drama and theatre studies, and cultural studies. For these latter examples, a lack of focus on the ancient texts is more understandable, see Blumberg (2011, 238-60); Hutchison (2013, 86-90); L. Kruger (2012, 355-77); Rich (2012, 289-312); Segall (2013, 161-73); Stathaki (2009, 125-203); Vellino and Waisvisz (2013, 113-37).

⁹ Hardwick (2010b, 200-1).

the murder of Agamemnon (i: testimony, pp. 22-25, ii: murder pp. 25-27) and Elektra's concealment of Orestes' whereabouts (iii: exile, pp. 28-30). Elektra remembers her torture as Klytemnestra attempts to relocate her son (iv: interrogation, pp. 30-32). Elektra recalls listening to her mother's feverish dreams in anticipation of Orestes' return (v: dreams, pp. 32-33) and insists on her commitment to righting the wrongs of her father's death (vi: grief, pp. 33-35). There is a long scene of agonistic exchange between mother and daughter (vii: grave, pp. 35-43), before Elektra is tortured again (viii: wet bag method, pp. 43-45). The focus of the play briefly shifts to Orestes, who undergoes an initiation into manhood under the auspices of the chorus (ix: initiation, pp. 45-47). Orestes' return in disguise (x: ash, pp. 47-51) and his eventual reconciliation with Elektra (xi: found, pp. 51-59; xii: plan, pp. 59-61; xiii: home, pp. 61-69) culminate in the murder of Aegisthus (xv: vengeance, pp. 69-71). Orestes is revealed to Klytemnestra and she begs for her life (xvii: truth, pp. 71-75). He is moved by his mother's pleas but Elektra is not (xvii: shift, pp. 75-77) and the chorus step in to avert matricide. Elektra and Orestes embrace and are encircled by the chorus who chant a prayer addressed to South African peace and unity (xix: rises, pp. 77-78). At the play's close, Klytemnestra reflects solemnly on the peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy as an act of grace, before the cast all turn to face the audience as a 'fine powdery substance gently floats down on them' and the lights 'fade to black' (epilogue, pp. 78-79).

Farber limits *Molona*'s cast to classical proportions, alongside a reduced, seven-member chorus.¹⁰ She evokes the dynamics of apartheid with race-specific casting, as Klytemnestra is played by a white actor, while Elektra, Orestes, and the chorus are played by

¹⁰ For the reception of the classical chorus in contemporary restaging, see Foley (2007).

black actors. The chorus are all women, with the exception of one ‘translator’, who form part of the Ngqoko Cultural Group, a collective from rural South Africa. In the paratext, Farber describes the group’s practice as reflecting and preserving ‘indigenous music, songs and traditions of Xhosa communities’ (p. 12). There is no acting part for Agamemnon, although his murder and its remembrance dominate the play: Klytemnestra (p. 22-23, 63-65) and Elektra (p. 28, 57-58) each recall the killing on two occasions, while it is symbolically re-enacted once (p. 26). There is also no acting part for Ayesthus who appears in the form of ‘an enormous male labourer’s uniform’ that Elektra hangs on a hook, as well as a pair of boots, described in the stage directions as ‘equally gargantuan’ (p. 62).¹¹ There is also no mention of Cassandra, as the women do not remember her murder across any of the tragedies. In a nod to the TRC’s policy of encouraging speakers to present their testimony in their own language with simultaneous translation, both English and Xhosa are spoken on stage with some translation. Klytemnestra only speaks English although she seems to understand Xhosa, Elektra and Orestes switch between the two languages, and the chorus perform their lines in Xhosa.¹²

¹¹ For a reading of Ayesthus’ boots, Aeschylus, and Farber’s South African context, see Wyles (2010, 176-79).

¹² The play-text provides translation in square brackets with capitalized font for the non-English speech of Elektra, Orestes, and the chorus; I replicate this lay-out in my citations from *Molara*. However, in performance, Farber uses translation sparingly. Farber responds to the linguistic practices of colonialism and reflects on the effect of bilingual performance for English-speaking audiences:

When the actor speaks in their vernacular, the actor is deep in their integrity, while the audience is momentarily an ‘outsider’ who misses out. When the actor then breaks from the

Farber's staging recalls the significance of memory to South Africa's peaceful transition from apartheid to non-racial democracy.¹³ The new government, headed by Nelson

vernacular, and returns to English – the audience no longer takes this for granted, but is aware that this storyteller is reaching out in language imposed upon them – which is a profoundly generous act.

See Fisher and Farber (2008, 26). For theories of 'linguistic imperialism' more generally, see Phillipson (1992); and for African responses, see Barber (1995). For a meditation on the politics of English for African creatives, see Achebe (1965). The reception of *Molara*'s bilingual cast in performances in the UK was mixed, see e.g. Loxton (2008). It is worth bearing in mind the centrality and visibility of the Xhosa people and their culture to the post-apartheid transition. The chairman of the TRC, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, is part Xhosa, Nelson Mandela was also Xhosa. See Cole (2010, 50). South Africa has eleven official languages (in alphabetical order): Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Northern Sotho, Sotho, Swazi, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa, and Zulu. The challenge to systems of exclusion post-apartheid entailed recognizing, and accommodating for, South Africa's linguistic eclecticism. However, English remained the 'foundational language for interpretation' at the TRC, with an impact on the idiom of the records of non-English testimony. Catherine Cole explains: 'So, for instance, a Xhosa witness would first be translated by the Xhosa-to-English booth and then that English translation would be transmitted to, say, the booths covering English-to-Afrikaans, English-to-Zulu, and English-to-SiSwati'. See Cole (2010, 70-73).

¹³ The TRC operated with a tripartite structure to oversee victim testimony (the Human Rights Violations Committee, HRVC), applications for amnesty (the Amnesty Committee, AC), and reparation rulings (Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee, RRC). Victims that the HRVC identify as having suffered 'gross human rights violations' were referred to the RRC. Applicants for amnesty were immune from prosecution on the conditions of full disclosure and that their crime was judged to have had a political motivation. The commission put a limit on retrospection, welcoming testimonies

Mandela, turned to personal testimony as its instrument of mediation and reconciliation, in which bearing witness at truth commission hearings became a way to air and exorcise historic injustice.¹⁴ TRC hearings provided a platform that turned to and then away from memory (a version of what, in Freudian terms, would be remembering, repeating, and working through),

related to offences committed between 1 March 1960 and 6 December 1993. For useful background to the TRC with full discussion of the roles and responsibilities of the committees, see Cole (2010). The live website for the TRC continues to welcome applications for financial assistance for victims identified by the HRVC and their dependents. The website also archives transcripts from hearings and other documents pertaining to the TRC, see: <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/>

¹⁴ This chapter focuses on memory and reconciliation rather than the relationship between memory, subjectivity, and ‘truth’. I would like to develop this chapter, with an eye to the discourse of ‘truth’ that surrounded TRC hearings, in light of the *Odyssey*’s attentiveness to the muddiness of the divide between fact and fiction, especially the ‘lies that resemble truth’ (*Od.* 19.203, see e.g., 13.253-86, 14.192-359, 17.415-44, 19.165-299, 24.244-314). See De Jong (2001, 326). The connection between public testimony and personal healing is made explicit in the TRC slogan, ‘The truth will set you free’, adorning banners unfurled at hearings, see Van Weyenberg (2013, 117). The phrase is taken from the New Testament (John 8.31-32) and appeared as the title of a brochure issued by The South African Council of Churches in support of the hearings in 1995. For the relationship between the Christian Church as an institution in South Africa and the transitional government, see De Gruchy and De Gruchy (2005, 224-28). South Africa’s commitment to reconciliation was profoundly entangled with Christianity and the shape of its practice in South Africa; this is exhibited most obviously through the appointment of Archbishop Desmond Tutu to the role of Chair of the TRC.

so that private suffering could give way to public reconciliation.¹⁵ The public, even performative, nature of the truth commission hearings has provided fertile ground for artistic expression and reflection, and Farber is one among many South African artists, working in theatre and across other media, to engage critically with the legacy of apartheid, restorative justice, and the performance of reconciliation at the hearings.¹⁶ Catherine Cole, who describes the truth commission as an example of ‘theatrical justice’, examines the effects of staging this process of national reconciliation. South Africa’s truth commission is one example in a long history of performative justice that gained renewed impetus in the twentieth century with the Nuremberg trials (or, less positively, the Stalinist trials in the USSR), but with ancient forerunners in the Roman Forum or at the Athenian Agora.¹⁷

¹⁵ There is clearly room to reshape or refine my argument with reference to Freud, especially ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’ (2006b) [1920], also the earlier ‘Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through’ (2006a) [1914]. For the TRC and Freud, see Hamber and R. A. Wilson (2002); Minow (1998). For the dynamic between social remembering and social forgetting in South Africa, see Crewe (1999). For memory and trauma, see Brison (1999); Van Alphen (1999). ‘Electra and her Shadow’, which is the third play in Zinnie Harris’s trilogy *This Restless House* (2017) a version of the *Oresteia*, takes place between Electra and her psychiatrist. Harris’s Electra, like Farber’s, takes over from her brother in the pursuit of matricide.

¹⁶ For examples of the wealth of artistic investigations of, and engagements with, the TRC, see Blumberg (2011); G. V. Davis (2003, 257-77); Krueger (2010); Marlin-Curiel (2002).

¹⁷ Cole (2010) takes Nuremberg as her jumping off point from which to consider South Africa and the TRC. For the intersections of drama, Athenian democracy, and justice, see Hall (2006). For institutionalized ‘forgetting’ in Athens, see Loraux (1998, 83-109).

Farber choreographs interactions between audience, actors, and the events that unfold in performance to remember the hearings. Klytemnestra and Elektra deliver their testimonies, which are excerpted from the tragedies, from separate tables that face each other across the playing space, while those events from the past are re-enacted in the space between the tables.¹⁸ Farber insists on audience proximity to, and implication in, the events on stage, and likens their presence to the local community that gathered for truth commission hearings (p. 19):

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.

...

The audience is seated in front of and around the performance area, as if incorporated into the testimonies. They are the community that provides the context to the event.¹⁹

¹⁸ For Farber's instructions, see (p. 19).

¹⁹ Cole (2010, 91) describes the public at the TRC hearings as 'active witnesses'. Farber stipulates that '[t]his work should never be played on a raised stage behind a proscenium arch, but on the floor to a raked audience. If being presented in a traditional theatre, the audience should be seated on stage with the action, preferably with all drapes and theatre curtains stripped from the stage and the audience in front of, left and right of the performance' (p. 19). For each of her three testimonial plays, produced prior to *Molora*, Farber similarly states: 'This work should ideally be played on the floor to a raked audience – as opposed to on a raised stage – so that contact with the audience is immediate and dynamic', see Farber (2008b, 37, 95). For the third play, *He Left Quietly*, she adds: 'The integrity of the production depends upon the audience experiencing themselves as active participants rather than passive voyeurs', Farber (2008b, 187).

All the cast begin the play seated within the audience, before moving to the performance space and their respective places, with Klytemnestra and Elektra at testimony tables and the chorus on chairs that overlook the playing space. Farber describes the seated chorus as representatives of South Africans at testimony hearings (p. 19), which adds another layer of witnessing to what plays out in the performance space. Farber's *mise en scène* also remembers the Greek tragedies.²⁰ She does not incorporate the *skene*-building in her staging, so that Agamemnon's grave occupies the centre of the performance space, which resembles the spatial arrangement of Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*.²¹ Farber interweaves the spatial and psychological focus on the grave of Agamemnon with the importance of land in South African rhetoric, both during and post-apartheid, as a marker of dispossession.²² She makes the South African resonance explicit by describing Agamemnon's grave as 'filled with the red sand of Africa' (p. 19).

The framework of irresolution that I will set out in the next section will help to reengage with sequences in Farber's play that appear to have little or no relationship with the classical texts. For instance, *Molona*'s eighth scene, 'wet bag method', sees Klytemnestra and

²⁰ Taplin (1977, 336, with bibliography at n. 2) for the entrances of Orestes and Pylades and then Electra and the chorus at Aesch., *Lib.* 2. Taplin favours their entrance from the *eisodoi*, which is an interpretation that is faintly echoed in the emergence of Farber's cast from the audience.

²¹ The focus of *Libation Bearers* shifts to the palace entrance at some point in the play. See Taplin (1977, 338-40) for the move from the tomb to the palace. See Garvie (1986, xli-xliv) for discussion of when this takes place.

²² Boesak (1995). I discuss this further at (pp. 380-83).

Elektra reenact a widely-publicized segment from the TRC hearings. The scene makes direct reference to the amnesty appeal of Jeffrey Benzien who was cross-examined by one of his former victims, Tony Yengeni, and induced to demonstrate his favoured torture technique on a third party while Yengeni watched.²³ Farber's reenactment of the reenactment re-genders the victim and perpetrator and shifts the dynamic of the performance so that the audience members are the sole spectators of the drama, as Elektra/Yengeni remains the object of torture.²⁴ Klytemnestra and Elektra reenact the torture and the actors repeat the scene each

²³ In the play's first torture scene, Klytemnestra waterboards Elektra while reciting the biblical 'curse of ham' (p. 30; cf. Book of Genesis 9.20-27), which foregrounds the racial dynamic of the scene between the white aggressor and her black victim and its underpinnings in the rhetoric of white supremacy. Farber stages waterboarding to recall not only the crimes of apartheid but also to look to the contemporaneous reports of the torture of detainees at Guantanamo. In the UK, Christopher Hitchens famously underwent the technique in reaction to reports of US interrogation methods before going on to write about its effects/affects against detractors who denied the seriousness of waterboarding as torture, see Hitchens (2008). The first UK performance of *Molona* at the Barbican Centre on 9th April 2008 predated Hitchens. Farber returns to the staging of waterboarding with her production of Wilde's *Salomé* in 2017, in which her John the Baptist character, Iokanaan, is subject to this method of torture.

²⁴ Stathaki (2009, 193). Farber deliberately echoes the testimony transcript, e.g., compare Elektra: 'Please, demonstrate for this commission how you tried to get information out of me as to my brother's whereabouts' (p. 44), with Yengeni: 'Now, is it possible for you to do a demonstration of how, I as a victim I would want to see what happened to me... I also want to see it with my own eyes what he did to me'. The transcript for Benzien's amnesty hearing is available online, see TRC (1997). The restaging of Benzien's re-enactment of torture at his amnesty appeal is not unique to Farber.

night as Farber emphasizes the potency of their endless circle of remembrance. She instructs her actors to shape their performance according to the audience as her stage directions suggest that ‘the suffocation should be performed for longer than the audience would be comfortable with’ (p. 44). Farber encourages her audience to consider their own role as theatre-goers in the cycle of remembrance and she collapses the distinction between suffering and its representation to test the limits of an audience’s enjoyment of tragic theatre. For the audience, the historical weight of Benzien’s testimony and its potential place in their memories seems to encourage an anti-theatrical reaction to the scene that, in an Aristotelian framework, would preclude their own resolution in *catharsis*. However, the classical framework encourages reflection on, for instance, the relationship between tragedy’s institutionalization of female mourning practice and the ‘real’ suffering that underlies lament. Does suffering on stage give an outlet for grief?²⁵ Is Elektra’s pain, like the televised victims’ hearings that were watched by millions, pleasurable for an audience who ‘hungers after tears’ (Plat., *Rep.* 606a)?²⁶

5.2 Penelope

Philip Miller’s *Rewind*, which premiered in 2006 on the tenth anniversary of the truth commission’s inauguration, included Benzien’s testimony verbatim in a sequence called ‘The Bag’. See Hutchison (2013, 58).

²⁵ See Loraux (2002b).

²⁶ For Plato’s treatment of pleasure in the reception of poetry, see Liebert (2017, 120-70).

The story of Agamemnon's homecoming and murder, his betrayal by Clytemnestra, and the revenge of Orestes is 'remembered' and recited continuously throughout Homer's *Odyssey*, both by those with 'memory' of the events, either through their divinity or personal involvement (e.g., Agamemnon at *Od.* 11.409-56, 24.95-97, 191-202), and by those whom the story reaches indirectly as rumour (e.g., Nestor at 3.193-200, 254-316).²⁷ Menelaus' treatment of the story is a good example of how the events in Argos circulate as myth, as he learns of his brother's fate from Proteus (4.512-49), which he recalls as part of his retelling to Telemachus (cf. 4.91-92). With the exception of Athena (1.298-302, 3.232-35), men control the circulation of the story in Homer, as the villainy of Aegisthus, the treachery of Clytemnestra, and Agamemnon's vindication by Orestes appear only in conversations between men.²⁸

²⁷ See Hom., *Od.* 1.32-43, 1.298-302, 3.193-200, 254-316, 232-25, 4.91-92, 512-49, 11.409-56, 13.383-35, 24.95-97, 24.95-97, 24.191-202. For discussion of the relationship between the House of Atreus myth and the *Odyssey*, see Felson-Rubin (1994, 95-107); Katz (1991, 29-53).

²⁸ For Orestes' exemplarity for Telemachus, see Goldhill (1984, 184, 183-95). Farber's resolution to the drama almost recalls the version of the mythology to which Homer refers in the *Odyssey*, in which Orestes' model for Telemachus is uncomplicated by matricide. However, see Burnett (1998, 101 n. 5) for the possible hint at matricide at *Od.* 3.305-10. There may be a trace of epic in *Molara's* presentation of Orestes' homecoming initiation (pp. 45-46), in which the chorus' advice is comparable to Athena's instructions to Telemachus at *Od.* 1.252-305, especially 293-305. Indeed, Athena frames the necessity of Telemachus' actions in terms of imitating Orestes' fame (4.298-300). Athena's instructions for the Telemachy are framed in terms of encouraging Telemachus to manhood (1.296-97) and noting the adulthood of his physique (1.301). Farber's stage directions describe the initiation song of the chorus as encouraging Orestes' transformation: 'Orestes stands and

Farber's return to the mythology recasts Agamemnon's remembrance in Homer, particularly with regard to his wife, in an ironic light. Agamemnon's perverted νόστος serves as the foil for Odysseus' return throughout the epic and he remembers the circumstances of his death to establish Clytemnestra as the anti-model for Penelope's virtue (*Od.* 24.191-202, cf. 11.409-56), citing Penelope's remembrance of Odysseus as the root cause of her constancy ('ὡς εὖ μέμνητ' Ὀδυσῆος,/ ἀνδρὸς κουριδίου', 24.195-96). However, Farber's emphasis on women's memories in the tragedies suggests that, if anything, Klytemnestra/Clytemnestra remembers *her* wedded husband only too well. Farber makes use of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* as an origin-text for vengeance and supplements Klytemnestra's remembrance of Agamemnon's murder with both his sacrifice of Ephigenia and his murder of her first husband and child (pp. 36-38, 41-63; cf. Eur. *IA* 1148-52).²⁹

Farber's commitment to excavating the pre-war memories of Klytemnestra to mitigate for the murder of Agamemnon situates her work within a wider tradition of women's

drops his blanket to reveal his powerful, muscular physique. We see the boy is now a man' (p. 46).

This produces something of a reception feedback loop, in which Homer's use of Orestes as the model for Telemachus becomes Farber's use of Homer's Telemachus as the model for her Orestes. Farber's Orestes matures before he commits matricide in a way more comparable to Telemachus than Aeschylus' Orestes, the latter for whom matricide initiates and signals manhood, see e.g. Garvie (1986, 47).

²⁹ For 'sympathetic' treatments of Clytemnestra as a very recent part in her reception history, see Hall (2005, 75); Komar (2003).

responses to Greek tragedy, comparable with, for example, Ariane Mnouchkine's *Les Atrides* (1992), Marina Carr's *Ariel* (2002), and Gwyneth Lewis's *Clytemnestra* (2012).³⁰

Mnouchkine prefaces her re-visioning of the *Oresteia* with Euripides and conditions her audience to see Agamemnon's murder as a consequence of Iphigenia's sacrifice, which they will remember from the first play.³¹ These receptions work against the thematic turn from Iphigenia and the undermining of Clytemnestra's maternal motivation that take place through the course of Aeschylus' trilogy (see e.g., *Lib.* 732-65; *Eum.* 657-73).³² Farber's contribution

³⁰ For the bibliographic reference, see Carr (2009). The early article of Zeitlin (1965) suggests that Aeschylus draws some equivalence between Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia and Clytemnestra's retributive sacrifice of Agamemnon.

³¹ See e.g. Glynn (2017) who reads *Les Atrides* as a remembering of Aeschylus and Euripides that self-consciously engages with, and deconstructs, the cultural legacy of Classics. Cixous translated *Eumenides* for Mnouchkine's tetralogy, in which the transformation of the Furies to the Kindly Ones is followed by a stage invasion by other choral members: 'they are beasts – part lion with huge manes, part ape, part growling, fanged gods. They run down-stage, ready to devour the audience', see Lamont (1999, 239). For Cixous's translation, see Cixous (1992).

³² See Burnett (1998, 111-12); Loraux (1987, 38-44), (1998, 50). See Burnett (1998, 119-41) for how this process is taken further in Sophocles as Clytemnestra's assertions of motherhood (e.g. *El.* 533, 536), are countered, equally emphatically, by Electra, (e.g. 1154, 'mother, who is no mother' / 'μήτηρ ἀμήτωρ'). March (1996) suggests that Euripides draws out and extends the hints of sympathy in Aeschylus that are connected to Clytemnestra's maternity (e.g. *Eur. El.* 1102-10, 1123-35). For a survey of earlier scholarship concerning Aeschylus' treatment of Iphigenia's sacrifice, see Conacher (1987, 76-83). For sexual jealousy and passion, see Rehm (2005, 358). Rehm suggests that a focus on

to this wave of largely female-led interest in the Clytemnestra-Iphigenia relationship is in her emphasis on the potency of female memory as an inexhaustible resource.³³

Farber's comingling of epic and tragedy takes the unusual step of foregrounding the *Odyssey* over the *Iliad*, as Penelope models the irresolution that Farber's women practice with their repetitive remembrance in her nightly unravelling of the day's work (*Od.* 2.93-110, 19.138-56, 24.128-46) and her never-ending lament (19.512-34).³⁴ Penelope 'weaves, unweaves, and reweaves' to sustain the possibility of Odysseus' successful νόστος, while the memories of Klytemnestra and Elektra effectively regenerate Agamemnon, quite literally in the restaging of his death in scene two, only for Klytemnestra to kill him again.³⁵ Farber's Klytemnestra frames her murder of Agamemnon as a work of feminine production that she

Iphigenia in reception downplays the erotic motives for the murder readily apparent in *Agamemnon* (e.g., 1384-92, 1434-37, 1438-47). See also (Soph., *El.* 197-200).

³³ In prose, the sacrifice of Iphigenia has piqued the interest of male writers, such as Barry Unsworth's *The Songs of the Kings* (2004) [2003] and Colm Tóibín's *House of Names* (2017). While Unsworth's novel concentrates on the lead up to and execution of the sacrifice, Tóibín deals with its aftermath.

³⁴ For tragic receptions of the *Odyssey*, see Hall (2008a).

³⁵ Clayton (2004, 43).

enjoys replaying and celebrates the δολομήτης that earns her negative renown in the *Odyssey* (cf. Agamemnon's hateful song at *Od.* 24.200-1; cf. 11.422):³⁶

And the new green spear splits the sheath
and rips to birth in glory!
Here lies Agamemnon my husband
made a corpse by this right hand.
A Masterpiece of Justice.
Done is done. (*Molara* p. 23)

οὗτός ἐστιν Ἀγαμέμνων, ἐμὸς
πόσις, νεκρὸς δέ, τῆσδε δεξιᾶς χερὸς
ἔργον, δικαίης τέκτονος. τάδ' ὧδ' ἔχει. (Aesch., *Ag.* 1404-6)

These lines are part of Clytemnestra's opening testimony in the play and draw on the translation of Fagles, whose particular rendering of the verse lends itself nicely to what Farber has to say about memory and creativity. Fagles conflates Clytemnestra's description of her right hand (δεξιᾶς χερὸς, 1405) as a 'just workman' (δικαίης τέκτονος, 1406) in the line 'A Masterpiece of Justice'. His translation relies on the homophone of 'right' to identify both the specific hand and the correctness of the action it executes. Fagles makes use of the conceptual space left by the homophone to play with the meaning of 'δικαίης τέκτονος' so that Clytemnestra's execution of justice, realized through Agamemnon's dead body, is directly comparable to a work of art. Clytemnestra's opening statement of testimony makes reference to the net that she uses to ensnare Agamemnon which, in the tradition, is her most obvious cross over with and subversion of Penelope's model of womanhood.³⁷ Farber borrows from

³⁶ Katz (1991, 24) suggests that Penelope's κλέος is complicated her own associations with δόλος and μήτις.

³⁷ The net also recalls Demodocus' story of Aphrodite, Hephaestus, and Ares (*Od.* 8.265-367), in which Hephaestus sets a trap for his unfaithful wife by hanging a net 'like slender spiderwebs'

Fagles's translation to describe the 'never-ending, all-embracing net...I coil him round and round in the robes of doom' (p. 23; cf. Aesch., *Ag.* 1381-83). Fagles's rendering of the lines 'never-ending, all-embracing' from 'ἄπειρον ἀμφίβληστρον' is particularly apt for a Penelopean reading of Klytemnestra, as his translation emphasizes Clytemnestra/Klytemnestra's net as never-ending in the same way that Penelope's weaving practice resists resolution.³⁸

Klytemnestra and Elektra provide tragic updates to Penelope's weaving and mourning practices that exploit, and even emphasize, the ambivalence of her epic characterization.³⁹ Theodorakopoulos suggests that Penelope's perpetual grief, which she likens to the song of the nightingale, is another way in which she exhibits the irresolution and indeterminacy that has made her such an important figure for feminist readings of epic:⁴⁰

across their bed. Clayton (2004, 50-51) demonstrates how this tale of infidelity looks forward to, and contrasts with, the relationship of Penelope and Odysseus, as well as drawing out parallels between the craft of netmaking and weaving. Clytemnestra/Klytemnestra, the unfaithful wife par excellence, is an interesting analogue to the cuckolded Hephaestus in their netmaking.

³⁸ Compare the more prosaic translations: 'I cast an impassable net' in Weir-Smyth (1926) or 'A net with no way through' in Collard (2002).

³⁹ See especially Katz (1991).

⁴⁰ Theodorakopoulos (forthcoming). For the simile and Penelope's indeterminacy, see Anhalt (2001). For approaches that emphasize her agency in the poem, see Felson-Rubin (1994); Foley (1978); Marquardt (1985); J. J. Winkler (1990). Clayton (2004) goes so far as to characterize Penelope's practice of 'weaving, unweaving, and reweaving' as indicative of the epic's poetics. For

But in my own case, heaven seems to have sent no relief to my misery. By day one relief is to weep and sigh as I go about my tasks and supervise the work of the maids in the house; but when night falls and brings sleep to everyone else, I lie on my bed, and anxious cares come thronging into my restless, grieving heart and give me no peace.

You know how Pandareus' daughter, the tawny nightingale, perched in the dense foliage of the trees, makes her sweet music when the spring is young, and with many turns and trills pours out her full-throated song in sorrow for Itylus her beloved son, King Zethus' child, whom mistakenly she killed with her own hand. In the same way my inclination waves this way and that. (Hom., *Od.* 19.512-34, cf. 20.66-82)⁴¹

Using Penelope's identification with the nightingale as a model to examine Farber's reception of memory and grief complicates Clytemnestra/Klytemnestra's antithetical relationship with Penelope.⁴² Penelope likens her grief to the regret of a mother who plays a role in the death of her son, which is something that Clytemnestra will be made to experience in the middle play of Aeschylus' trilogy and its receptions. The sincerity of Clytemnestra's grief at *Libation Bearers* 691-99 is famously unclear, especially as her female speech is marked in the trilogy by its lack of formal lamentation; however, Farber's reception of Orestes' faked death appears to promote her sincerity.⁴³ Farber makes a mourner out of Klytemnestra in her play as, in

contrasting approaches that foreground Penelope's lack of agency, see Murnaghan (1986), (1987); Zeitlin (1995). For Penelope and indeterminacy, see Katz (1991).

⁴¹ It is unclear which version of the nightingale myth Homer had access to or evokes. For discussion, see Anhalt (2001, 148-49).

⁴² Katz (1991, 43-53) reads Penelope's indecision from the first book onwards (cf. *Od.* 1.249-50) in terms of her engagement with Clytemnestra's infamy.

⁴³ For Clytemnestra's reaction to Orestes' death in Aeschylus, see Garvie (1986, 233-34). For Clytemnestra's lack of lamentation, see McClure (1999, 70).

addition to her memories of Ephigenia, her reaction to Orestes' death borrows from the genuinely regretful words of Sophocles' chorus (p. 49; cf. *El.* 764-65).

Penelope's inscrutability, which has fascinated readers, is contrasted with the forcefulness of Electra's grief, which plays a significant role in her reception, as, for instance, Woolf is moved to reflect on her identification with the nightingale in Sophocles' play.⁴⁴

So long, like a nightingale, robbed of her young
here before the doors of what was my father's house
I shall cry out my sorrow for all the world to hear. (*El.* 107-9, cf. 147-49)⁴⁵

Electra's effusiveness is particularly marked by Sophocles, whose characters repeatedly try to impose limits on her volubility (see e.g., 77, 82, 797-98, 1335-37).⁴⁶ Her models for lament in the play – Procne and Niobe (150) – seem ironic in light of her determined childlessness (958-71), which is a point of contention between Klytemnestra and Elektra in Farber's version

⁴⁴ V. Woolf (2003, 28). See also Carson (1996); Luschnig (2016). For Penelope's inscrutability, see Clayton (2004, 39-40).

⁴⁵ Cassandra (Aesch., *Ag.* 1140-49) is another important nightingale that I would like to consider in light of the connection between the *Odyssey* and Farber's reception of the *Oresteia*, especially as the repetitions of the play (and the literal repetitions of ancient plays that the characters recognize as having already been written, cf. p. 74) give the characters (and the classically-informed audience) Cassandra-like prescience which is then overturned by the avoidance of matricide.

⁴⁶ Dué (2012, 244). See Walton (1996, 42) for the inappropriateness of Electra's public speech.

(‘The power in that bond you will never know’, p. 41).⁴⁷ There is the suggestion that Sophocles’ *Electra* makes up for her childlessness with Orestes, in which her lament to his ashes emphasizes her almost-maternal bond with her brother (e.g., 1129-35).⁴⁸ However, the model of Penelope’s weaving and mourning suggests instead that *Electra*’s incessant cries of anguish, which publicize her private grief, are her real creations.

Penelope’s description of her mourning practice makes the connection between grief and joy (ἤματα μὲν γὰρ τέρπομ’ ὀδυρομένη, γοόωσα, *Od.* 19.513) that recurs across the epics (e.g., *Od.* 11.212-13; *Il.* 21.10). However, while the proper trajectory of grief turns from its strange pleasure to its eventual satiety (τεταρπόμεσθα γόοιο), Penelope’s lament, like her weaving, has no end in sight.⁴⁹ The compulsion of Farber’s *Elektra* and *Klytemnestra* to remember is at once traumatic and strangely invigorating. Farber can even make a wry joke at *Elektra*’s expense, as she opens a passage of testimony, after recalling and reenacting Agamemnon’s death, with the line: ‘No-one ever talks about the night you spilled my father’s blood’ (p. 43). *Klytemnestra* uses tautology to emphasize the maddening repetitions of her remembrance as she boasts about the murder of Agamemnon: ‘Done is done’ (p. 23, 54, 65),

⁴⁷ Burnett (1998, 140) notes that her speech at line 962 makes a pun on her name ἄλεκτρα, which means that she has not been taken to bed.

⁴⁸ Burnett (1998, 129).

⁴⁹ For a reading of feminine, ‘Penelopean poetics’ that ‘privileges process over product’, see Clayton (2004, ix); also Theodorakopoulos (forthcoming). Paris suggests that Helen should forget about the war in favour of pleasure (τραπέομεν) at *Il.* 3.441, which he frames as a kind of remembering of the desire and passion of their first meeting.

which draws on the translation of Fagles, who introduces circularity to the line ‘τάδ’ ὧδ’ ἔχει’ (Aesch., *Ag.* 1406), and, in another reminiscence, she idiosyncratically asserts: ‘We killed him dead’ (p. 64).⁵⁰

Penelope’s remembrance puts her in conflict with male, epic song (*Od.* 1.343-44), which reminds her of her loss.⁵¹ Her intervention in war discourse is unwelcome, like Andromache’s (*Il.* 6.490-93; cf. *Od.* 1.356-59), though both women move within communities of women who weave and mourn their own responses to war.⁵² I propose that these tantalizing female groups, hidden in plain sight in the epic, bleed through to the post-Trojan War tragedies that consider Agamemnon’s homecoming and its aftermath. Farber returns to the mythology through Penelope’s model of feminine difference, so that, for instance, her play responds to the potency of ash/molora across epic and tragedy as a substance that testifies to war’s ruination while inspiring creativity in the women who it provokes to remember and mourn.⁵³ Aeschylus’ citizen chorus describe Ares as a trafficker in

⁵⁰ For tautology in choral speech in the trilogy, see Goldhill (1984, 15).

⁵¹ See De Jong (2001, 37) for the significance of ποθέω. For the interplay of remembering and forgetting in the *Odyssey*, see De Jong (2001, 14).

⁵² I discuss this in greater detail at (pp. 153-54).

⁵³ I use ‘difference’ here to mean the amount one thing exceeds another to emphasize how the compulsion to remember relentlessly in tragedy will exceed the boundary intimated by the resolution of *Eumenides*. I also use difference with an eye to *différance* and the feminisms of Cixous (1976),

war for whom men's bodies are commodities that are converted to ash on the funeral pyre (Ag. 437-444, cf. 435). The passage comes from the play's first stasimon as part of a wider sequence concerned with the decade-long war at Troy, as the male chorus remain sceptical of the message of victory relayed by the beacon fires.⁵⁴ As these male Argive elders turn from the past – the sacrifice of Iphigenia and the abduction of Helen – to the present, they consider the war not as the source of κλέα ἀνδρῶν but, in its aftermath, as a mainspring for the suffering of men. The economic-hue of Ares 'χρυσάμοιβος σωμάτων' (Ag. 437) spills over into the rhetoric of vengeance embraced by Farber's Elektra, who looks back to the murder of her father in *Agamemnon* and asks: 'How can we move on until the debt is paid?' (p. 34).

However, *Agamemnon*'s citizen chorus can only think of ash in terms of death and finality, while Farber's Elektra reveals the contradiction of ash as a symbol of an ending that generates grief in perpetuity. Elektra despairs that her plans for revenge are thwarted by the arrival of a stranger with Orestes' ashes and she lies prostrate over her father's grave and laments: 'Our future is ash' (p. 52). She regrets the bastardized burial rites that she imagines for Orestes ('These loving hands could not wash your corpse, could not lift you into the fire/ Your corpse was cleaned and prepared by the hands of strangers', p. 52; cf. Soph., *El.* 865-70) and longs for death ('Take me as nothing, into your nothingness, that I may live with you – in the ground', p. 52). However, her abundance of speech gives the lie to her desire for

Irigaray (1985), and Kristeva (1981) and the importance of their approaches to sexual difference, language, and especially overabundance, which underpin Clayton's concept of 'Penelopean poetics'.

⁵⁴ For the chorus' treatment of the beacon fires as womanish (cf. Ag. 479-84), see McClure (1999, 74).

annihilation as Farber foregrounds the potency of molora/ash for women's public, incessant remembrance.

5.2.1 Remembering Differently

In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Clytemnestra describes the female experience of war as a theatre of suffering in which women perform their overwhelming grief over the corpses of male loved ones. Her speech's attentiveness to 'enemy' women differentiates her vision from the male citizen chorus discussed above (cf. *Ag.* 437-444).

They are kneeling by the bodies of the dead,
embracing men and brothers, infants over
the aged loins that gave them life, and sobbing,
as the yoke constricts their last free breath,
for every dear one lost. (*Ag.* 326-29)

Clytemnestra's remarkable focus on the laments of women who are ostensibly on the other side of the conflict, and which recall the end of the *Iliad* (24.723-76), extends her vision beyond the epic narrative to the fall of Troy, as she considers the Trojan women's loss of freedom and goes on to consider the Greek men lodging in Trojan houses apportioned by lot (*Ag.* 336-37). Farber inserts references to the fate of captured women into Clytemnestra's description, such as her recollection of Agamemnon's murder of her first child: 'He tore this – my firstborn from my breast. Then holding the child by its new ankles – he smashed its tiny head against a rock' (p. 41), which invites comparison with the fractured skull of Astyanax in Euripides' post-war tragedy (*Tro.* 1173-77).

The most meaningful difference in Clytemnestra's account of conflict emerges out of her description of the sacrifice of Ephigenia. Just as the murder of Agamemnon becomes the

subject of conversations between men in Homer, Farber's *Klytemnestra* tries to indoctrinate Elektra into her feminine tradition of remembering the war ('A history that was written long before you were born' (p. 41)). *Klytemnestra* flips the meanings of war and peace so that Iphigenia's sacrifice, which would eventually lead to the defeat of Troy and renewed peace, is recast in the light of the deaths that occur along the way and the devastation of the fallen city ('PEACE? WHOSE PEACE?', p. 41). Farber and, through her, *Klytemnestra* deliberately ignore the Euripidean tradition of Iphigenia's change of heart and capitulation to the epic rhetoric of κλέος (cf. Eur., *IA* 1440). Her example works to challenge Elektra's pragmatic militarism (e.g., 'It was War! He had no choice', p. 37) and to encourage the kind of gendered solidarity that sees Aeschylus' *Clytemnestra* think of Trojan women.

Farber's attentiveness to women, war, and memory is crystallized through comparison with Ted Hughes's take on the sacrifice of Iphigenia in his version of Aeschylus' trilogy (1999). For a playwright who includes multiple scenes of torture in her play, Farber's reticence to engage directly with the details of Iphigenia's sacrifice in any of the testimonies is striking. However, there is something disturbing about the description of Iphigenia's sacrifice by the male chorus in Aeschylus that makes Farber's choice appear feminist. For instance, the chorus fixate on her 'lovely mouth' in an admiring appraisal of the effect of the gag (στόματός καλλιπρώρου, *Ag.* 235-36; cf. 228-47).⁵⁵ By using the 'Masterpiece of Justice' line from Fagles, Farber's *Klytemnestra* redirects the troubling aestheticism of Iphigenia's sacrifice, in which she is described by the chorus as being as 'clear as a picture' ('πρέπουσά θ' ὡς ἐν γραφαῖς', *Ag.* 242), to Agamemnon.

⁵⁵ Reynolds (2005, 122-23).

By drawing attention to the sacrifice of Iphigenia as the cause of Agamemnon's death, Clytemnestra makes explicit what may be implicit to Aeschylus' text.⁵⁶ His male citizen chorus seem to anticipate Agamemnon's murder as they refer obliquely to his death as part of the Atreus cycle of violence to which he has also added ('and die for the deaths/ he brought to pass', *Ag.* 1338-40). These deaths may include Iphigenia or they may refer to the casualties suffered by the Trojans. However, Ted Hughes's version of this passage omits any mention of Agamemnon having done anything to contribute to his death. Instead Hughes's rendering jumps from the crimes of Atreus to allude to the future deaths of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus: 'But now he must bathe and drown/ In the blood spilled/ By his own forefathers./ And his killers, in their turn,/ Will be choked in his blood' (p. 66).

Hughes's version of the sacrifice amplifies the quasi-pornographic texture of Aeschylus. Hughes invites us to imagine and desire the nubile body of the young victim over which his chorus linger, as the 'wind presses her long dress to her body/ And flutters the skirt' (p. 15). Aeschylus' chorus report that Iphigenia's dress falls away (*Ag.* 239) but there is no mention of the fit of her dress prior to its removal or any details of her nakedness. Hughes quite literally exposes Iphigenia as he elaborates on the male-female power dynamic that sees her stripped naked ('rough hands rip off her silks') and invents details of her 'heaving breasts' and 'perfect skin/ Goose-pimpled in the cold' (p. 15, 16). Iphigenia's voice is important for the reception of her sacrifice for the audience and those who remember: she is gagged before she can curse Agamemnon (*Ag.* 237-38) and the chorus recall songs she performed at palace

⁵⁶ See Zeitlin (1965).

feasts (*Ag.* 245-47) to increase the pathos of her death. Aeschylus' chorus describe how the gag effectively silences Iphigenia ('βίβα χαλινῶν τ' ἀναύδω μένει', *Ag.* 238) but Hughes draws out her degradation by imaging how the gag was put in and sexualizes the violence of the act by transposing it into a kind of rape: 'She chokes -/ Hands are cramming a gag into her mouth' (p. 15). Hughes deflates the potency of Iphigenia's speech as he translates her plaintive cries to Agamemnon ('λιτὰς δὲ καὶ κληδόνας πατρώους', 228) as 'Daddy!' (p. 15). Hughes's intervention is disturbing not only for its infantilization of Iphigenia (with also perhaps the suggestion of some kind of father complex) but also for the potential nod to Sylvia Plath's 'Daddy' (published 1965) and their famous relationship.⁵⁷

Farber's Klytemnestra reinvigorates Ephigenia as a speaker by ventriloquizing her pleas from Euripides' version of the sacrifice: 'She begged him: "Do not kill me before my time. Don't force me to gaze at darkness in the world below"' (p. 38; cf. Euripides, *IA* 1219). She also appropriates Agamemnon's speech to advocate for her daughter:

How many children can a mother lose?
First it was my baby he smashed against a rock.
Then Ephigenia – sacrificed like a goat.
And now Orestes – gone! (p. 63)

Klytemnestra's reference to her sacrifice 'like a goat' draws on the description of Iphigenia given by Agamemnon and relayed by the chorus in Aeschylus (*δίκαν χιμαίρας*, *Ag.* 232). Klytemnestra redeploys Agamemnon's words to bear witness on behalf of Ephigenia, perhaps to make up for her having been gagged. Ephigenia's forced silence is something that

⁵⁷ For the House of Atreus mythology in Plath's poetry, especially her identification with Electra, see Bakogianni (2009).

Klytemnestra refers to in a passage, partly borrowed from Sophocles, in which she asks Elektra: ‘Breath for breath, and life for life. And so would say your dead sister, if she could speak’ (p. 37; cf. *El.* 548).

5.2.2 Women and Memory

Froma Zeitlin’s important feminist intervention into Aeschylean criticism suggests that patriarchal ‘mythmaking’ underpins the narrative chronology of the three plays, so that ‘[t]hrough gradual and subtle transformations, social evolution is posed as a movement from female dominance to male dominance’.⁵⁸ The literal transformation of the Furies to the Kindly Ones in *Eumenides* and their institutionalization within the Athenian city-state is central to this movement. Zeitlin, for whom the hierarchy of a male/female binary underpins the workings of the trilogy, presents Athena’s persuasion of the Furies to subsume their memory-work to the democratic project of Athens as an act that:

completes the transference of *political* power (along the lines of the myth of matriarchy), which Clytemnestra had brazenly claimed in the first play, to the *ritual* power of the female exemplified by the role assigned to the Erinyes in Athens.⁵⁹

From the late 1980s onwards, feminist academics such as Nicole Loraux, Helene Foley, and Victoria Wohl began to build on Zeitlin’s work to rethink the apparatus of Aeschylus’

⁵⁸ Zeitlin (1978, 151).

⁵⁹ Zeitlin (1978, 173), emphasis in the original.

mythopoesis.⁶⁰ An especial target for re-examination is the assumption that the transformation of the Furies is an act of closure that issues a definitive check on the cycle of vengeance.⁶¹ The potency of memory, and the Furies' continued role in its perpetuation (*Eum.* 932-37), threatens the decisiveness of Athena's achievement at the trilogy's close.⁶² Victoria Wohl points to the residue of the murder of Agamemnon and the sacrifice of Iphigenia in the blessings of the now transformed Kindly Ones:

So when the virgin Eumenides are set at the end to preside over holy sacrifices for the city (*sphagiôn ... semnôn*, *Eumenides* 1007), the celebratory language cannot help but evoke what it most wishes to obscure: not only Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon (*sphagên*, *Agamemnon* 1389), but also the sacrifice of the virgin Iphigenia (*parthenosphagoisin*, *Ag.* 207).⁶³

⁶⁰ See e.g., Foley (2003); Loraux (1986), (1987); Wohl (1998). For a survey of the influence of feminist theory on interpretations of Greek tragedy, see Wohl (2005).

⁶¹ See the review of Keen (1994) for Peter Stein's *Oresteia* (1980) and the emphasis on irresolution, as the unsated anger of the Furies 'literally splits apart the platform on which the jury sit'. Their reconciliation to Athenian civic life is thus enforced – they are 'completely enclosed' – rather than negotiated. See also Foley (2007, 363). Keen criticises Stein's parodic approach to *Eumenides*, in which 'Athena flies into the auditorium on a wire, hair perfectly bouffant, looking like something out of a game-show; Apollo is lowered into the trial from the roof, and proceeds to prance about the stage as if in a pantomime'. However, if Stein is calling attention to the non-reconciliation of *Eumenides* then parody seems an appropriate vehicle to do so. For my own reading of parody in response to triumphalism and as a particularly fruitful device for women, see the discussion in chapter two.

⁶² Easterling (2008, 233-34); see also Rynearson (2013, 6-7); Thalmann (1985b, 236).

⁶³ Wohl (2005, 152).

These echoes of Clytemnestra – her notorious act and its motivation – look back through the trilogy and beyond, to memories that remain unchecked and primed to rekindle the call to remembrance and revenge.⁶⁴

The connection between the myth of Pandareus' daughters, to which Penelope and Electra refer, and the Furies (Hom., *Od.* 20.66-82; Ov., *Met.* 6.430-1) foregrounds *Eumenides* as a meaningful intertext for my reading of the play. Farber exposes the latent irresolution of Aeschylus' trilogy as her women remain 'unappeasable' like the Furies (δυσπαρήγοροι, *Eum.* 384) and their repetitive remembrance is replayed in the relationships between the tragedies that engage with the House of Atreus mythology to show how they effectively remember each other.⁶⁵ One such intertextual entanglement occurs in Sophocles, in which his Electra revisits the death cries of Aeschylus' Agamemnon ('Again! I am hit a second time!', *El.* 1345) to urge Orestes on to deliver a second blow in vengeance ('Hit her a second time, if you have the strength!', 1416).⁶⁶ In ventriloquizing her father, Electra emphasizes not only the causal relationship between the murders (Electra remembers Agamemnon and Clytemnestra) but also the dialogue that Sophocles initiates with Aeschylus (Sophocles remembers Aeschylus).

⁶⁴ As the ghost of Clytemnestra does at the start of *Eumenides*, rousing the Furies from their sleep and reigniting their commitment to honour the memory of her death and to pursue Orestes (94-139).

⁶⁵ For the 'implacability' of the Furies, see Rynearson (2013, 7).

⁶⁶ Carson (2009, 83). The translations from Sophocles on (pp. 344-45) are taken from Carson, whose introductory essay to her translation of Sophocles' play notes the tragedian's revisiting of Aeschylus. See also Carson (1996).

Farber also enters into conversation with the tragedians and repurposes material from the ancient dramas to fashion her own take on the mythology. For instance, Klytemnestra speaks Electra's lines from Euripides, but transforms them from lament to boast, as she recalls the murder of Agamemnon: 'And planned to welcome my husband home ... not with crown or garland ... but with a sharpened axe' (p. 63; cf. Eur., *El.* 162-66).⁶⁷ Clytemnestra effectively performs her own messenger-speech in Aeschylus, in which her triumph over the corpses of Agamemnon and Cassandra sees her bear witness to the murder (*Ag.* 1372-98). This pivotal moment in the mythology is one that all the receptions remember and Electra plays the key role in this process of memorialization (e.g., Aesch., *Lib.* 306-513; Eur., *El.* 150-66). However, Farber confuses the usual trajectory of Agamemnon's murder in Aeschylus as an act memorialized and subject to repetition, both intra- and inter- textually. Farber's Elektra no longer remembers through the testimony of Klytemnestra; instead, Farber's Klytemnestra remembers through the speech of Euripides' Electra, a speech that itself looks back to Aeschylus' Clytemnestra. The remembering of these two women has gone full circle.

The women's commitment to irresolution in Farber's play appears incomprehensible against the strictures of institutions that demand resolution and insist on closure. Electra's incessant mourning for Agamemnon, as one who 'cannot not grieve' ('οἶδά τε καὶ ξυνήμι τάδ', οὗ τί με/ φυγγάνει', Soph., *El.* 131-32), upends the historical control of women's

⁶⁷ Farber mistakenly attributes these lines to Sophocles. Her practice of directly citing from translation – in this instance, the translation of Edward Paley Coleridge – adds yet another voice to the play's polyphony.

graveside lamentation in classical Athens and makes her a particularly suggestive figure for the untapped, and potentially explosive, memories of South Africa's black female population. Farber's early work on verbatim theatre documents the experiences of black women under apartheid and in its aftermath and speaks to the playwright's sustained interest in theatre as a platform for performing memory, as well as to the role of the theatre-maker as advocate:

It was whilst watching the televised Truth and Reconciliation Hearings each Sunday night several years ago that I was first struck by a haunting, silent presence on the periphery of these proceedings: the women – mothers, daughters, wives of those murdered or still missing – who had come to the hearings to learn the truth about the deaths of their loved ones.⁶⁸

The TRC's focus on political crimes neglected female testimony, although the relative silence of female suffering in the hearings was contrasted with the visibility of women in the administration of the commission, in which amnesty judgements were read out by female speakers and women were employed to comfort victims giving testimony.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Farber (2008b, 34). The play *A Woman in Waiting* (1999) is the product of collaboration between Farber and the South African actor, Thembi Mtshali-Jones. Farber edits and stages Mtshali-Jones's testimony to create a meditation on black mothers and their children, who are torn apart – physically and emotionally – by apartheid. The play is published along with two other testimonial works: *Amajuba: Like Doves We Rise* (2000) and *He Left Quietly* (2002) in the volume *Theatre of Witness* (2008b).

⁶⁹ Driver (2005, 220). For feminist critiques of the TRC, see Driver (2005); Goldblatt and Meintjes (1998); Kashyap (2009); Manjoo (2008). For women, witnessing, and the TRC, see Ross (2003). The potential absence of female experience from what was meant to be a collective and collaborative process of national storytelling spurred feminist activists to put together a gendered analysis of the truth commission. For the report submitted to the TRC, see Goldblatt and Meintjes

The plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides offer material with which to redress the gender imbalance of truth commission hearings. Across the plays, it is women who commit to, and make a performance out of, the labour of remembering: from Clytemnestra's fixation with the sacrifice of Iphigenia (Aesch., *Ag.* 1415-21; Soph., *El.* 525-51), to Cassandra's kaleidoscopic vision of past, present, and future (*Ag.* 1072-330), and to Electra's incessant mourning for Agamemnon ('οἶδά τε καὶ ξυνήμι τάδ', οὗ τί με/ φυγγάνει', Soph., *El.* 131-32), and on to the Furies, described as agents of memory and 'witnesses' (μάρτυρες, Aesch., *Eum.* 318) for the dead.⁷⁰ In pointed contrast, their male counterparts are less likely to remember, as the Argive chorus of *Agamemnon* balk at recounting the sacrifice of Iphigenia ('What comes next? I cannot see it, cannot say' / 'τὰ δ' ἔνθεν οὔτ' εἶδον οὔτ' ἐννέπω', 248), or, indeed, have no memories on which to draw, as Orestes is essentially indoctrinated into the recollection of the crimes of his mother and Aegisthus by Electra (e.g. Aesch., *Lib.* 306-

(1996). These recommendations initiated three women-only hearings, with the first taking place in Cape Town in 1996. At these special fora, women were actively encouraged to address their own experiences, with a loosening of the TRC remit to incorporate a wider range of suffering. Women were also given the opportunity to present testimony from behind screens or in written form, responding to cultural discomfort at the occupation of public space by (especially black) women.

⁷⁰ Clytemnestra recites, remembers, and anticipates her own death from a passage of Cassandra's speech (p. 73; cf. Aesch., *Ag.* 1256-60). She identifies herself as the 'two-footed lioness' (δίπους λέαινα, 1258) from Cassandra's prophecy ('I was the two-footed lioness') and looks out from the consequences of her act of murder ('I killed – and now must die').

479).⁷¹ The potential for crosspollination between the memory-work performed by women in the tragedies and the untapped memories of South Africa's female population lends a suggestively feminist charge to Farber's classical reception.

The narrative prominence that Farber affords to Klytemnestra and Elektra comes at the expense of Orestes, who does not enter the play until its second half. Orestes is incompatible with Farber's particular (re)vision of the House of Atreus mythology as his engagement with the memory of Agamemnon's murder is second hand, via Electra (not to mention his catalytic role in the trilogy's resolution and its turn from remembrance, inspiring the judgement of Athena and her transformation of the Furies).⁷² Elektra inserts herself into parts of the play

⁷¹ Burnett (1998, 106). This is another point of contact between Telemachus and Orestes and their relationships with Penelope/Klytemnestra/Elektra. Telemachus dismisses Penelope (*Od.* 1.345-59) because he remembers differently. As De Jong points out (2001, 37), 'Penelope's longing for Odysseus differs from that of Telemachus (in 115-17): she misses what she once had and has now lost (ποθέω), whereas Telemachus wishes for the return of a person he has never seen'.

⁷² Orestes' return to avenge Agamemnon is mediated by Apollo in *Libation Bearers* (269-96) and by the chorus in *Molona* (p. 45-46). After the siblings' reconciliation, Aeschylus' chorus and Electra remember Agamemnon's murder and the mistreatment of his dead body on Orestes' behalf (e.g., Aesch., *Lib.* 429-55), while Elektra enacts this persuasive remembering in *Molona* (pp. 56-58). In her programme to the Oxford performance of *Molona*, Farber also cites Jean-Paul Sartre's reception, *Les Mouches* (1943) as an influence, see Van Zyl Smit (2010, 130). For the published text, see Sartre (1947). While Sartre and Farber both demur from staging the judgement of Orestes in *Eumenides*, they do so for markedly different reasons and with different effects. Sartre's Orestes, an

that ‘remember’ and reenact key moments between Clytemnestra and Orestes from the tragedies. One key instance is Farber’s reception of the famous scene in which Clytemnestra bears her breast to make Orestes forget his vengeance, which is also remembered by Euripides (Aesch., *Lib.* 896-98; Eur., *El.* 1206-9, 1214-17).⁷³ Farber’s reenactment is upstaged by Elektra who blocks the dialogue between mother and son to leave Orestes with only one line in the entire scene (pp. 71-75) and issues her own reply to Klytemnestra.

KLYTEMNESTRA: My son, - hear me – for I will say this only once.
 Upon this breast you often lay asleep.
 And from here you sucked the milk that made you strong.
 I gave you life. And if you take mine –
 You will never know peace gain.

ELEKTRA: (*Circling her mother and brother, axe in hand.*)
 This night’s end is already written.
 Our destiny must be played out! (p. 74)

Klytemnestra’s words are adapted from Aeschylus, though the warning sounded by her final two lines looks to the horror of remembering in Euripides’ text, in which Orestes reflects on the reversal implicit to the act of matricide (‘You gave birth to your own murderers’/ ‘φονέας ἔτικτες ἄρα σοι’, *El.* 1229). Klytemnestra goes on to warn that ‘[t]he hounds that avenge all murder will forever hunt you down’ (p. 74; Aesch. *Lib.* 924) but redirects her speech from

existential hero, assumes complete responsibility for his actions, freeing him from replaying the past. The characters in *Molona*, on the other hand, are stuck in the act of remembering.

⁷³ Clytemnestra’s actions also ‘remember’ Homer. For the Homeric model, see (Hom., *Il.* 22.79-89). Nicole Loraux notes that Hecabe’s pleas draw on the tension between remembering and forgetting, in which she uses her body to appeal to the memories of Hector so that he remembers (μνησαί, 22.84) her maternal breasts, ‘where cares are forgotten’, in order to forget (λαθηκηδέα μαζόν, 22.83), see Loraux (1998, 38). See also Garvie (1986, 270).

Orestes to Elektra. Klytemnestra's use of memory does persuade Orestes in Farber's version in a way that follows on, as a type of progression, from the regret experienced by Euripides' Orestes. Elektra, on the other hand, reworks the allusivity in Klytemnestra's pleas to insist on the uniformity of the tradition with regard to matricide.

The reduction of Orestes' role is particularly striking from a South African context due to the thematic importance of the avenging son in anti-apartheid theatre, which is exemplified by Athol Fugard's *Orestes* (1971).⁷⁴ Fugard imaginatively recreates the case of John Harris, who was executed after detonating a bomb next to a 'whites only' bench at a railway station in Johannesburg.⁷⁵ Fugard's play transposes the intimacy of the mother and son relationship to the experience of whiteness in an apartheid state, describing 'a sense that Harris stood in relation to his society as Orestes did to Clytemnestra'.⁷⁶ Farber certainly shares an interest with Fugard in the psychological effects of an oppressive regime and the ethical responsibility of the white theatre-maker in challenging racial injustice. However, Farber's Klytemnestra

⁷⁴ For the potency of the Orestes myth to South Africa, see Wetmore (2002, 143-68).

⁷⁵ There is no published script for Fugard's *Orestes*. For details see the published notebooks, Fugard (1983, 187-90); discussed in McMurty (1998); Mezzabotta (2000); Wetmore (2002, 145-53). For a discussion of the plays of Fugard, Fleishman, McMurty, and Farber in their political contexts, see Van Zyl Smit (2010). For a comparison of Fugard with Farber, see L. Kruger (2012, 355-77). *The Island* (1973) is Fugard's most famous work, produced in collaboration with actors John Kani and Winston Ntshona. The play reworks Sophocles' *Antigone* for anti-apartheid agitation, see Fugard et al. (1974).

⁷⁶ Fugard (1983, 188).

clings to the advantage that her whiteness brings, with her torture of Elektra while reciting the ‘curse of Ham’ being the clearest case in point (p. 30-31).⁷⁷ Clearly Fugard’s themes of resistance and protest are complicated for Farber in a post-apartheid state, in which redress and reckoning become the watchwords for examining the continuing presence of whiteness in South Africa.⁷⁸ However, Farber’s attentiveness to gender marks the difference between Fugard’s Harris-character and Klytemnestra, as Klytemnestra’s identity as a white South African in a supremacist state is complicated by the fact that she is a woman.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Farber includes the following footnote to her biblical reference: ‘The “curse of Ham” has been used by some to justify racism, systems like Apartheid, and the enslavement of people of Black African ancestry – believed to be descendants of Ham’ (p. 30 n. 8).

⁷⁸ For the relative neglect of women’s political theatre across Africa, see Mule (2007). The entanglement of Fugard’s Orestes-figure in a racist society – and the moral uncertainty of his actions – provides a model for asking searching questions of audience members that Farber continues to explore with *Molora*. As noted, Farber is keen to explore her audience’s sense of complicity with the play’s action. In his notebook account of the production, Fugard imagines the audience seated alongside the play’s three actors, on ‘brown station benches’ marked out for ‘Whites Only’. Fugard explains: ‘Among many things, we wanted in this way to say to our audience of white South Africans: “You could have been the person beside whom a young man left a large brown suitcase”’, see Fugard (1983, 188-89).

⁷⁹ For discussion of the intersections of race and gender, see Minh-Ha (1989), hooks (1989), (1992). Farber’s concentration on the mother-daughter relationship also side-steps a ‘battle of the sexes’ rendering of the *Oresteia*, typified by the translation of Tony Harrison (2002a) [1981].

Orestes is a figure for whom memory is contingent and open to renegotiation, while Farber's Elektra cannot and will not forget. Part of the conflict between Klytemnestra and Elektra stems from their efforts to control the memory of Orestes as the potential matricide. Elektra is keen to negate Klytemnestra's maternity and emphasize Agamemnon's paternity, as if preempting the potency of her mother's maternal gesture at the crucial moment of matricide. In her testimony, Elektra reproduces Sophocles' description of the murder of Agamemnon: 'It is seventeen years since she hacked my father like a tree with an axe' (p. 28; cf. Soph., *El.* 97-99). Elektra then draws out, and makes use of, the web of allusions that this image evokes across the tragedies, to underline Orestes' paternal duty to avenge Agamemnon and recall the figure of Apollo in *Eumenides* as the champion of paternity. She links Orestes to his father, 'I gave him to the women of our Tribe to grow like a tree in the mountains until he became a man' (p. 30) and later: 'You are your father's son ... Child of the body that I loved best' (p. 54; cf. Soph., *El.* 1232-35). Elektra's Apollonian rhetoric is ultimately unsuccessful in the play. Farber's Orestes does not kill Klytemnestra and he even goes so far as to recast the entire family drama from the perspective of his mother, referring to 'the curse of our Mother's House' (p. 76).

5.3 Critical Reception

The publication of *Molona* in 2008, alongside an international tour that saw the play reach Europe and the US, marked the culmination of several years of consultation,

collaboration, and development in South Africa.⁸⁰ The first performance of the play took place in 2003 (which is was the year of the TRC's final report) at the National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, before workshop development at the Market Theatre, Johannesburg, which is notable for its history of politically engaged theatre. *Molora* is part of a longstanding tradition of African and, more specifically, South African classical reception and is one of several plays to adapt the House of Atreus tragedies to reflect on post-apartheid politics. Mark Fleishman's *In the City of Paradise* (1998) and Mervyn McMurty's *Electra* (2000) evidence a wider interest in thinking through the process of the truth commission in the formation of a democratic South Africa with reference to the cycle of vengeance that envelops Clytemnestra and her offspring.⁸¹ These plays share *Molora*'s imbrications of source material and concentrate on the middle play of Aeschylus' trilogy and its receptions by Sophocles and Euripides. The matricides in Fleishman's *In the City of Paradise* are saved from the Furies by Clytemnestra's parents, Leda and Tyndareus, who want their daughter's murderers to face public judgement in court.⁸² However, they are dissatisfied when full disclosure by Electra and Orestes sees them acquitted of the crime.⁸³ McMurty's *Electra* begins after

⁸⁰ The publication of *Molora* by Oberon Books is based on the play's British premiere at the Barbican Centre on 9 April 2008.

⁸¹ Fleishman, alongside Jennie Reznick, also adapted Euripides' *Medea*. The play's premiere in 1994 coincided with South Africa's elections and explored the consequences of apartheid for the emerging democracy.

⁸² The role of Tyndareus draws on Euripides' *Orestes*.

⁸³ Steinmeyer (2007). For a comparison of *In the City of Paradise* and *Molora*, see Van Weyenberg (2008b), (2013, 91-140). Van Zyl Smit (2010, 120) considers the dissatisfaction of Leda

Clytemnestra's murder and interweaves TRC testimony with the trial of Orestes and his sister. McMurty's *Electra* ends on a somber, Aeschylean note as Orestes begins to succumb to the Furies and any sense of closure for the crimes of the family remains elusive (cf. Aesch., *Lib.* 1048-62).⁸⁴ The works of both male playwrights express ambivalence with regard to the adequacy of the model of restorative justice practised by the TRC to express and address the outrages of apartheid. However, neither play challenges the inevitability of Clytemnestra's death, with *City of Paradise* emphasizing cyclical violence and blood feud with frequent reference back to Thyestes' unwitting cannibalism.⁸⁵

Despite Farber's sustained engagement with Greek tragedy in the years following *Molora* – in 2011 she directed the Theban cycle, *Kadmos*, and she is due to direct *Oedipus to*

and Tyndareus as an extra-theatrical nod to feelings of discontent at the TRC's amnesty rulings. She compares the wording of Fleishman's acquittal of Orestes and Electra with the preamble to South Africa's interim constitution and its discussion of amnesty.

⁸⁴ The chorus close the play in confusion: 'What is good? What is evil?/ What is justice? What is truth?/ I do not know', quoted in Van Zyl Smit (2010, 123). See also Steinmeyer (2009).

⁸⁵ Mezzabotta (2000). Van Zyl Smit suggests that Electra and Orestes' description of their crimes as essentially political in this play presents the murder of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra favourably as an uprising against an 'oppressive regime', see Van Zyl Smit (2010, 121). While this may indeed be the case, the lack of agency exercised by Electra and Orestes to do anything other than reenact an ancient plot is telling, particularly in light of *Molora's* alternative ending.

Antigone – her classicism remains overlooked.⁸⁶ The only real exceptions to this omission are the brief mentions of *Molora* in chapters on translation practice and costuming by Lorna Hardwick and Rosie Wyles respectively.⁸⁷ Tellingly, these treatments do not appear within a volume dedicated to post-colonial Classics. Wyles, for example, explores the layers of meaning attached to Aiesthus' boots that overlap across a South African context, the play's restaging in the UK, and to the *Oresteia*, in which the removal of Agamemnon's boots is a focal point for Clytemnestra's deception. These pieces demonstrate that there is a wealth of comparative work left to do with *Molora* and that the play has something to contribute to approaches to ancient drama beyond and/or alongside its explicit post-colonial context.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Farber's *Kadmos* remains unpublished and details of *Oedipus to Antigone* are forthcoming. *Kadmos* evidences a similar engagement with existing translation as *Molora*. Farber draws on the arrangements of Sophocles' Theban plays as a trilogy in the translations of Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald's *The Oedipus Cycle* (1949) and Timberlake Wertenbaker's *The Thebans* (1992).

⁸⁷ Hardwick (2010, 199-204); Wyles (2010, 176-79).

⁸⁸ The critical reception of Seamus Heaney, as an example for comparison, has not suffered from the same reductionism. With Heaney, the example of Irish classicism informs rather than overwhelms appreciation of his reception practice, see e.g. Wilmer (2007). Another example would be Derek Walcott, see e.g. G. Davis (2007); Greenwood (2007); Prince (2007). The classicisms of Heaney and Walcott are examined not just for what they can tell us about Classics in post-colonial situations, but also as reworkings of ancient texts more generally, in which there is a sense of aesthetic engagement between the artist and their source. For Irish reworkings of Greek tragedy, see M. McDonald and Walton (2002).

Most academic engagements with *Molora* by classicists set the play in context alongside the receptions of McMurty and/or Fleishman, while the similarities and differences between the plays are measured not in terms of how they adapt the ancient dramas but in terms of their approach to the truth commission.⁸⁹ To borrow the categorization of Aktina Stathaki, they are considered ‘reconciliation plays’ first and classical reception second.⁹⁰ As a result, the classical source becomes almost incidental – simply a vehicle – for political expression.⁹¹ Astrid Van Weyenberg’s work on the play is an example of this trend, which considers *Molora* alongside Fleishman as part of a monograph that examines African adaptations of Greek tragedy.⁹² Van Weyenberg’s readings of Farber’s text illuminate the playwright’s engagement with the truth commission first and foremost, while the context offered by the truth commission hearing does not reveal anything meaningful about the ancient dramas.

⁸⁹ Mezzabotta (2000); Van Weyenberg (2008b), (2013, 91-140); Van Zyl Smit (2010), (2011).

⁹⁰ Stathaki (2009).

⁹¹ The Ph.D thesis of Stathaki goes so far as to measure *Molora*’s success on its politics. Her categorization of *Molora* as part of a wave of ‘reconciliation theatre’ in the 1990s leads her to assert that the play fails ‘to address less dominant interpretations of South Africa’s transition that poses questions on issues of justice, reparations and the still yawning gap between beneficiaries and victims of apartheid’, see Stathaki (2009, 170).

⁹² Van Weyenberg (2013, 91-140). Van Weyenberg (2013) is a close version of an earlier article, see Van Weyenberg (2008b).

For instance, Van Weyenberg fails to make the link between the opening testimony of Klytemnestra, its source material, and the translation of Fagles.⁹³ I reproduce the relevant passage in full, including its quotation of the excerpt from the play:

After the Chorus' singing has ended, Klytemnestra pulls the microphone towards her and starts her testimony confessing: "I did it all. I don't deny it" (22). In the present tense, she describes in detail how "at each stroke he cries in agony," how he "buckles at the knees and crashes here!" and how, "when he's down," she adds the third and final blow, after which "the life is bursting out of him – great sprays of blood" (23). Klytemnestra revels in what she has done:

And I... I revel like the Earth
when the spring rains come down.
The blessed gifts of God.
And the new green spear splits the sheath
and rips to birth in glory!
Here lies Agamemnon my husband
made a corpse by [t]his right hand
A Masterpiece of Justice.
Done is done. (23)

Although the "murderous shower wounds [her], dyes [her] black," Klytemnestra presents the execution of Agamemnon as legitimate on both religious and legal grounds: it evokes the "blessed gifts of God" and is a "Masterpiece of Justice." Her testimony points to a crucial aspect of the TRC process: perpetrators were asked to reveal what they had done and state the facts, but whether or not they would be given amnesty did not depend on any expression of remorse or guilt; amnesty was linked solely to truth, not remorse.⁹⁴

Van Weyenberg presents Klytemnestra's testimony as if Farber composed it to comment on the truth commission and its ideology, with no acknowledgement of how Farber lifts the extract directly from the translation of Fagles. South African relevance cannot be implicit in the text and therefore must stem from the play's recontextualization and transformation in

⁹³ See Loraux (1987) for an emphasis on Greek tragedies as texts.

⁹⁴ Van Weyenberg (2013, 98-99).

reception. However, Van Weyenberg does not attempt to consider Farber's reception practice in this way, which is surprising because unpicking Farber's reception work will enrich a reading of the play's first scene in relation to personal testimony.

Van Weyenberg also does not mention the lines that open Clytemnestra's initial testimony, just before the borrowing from Fagles, which are excerpted from Louis MacNeice's translation of the Watchman's prologue:

A great ox –
As they say –
Stands on my tongue. (p. 22; cf. Aesch., *Ag.* 36)

The irony here is that Farber transforms a proverb about discretion into what will be an overflowing of testimony.⁹⁵ The thinking that underpinned truth commission hearings – that full disclosure would essentially purge the past – lends an interesting slant to a deeply allusive speech.⁹⁶ The Watchman gestures to, but refrains from explicitly naming, the malaise in the house, leaving him to weep for recent 'hard times'.⁹⁷ However, the description of manly-minded (ἀνδρόβουλον) Clytemnestra, rendered by MacNeice as: 'By a woman of sanguine heart but a man's mind' (*Ag.* 11), reveals the object of discomfort and its cause – masculinity

⁹⁵ For Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* as a play about disclosure, or 'speaking the unspeakable', see Reynolds (2005).

⁹⁶ For allusivity in the Watchman's speech, see Goldhill (1984, 8-11).

⁹⁷ See the lines: 'κλαίω τότ' οἴκου τοῦδε συμφορὰν στένων/ οὐχ ὡς τὰ πρόσθ' ἄριστα διαπονουμένου' (*Ag.* 18-19), rendered in MacNeice's translation as: 'I cry for the hard times come to the house,/ no longer run like the great place of old'.

in a woman – and, in performance terms, raises expectation for her entrance.⁹⁸ In Farber’s re-staging, the source of the Watchman’s anxiety: Clytemnestra/Klytemnestra, speaks his lines and shifts their perspective. And that which is unspeakable to the Watchman will be expressed by Klytemnestra and the events to which he can only speculate – Agamemnon’s return from Troy (‘if they’ve taken Troy...’/ ‘εἴπερ Ἰλίου πόλις/ ἔάλωκεν’, 29-30) to this ‘manly-minded’ woman – Klytemnestra remembers.

Klytemnestra’s testimony provides an unabashed confession of murder. The repeated statement, which is not cited by Van Weyenberg: ‘Here I stand and here I struck and here my work is done’ (p. 22), bookmarks the description of the act and follows the exact translation of Fagles for the line (‘ἔστηκα δ’ ἔνθ’ ἔπαισ’ ἐπ’ ἐξειργασμένοις’, Aesch., *Ag.* 1379).

Klytemnestra bears witness on Farber’s stage, by using the words of Fagles which are crafted from Aeschylus, and, as noted, these accretions of authorship reflect the kind of exchanges between texts in evidence across the ancient plays. Farber’s shift from the translation of MacNeice to Fagles is wholly deliberate. The emphatic, communicative repetition of ‘here’, introduced by Fagles, best reflects and engages with the circumstances of the new play. For Fagles, ‘here ... here ... here’ doubles as gesture, marking the point at which Clytemnestra reveals the bodies of Cassandra and Agamemnon and anticipating the remembrances in the receptions of the play. In *Molora*, of course, this moment of revelation has passed, with Klytemnestra’s re-enactment delayed until the next scene and, even then, there will be no

⁹⁸ Taplin (1977, 280) notes that ‘[t]he movements of Clytemnestra in *Ag* are notoriously problematical’. For a survey of the literature and a discussion of her likely entrance-point in the text, see Taplin (1977, 280-88).

momentous display of the victim's body: the focus has indelibly shifted from the act to its remembrance.⁹⁹

Farber's use of Fagles's line and its repetition of 'here' calls attention to the aftermath of the murder and its memorialization with the grave of Agamemnon.

Clytemnestra/Klytemnestra's account of the murder turns to self-portraiture in Farber's reception of Aeschylus, as the blood-soaked murderer, in her own words, resembles the saturated earth:

And the murderous shower wounds me,
dyes me black.
And I... I revel like the Earth
when the spring rains come down. (p. 23; cf. Aesch., *Ag.* 1388-90)

The description recalls *Molora*'s prologue and the first words of the play, which are sung by a member of the chorus. This woman approaches the centre of the playing space to intone, 'Hophalal'igazi', which is a Xhosa expression that Farber translates to 'Blood has been spilt here' (p. 20). The words gesture to Agamemnon's grave, the focus of the performance area, and anticipate the testimonies which, in turn, look back to the murder. The singer's words seem to recall the *parode* of *Libation Bearers* (22-83), in which the chorus lament Agamemnon's death and ask: 'What can atone for blood/ once fallen on the ground?' (48). Aeschylus' chorus consider the unpredictable, although unavoidable, scales of Justice (55-65) and the call to vengeance that blood inspires as it clots the earth (66-70) in anticipation of

⁹⁹ MacNeice translates line 1379 as: 'I stand here where I struck, above my victims'. This more literal rendering makes less sense in the context of *Molora*, in the absence of those victims' bodies.

Orestes. In Aeschylus, the choral song looks back to the murder of Agamemnon as described by Clytemnestra and forward to the return of Orestes.¹⁰⁰ However, in *Molona*, reference to the *parode* in the prologue looks forward to that same description by Clytemnestra which, in turn, has become a statement of remembrance.

Clytemnestra/Clytemnestra likens the murder of Agamemnon to birth ('And the new green spear splits the sheath/ and rips to birth (λόχευμα) in glory!' (p. 23; cf. *Agamemnon* 1391-92), an act of proliferation that will, as it turns out, spawn the revenging actions of Orestes and Elektra. The potency of this description in Aeschylus reverberates across the tragedies, in which the significance of the new growth that Agamemnon's blood generates reappears, for example, in the prescient dream of Sophocles' Clytemnestra:

There is a story that she saw my father,
the father that was yours and mine, again
coming to life, once more to live with her.
He took and at the hearth planted the scepter
which once he bore and now Aegisthus bears,
and up from out the scepter foliage sprang
luxuriantly, and shaded all the land
of this Mycenae. (*El.* 417-25)

In Sophocles, Clytemnestra's dream is relayed to Electra by her sister Chrysothemis, and, in a nod to the passage's intertextual engagement with the mythology, Chrysothemis does not relate the dream first-hand but presents it as hearsay ('λόγος τις...', 417). The dream anticipates the appearance of Orestes, with the echo of Aeschylus' 'green spear' in Sophocles' 'foliage' suggestive of cause and effect: Agamemnon's death generates the return of his son.

¹⁰⁰ Anticipation for Orestes' return begins in *Agamemnon* with Cassandra (1280-85) and is then continued by the chorus (1646-48, 1667).

In *Molara*'s first scene, Farber juxtaposes Aeschylus' metaphor with Sophoclean reception in the testimonies of mother and daughter. In Elektra's opening statement, she follows Sophocles' description of the murder: 'It is seventeen years since she hacked my father like a tree with an axe' (p. 28; cf. *El.* 97-99). The shift in the two testimonies between 'green spear' and 'tree' is redolent of causation, in which the tree is felled but produces new growth. However, in Farber's re-arrangement, the new growth is described before the felling of the tree so that circularity replaces linear progression. Farber's use of Fagles's translation of 'green spear' renders comparison between the testimonies all the more apt, as the Homericism of Elektra's simile in Sophocles: 'like a tree with an axe', is matched by the martial-inflection with which Fagles renders 'γάνει σπορητὸς' as 'green spear' (1392).¹⁰¹ Farber recasts the richness of Aeschylus' imagery and its subsequent receptions in the testimony of Klytemnestra, so that the 'green spear' now looks both forwards and backwards to Orestes. Even the symbolic re-enactment of the murder of Agamemnon is suggestive of causation, in which Agamemnon-as-tree in Elektra's simile becomes the table through which Klytemnestra drives her axe. In this way, the re-enactment gives physical, even monumental,

¹⁰¹ Finglass (2007, 128) points to *Il.* 13.389 and 16.482 as epic models for 'like a tree'. I assume Fagles responds to the Homeric use of the verb γανάω to refer to the gleam of metals, (e.g. *Hom., Il.* 13.265), so that the lines 'χαίρουσαν οὐδὲν ἦσσον ἢ διισδότω / γάνει σπορητὸς κάλυκος ἐν λοχέυμασιν' (*Aesch., Ag.* 1391-92) become 'the blessed gifts of god, and the new green spear/ splits the sheath and rips to birth in glory!'. The line reference for Fagles is 1414-15. See the LSJ entry for γανάω. Compare with Weir Smyth (1926): 'while I rejoiced no less than the sown earth is gladdened in heaven's refreshing rain at the birthtime of the flower buds', or Collard (2002): 'I rejoice no less than a sown crop does in Zeus' sparkling gift when the sheathed ears swell for birth'.

expression to the way in which both the memories of Klytemnestra and Elektra and their various iterations in reception have memorialized Agamemnon and his death. Farber's confused timeline creates moments that upend the *telos* of cause and effect between Agamemnon's death and Orestes' return.¹⁰²

Farber responds to Clytemnestra's account of the murder of Agamemnon as a pivotal moment in the mythology that will be remembered through the trilogy and across the tragedies. Van Weyenberg fails to draw out the significance of Klytemnestra's opening testimony and its complicated expression of remembrance as something that looks forwards as well as backwards. A reason for Van Weyenberg's apparent short-sightedness may lie in her methodological approach. Van Weyenberg's characterization of the play as post-colonial theatre considers Farber's engagement with Greek tragedy through the framework of the truth commission and the wider context of post-apartheid South Africa. She responds to the growth in the academic field of post-colonial Classics and the resulting shift to a more nuanced approach to African classicism that scrutinizes earlier characterizations of post-colonial

¹⁰² In Farber's staging, the actor who plays Orestes is also the corpse of Agamemnon, revealed by Klytemnestra in re-enactment. *Molora's* Elektra refers to the likeness of Orestes to Agamemnon, which is both ironic and poignant. For example, Elektra points to the physical similarity between father and son, while also gesturing towards the causal relationship between Agamemnon's death and Orestes' return: 'Ungumfanekiso ka yihlo uAgamemnon. [YOU ARE THE IMAGE OF AGAMEMNON]. You are your father's son' (p. 54). Katie Mitchell's production of the *Oresteia* for the National Theatre in 1999 similarly plays with collapsing the identities of Agamemnon and Orestes. Here, the footprints that play a key role in the recognition scene between Orestes and Electra are made by the ghost of Agamemnon, see Walton (2006, 189).

reception in terms of opposition and appropriation.¹⁰³ Her work is rightly careful to draw out what is at stake with African Classics and its study, in which critical notions of ‘writing back’ and/ or ‘counter-discourse’ may serve to perpetuate Eurocentric ownership of classical texts.¹⁰⁴

Van Weyenberg adds nuance to the dynamic between new works of reception emerging from Africa and their classical models, pointing out that ‘Greek tragedy is [already] part of hybrid African cultural traditions’.¹⁰⁵ Farber’s Xhosa chorus and the cast’s

¹⁰³ For a survey of Greek tragedy in South Africa in the twentieth century, see Van Zyl Smit (2003), (2008). For creative engagements with Greek tragedy from Africa more generally, see Goff (2016); Hardwick (2007a); Wetmore (2002, 7-22); Van Weyenberg (2013). For the reception of Aeschylus in Africa, see Wetmore (2017). For a survey of the emergence of a ‘black classicism’ – in reception theory and practice – across Africa and the black diaspora, see the review essay of Greenwood (2009).

¹⁰⁴ Van Weyenberg (2013, xi-li); see also Goff (2016, 453) with bibliography. For counter-discourse in post-colonial theatre, see H. Gilbert and Tompkins (1996). For post-colonial strategies in approaches to classical reception, see Decreus (2007); Goff and Simpson (2007b, 38-77); Hardwick (2004a), (2005a), (2007a); McKinsey (2010).

¹⁰⁵ Van Weyenberg (2013, xlv); see also Wetmore (2002, 23-52). Van Weyenberg engages with Martin Bernal’s *Black Athena* (1987), (1991), as his challenge to ‘eurocentric classicism’ provides a useful strategy to rethink post-colonial classical reception, see also Bernal (2001); Orrells, Bhabra, and Roynon (2011). For the critical response to Bernal, see Lefkowitz and Rogers (1996). See Bhabha (2004) for hybridity in post-colonial theory. See discussion in Marzec (2011, 3-4). See

bilingualism can be understood within this context of hybridization, with the merging of Greek tragedy and ‘indigenous materials and performance styles’.¹⁰⁶ Van Weyenberg explicitly sets out to challenge ‘historicist ideas of literary influence’ but her method of securing this goal seems to consist of underplaying the role of the source text in creating meaning.¹⁰⁷ This is something of a reverse-take on the discourse of the classical tradition in which, for Van Weyenberg, it is the new text that merits especial critical attention, almost to the exclusion of the source material. With this gesture, however, she goes too far: with dialogue between cultures overshadowing an examination of the dialogue between texts.¹⁰⁸

also Hardwick (2008) for a discussion of Bhabha’s concept in relation to Classics in translation. For cultural contact between Greek and African theatre traditions, see Djisenu (2007).

¹⁰⁶ Van Zyl Smit (2010, 115); see also Hardwick (2010b, 199-204); L. Kruger (2012). For multi-lingualism in post-colonial classical receptions, see Hardwick (2007b). In the second scene, Elektra recalls herself as a child of seven and sings a South Africanized English nursery rhyme: ‘One man went to plough/ Went to plough mielies...’ (p. 25).

¹⁰⁷ Van Weyenberg (2013, xxii). Van Weyenberg rejects the term source text in favour of ante-text, preferring to refer to the process of adaptation rather than reception. For discussion of metaphors for reception and their resistance to, or reconstruction of, cultural hierarchies, see Greenwood (2013); Hardwick (2011); McConnell (2016).

¹⁰⁸ In Barbara Goff’s survey chapter on African receptions of Greek drama she reflects on her own work in collaboration with Michael Simpson regarding post-colonial receptions of Oedipus and Antigone and notes that, in contrast with interpretations of African Classics as hybrid and dialogic, ‘[w]e found this body of plays to be highly conscious of their colonial past, and indeed divided by it...’, see Goff (2016, 457), also Goff and Simpson (2007b). She questions a tendency to sanitize the

5.4 Reconciliation

5.4.1 The Chorus

The existing receptions of Farber's chorus overplay the authenticity of the Xhosa actors and ignore evidence for the instability of choral identity throughout the play. The mutability of Farber's chorus is important as it demonstrates her engagement with the kind of shifting uncertainty that underpins dramatic representation or imitation/*mimesis*, as well as the relationship of *mimesis* to theatrical representations of femininity.¹⁰⁹ Alysse Rich recognizes

relationship between Greek texts – as symbols of the colonizer's culture – and their African receptions. In a similar vein, see also the review essay of Greenwood (2009) who addresses the difficulties inherent in the notion of a Black classicism. Goff suggests that the figures of Oedipus and Antigone 'insist on' and draw out anti-colonial sentiment. Perhaps then, it may also be Farber's choice of subject matter, and particularly her reduction of the Orestes role, that make interpretations that recognize her re-visioning less likely.

¹⁰⁹ For femininity, theatre, and *mimesis*, see Zeitlin (1985). See e.g. Van Zyl Smit (2010, 130) for whom the chorus are the heroes of Farber's play. The latest reading of *Molora*'s chorus is in Steinmeyer (2017), in which her discussion imagines the chorus at the intersection of Xhosa culture and the truth commission. On the chorus' ululating song, see Steinmeyer (2017, 468-69): 'Performed on stage during the play by the women of the chorus, it reflects the situation of the TRC hearings, in which historical truth and individual story were performed simultaneously, and even informs the structure of *Molora* with its interplay between macro- and micro- historical levels, between public and personal'. Grant Parker, editor of the volume whose title promises 'classical confrontations' between

the threefold, sometimes overlapping, associations that Farber's chorus engender: they are fictional characters that exist within the narrative, they represent South Africans at TRC hearings, and, with their ululation and instrument-playing, they are representatives of Xhosa culture.¹¹⁰ Rich is particularly astute in her observation that Farber's chorus occupy a strange place in the drama as fictional characters who also perform their real roles as part of a particular South African tradition. Farber seems keen to muddy the waters between the Xhosa chorus who engage in theatrical performance and their real-life practice. In interviews, for example, she credits them with *Molora's* distinctive ending and describes the collaborative work that went into formulating a resolution to the conflict:

They made it 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.¹¹¹

Rich frames the chorus' Xhosa identity in terms of 'authenticity' that overrides their fictional guises and conveys authority to the play's audience, leading naturally on to the prevention of matricide.¹¹² To my mind, however, the changeability of choral identity in

South Africa, Greece, and Rome, addresses the intersections of imperialism with antiquity, particularly with regard to education, see G. Parker (2017a, 10-21).

¹¹⁰ Rich (2012, 293-94). Rich's Ph.D chapter provides the most sustained interest in Farber's chorus across the secondary literature. However, Rich's approach is focused on the relationship between the chorus and the audience in terms shaped by the truth commission.

¹¹¹ Woods and Farber (2010).

¹¹² Rich (2012, 296-97).

Molora only draws attention to the artifice of their dramatic representation. Farber's chorus are the most actorly performers of the play, and it is through the interplay of their theatrically- and classically-informed identities that the resolution they appear to bring about is offset with irresolution. Farber's chorus appear to play the role of anti-Furies, as they physically restrain Elektra as she rushes towards Klytemnestra with an axe to undo the cycle of familial vengeance.¹¹³ However, Aeschylean precedent for choral intervention – the manipulation of the Nurse (*Lib.* 770-73) and the deception of Aegisthus (*Lib.* 848-50) – suggests that their involvement may not be so benign.

Farber's chorus comes closest to resembling Aeschylus' female chorus in *Libation Bearers* and, despite what Farber says about their representative role as South Africans, they bear little relation to the male citizen chorus of *Agamemnon*, who markedly do not intervene to help Agamemnon (1343-71). In addition to the intertextual nod to the mythological tradition of matricide, Elektra's resistance to Klytemnestra's pleas for mercy ('This night's end is already written', p. 74) also calls attention to the role of *Libation Bearers'* chorus in the intra-textual formation of that tradition. The chorus anticipate the power of words to induce and/or enable action (cf. *Lib.* 720-21).¹¹⁴ The choral song before Aegisthus' entrance looks on

¹¹³ *Molora's* stage directions note in the aftermath: 'ELEKTRA and ORESTES embrace, weeping. They have triumphed over their destiny of vengeance. The cycle has been broken' (p. 77).

¹¹⁴ Thalmann (1985b, 229). In Aeschylus, the chorus disavow their role as accomplices (*Lib.* 872-74), as they assume that their lack of physical intervention in the murder of Aegisthus will render them blameless (873). As I demonstrate, the chorus' physical intervention to prevent the matricide in

to the murder of Clytemnestra and essentially scripts a role for the matricide (*Lib.* 827-30), which anticipates Clytemnestra's appeal to the mother-son relationship (*Lib.* 896-930) and the displacement of women's role in procreation in the next play (*Eum.* 657-66, 735-40).¹¹⁵ As Farber's Orestes waives in his commitment to murder Klytemnestra, Elektra repurposes the casting of Orestes as father-avenger by the chorus in *Libation Bearers*, and legitimized in *Eumenides*, to remind her brother of his role as the 'son of Agamemnon', for whom paternal duty displaces maternal ties: 'This is the son of Agamemnon/ His hour is come at last' (p. 74).

At several points during *Molora*, the chorus move from their chairs to the performance space, which marks a shift between their identities as witnesses to the testimonies and as fictional characters within the re-enactments. During their performances in the playing space the play draws out the tension between their Xhosa identity (and its entanglement in the prevention of matricide) and the various choral identities they take on within the action. In the second scene, the only named choral member, Ma NOSOMETHING, helps Elektra to conceal Orestes (p. 29).¹¹⁶ In the fifth scene, three chorus members attempt to soothe Klytemnestra

Molora is complicated by the potency of their verbal and performative encouragement of vengeance in the tragedies.

¹¹⁵ 'When she cries out "My son!"/ cry in return "My father's son!"/ Then murder her in innocence (cf. *Lib* 828-40). See Garvie (1986, 270).

¹¹⁶ Elektra's role in Orestes' exile follows Sophocles (*El.* 11-13). However, while the Pedagogue in Sophocles receives Orestes from Electra, in *Molora*, Elektra delivers her brother to a female protector. The role of a woman in the rescue of Orestes has precedent in the form of Orestes' childhood nurse in Aeschylus (*Lib.* 732-65).

with an ‘ancient lullaby’ and take on the roles of midwives for the snake birth that anticipates Orestes’ return (pp. 32-33; cf. Aesch., *Lib.* 523-39). In the play’s ninth scene, attention turns to Orestes, as Ma NOSOMETHING and her tribe initiate Orestes into manhood with Xhosa ritual (pp. 45-47). The chorus precipitate Orestes’ homecoming and his reconciliation with Elektra (pp. 51-59). In the reconciliation scene, the chorus support plans for vengeance following *Libation Bearers* (pp. 55-59; cf. *Lib.* 306-478) and punctuate the plotting of brother and sister with a Xhosa chant of ‘Makunbenjalo!’, translated as: ‘Let it be so!’.¹¹⁷ With the murder of Ayesthus in the fifteenth scene the choral mood changes and Ma NOSOMETHING condemns murder as an act that confers perpetual blame: ‘Uyalazi ukuba igazi lomntu liya kukumangalela? [DO YOU KNOW THAT HUMAN BLOOD WILL HAUNT YOU ALWAYS?], p. 70). Finally, in the nineteenth scene, they physically restrain Elektra to save Klytemnestra (p. 77).

The dramatic spotlight that Farber focuses on her chorus signals a concurrent turn from Clytemnestra, who is the typical target for mimetic suspicion in the mythology. Farber’s Klytemnestra does not match her Aeschylean counterpart in duplicity or in her marked use of femininity to persuade and deceive.¹¹⁸ With one exception, Farber’s re-use of Clytemnestra’s speech in *Agamemnon* stems from lines that appear after the murder, which Aeschylus marks

¹¹⁷ Farber shifts the chorus’ description of the desecration of Agamemnon’s body in Aeschylus to Elektra (p. 57; cf. *Lib.* 439-44).

¹¹⁸ Laura McClure is particularly compelling in respect to *Agamemnon*, referring to Clytemnestra’s ‘bilingualism’, see McClure (1999, 71). To McClure, Clytemnestra shifts between female and male speech to persuade and dissemble.

with a statement of semantic intent that expressly turns away from deception: ‘Words, endless words I’ve said to serve the moment -/ now it makes me proud to tell the truth’ (Ag. 1372-73).¹¹⁹ Farber’s Klytemnestra appears to bear this out when, as noted, she reframes the Watchman’s suspicions towards her and reticence to bear witness as the moment of disclosure in the play’s opening testimony. Farber offers a single glimpse of the earlier Clytemnestra and her rhetorical technique of excessive plain speaking when Klytemnestra reminisces about the tapestry scene (Ag. 783-974) to Orestes in disguise:

I whispered for the whole city to hear: ‘Come to me now my love, down from the car of war, but step upon these tapestries we have lain to honour your coming home. Those feet that have stamped out our enemies need never touch earth again, my great one’. (p. 64; cf. Ag. 905-7)

Klytemnestra’s assertion that she ‘whispered for the whole city to hear’ encapsulates her Aeschylean practice of pointed truth-telling: after all, Agamemnon’s feet will ‘never touch earth again’.¹²⁰ However, the craft of her persuasive speech is undermined by the circumstances of its re-telling as Klytemnestra is currently being deceived by Orestes.

Farber’s chorus calls attention to the constructed-ness of the playwright’s theatrical (re)vision and thus the contingency of reconciliation as a solution to vengeance. In the re-enactment of Agamemnon’s murder in the play’s second scene, Klytemnestra buries the body (p. 27), creating the gravesite that forms the focal point of the play. This act of concealment has already been undone figuratively, with the testimonies of the first scene, as well as literally, in the prologue, when the first choral member entered the playing space to reveal the

¹¹⁹ McClure (1999, 97).

¹²⁰ McClure (1999, 70-111); Thalmann (1985b, 226).

grave (p. 20). As noted, the opening phrase in *Molora*'s prologue, '[b]lood has been spilt here' (p. 20), is suggestive of the chorus of *Libation Bearers* and their opening song (66-67).¹²¹ However, while Aeschylus' chorus in *Libation Bearers* explicitly resist Clytemnestra, by refusing to perform her prayers (46-47), Farber's chorus take their seats in silence and wait expectantly for Klytemnestra's testimony.

The most striking contrast to the chorus' final role as arbiters of reconciliation is also the key point at which their Xhosa and fictional identities converge. Orestes performs the 'Dance of the Bull' in preparation for his revenge, which links Xhosa ritual to Aeschylus. Aeschylus' Orestes recalls the oracle's demand for retribution: "'Gore them like a bull!" he called, "or pay their debt/ with your own life, one long career of grief"', and complains about dispossession from his 'birthright' (*Lib.* 275-77).¹²² Farber displaces Apollo's oracle with her chorus in the command for matricide, as they similarly instruct Orestes in terms of inheritance: 'Your ancestors want you to return to your father's house and take your position

¹²¹ Visually, Farber's chorus loosely resemble their counterparts in *Libation Bearers*.

Directions for *Molora*'s prologue describe the singer of the play's first line as having 'clay on her face and a blanket about her shoulders' and she is soon joined in the performance space by five other women, 'dressed simply, with blankets around their shoulders' (p. 20). It is not too much of a stretch to compare this focus on face and dress with the slave women in *Libation Bearers*, whose performative mourning at the grave of Agamemnon draws attention to their ripped cheeks and torn clothing (*Lib.* 22-31).

¹²² From the translation of Fagles. Johnston's translation omits the command for Orestes to become 'as savage as a bull' / 'ταυρόομαι'.

there', and encourage him to perform the 'Dance of the Bull'. The dance is part of Xhosa tradition but its new resonance, when placed alongside Aeschylus, is striking. Farber details the choreography for this scene, describing how the chorus 'sing rapturously, and encircle Orestes – bumping him (as tradition dictates) to test his strength' (p. 46).

Orestes' 'Dance of the Bull', and the chorus' physicality, may also look forward to the completion of the matricide and cast the chorus as Furies. Orestes' increasing disturbance in Aeschylus alludes to the song and dance of the Furies: 'Deep in my heart, fear/ prepares its furious song and dance' (*Lib.* 1024-25; cf. *Eum.* 307-96). Farber's chorus encircle Orestes, which recalls the circular formation of the Furies' dance at the start of *Eumenides* (before institutionalization transforms their dance to a 'benign procession').¹²³ Farber make the link between dancing and violence at other points in the play, as both Klytemnestra and Elektra remember Klytemnestra and Ayesthus dancing in Agamemnon's blood (p. 28, 65). The description of Klytemnestra's dance may be a nod to Sophocles' reception of the Aeschylean connection between dancing and violence, in which Electra complains about the inauguration of a dancing festival to celebrate the date of Agamemnon's murder (*El.* 277-81). The meta-theatricality of Electra's complaint in Sophocles – voiced as part of a festival play in which singing and dancing marks the (theatrical) death of Agamemnon and its aftermath - spills over into *Molara*, in which the 'authentic' ritual dance of the Xhosa chorus comes up against and accrues these associations of dancing and violence from the tragedies.

¹²³ Easterling (2008, 226); Prins (1991).

Farber's stage directions for the end of Orestes' initiation ceremony foreground the issue of choral identity in the fulfilment of the matricide. The directions mark one of several moments in the play in which the chorus' multiple identities are laid bare: 'They wave to him and resume their places on the chairs, as Witnesses to the testimonies' (p. 46). The transparency of this shift in dramatic representation, far from suggestive of an 'authentic' Xhosa identity that transcends its existence in the theatre, only serves to call attention to its artifice. The theatricality of the chorus, and how this contributes to an interpretation of the play's reconciliation, is best understood with reference to the South African concept of *ubuntu*.¹²⁴ *Ubuntu* is an Nguni Bantu term suggestive of a philosophy of human interdependence and was appropriated in TRC propaganda to present forgiveness and reconciliation as preconditions for the institution of a peaceful, democratic South Africa.¹²⁵ Forgiveness was presented as an especially feminine quality by the truth commission (recall the female comforters at hearings) and cast women as conduits for *ubuntu*.¹²⁶ On the surface, the chorus' act of reconciliation is a clear expression of *ubuntu* philosophy in action and they even comfort Elektra as, cowed, she 'finally breaks down and weeps for all the injustices done

¹²⁴ *Ubuntu* is best expressed in the Nguni saying, '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' ('a person is a person through other people'). See Bolden (2014); Driver (2005).

¹²⁵ Sanders (2007, 93-97). The preamble to the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act (the Act that initiated the TRC) includes reference to *ubuntu* as a goal of the TRC, citing 'a need for *ubuntu* but not for victimization', see TRC (1995).

¹²⁶ Driver (2005, 220).

to her, her brother and her father' (p. 77).¹²⁷ Farber's Elektra emphasizes the feminization of forgiveness, and its expression through the chorus, as she berates Orestes' lack of resolve and gestures to the group of women: 'Go then and keep company where you belong.../ Na bafazi! [WITH WOMEN!]/ I will do this thing on my own' (p. 77).¹²⁸ However, the chorus' role in the frustration of the revenge plot is a belated twist in their characterization and recalls the Eumenides' belated, and perhaps unconvincing, change of mind in Aeschylus. The chorus encourage only to condone violence, which surely gives the lie to the stability of reconciliation and the naturalness of the association between femininity and forgiveness.

Farber's intervention in fashioning mutating choral identities should be read alongside her intervention in the trajectory of the mythology, especially the transformation of the matricide. The clear fingerprints of the playwright on the play's denouement undermine any sense of closure and, instead, Farber's deliberate and explicit intercession suggests the potential for further re-imaginings. The final flourish of the chorus as agents of the drama's resolution is unexpected and abstruse and, having saved Klytemnestra, they encircle Elektra

¹²⁷ See L. Kruger (2012) for whom Farber's chorus embody the quality of *ubuntu*. For *ubuntu* in *Molara* more generally, see Odom (2011, 57-60). A short essay that forms part of the paratext to *Molara* in publication, cites Tutu on *ubuntu*: 'A person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished when others are tortured or oppressed', see Nield (2008, 10).

¹²⁸ Orestes here takes the place of Chrysothemis in Sophocles' play (Elektra: 'I will do this thing on my own', Soph., *El.* 1019).

and Orestes in a peculiar visual reminder of the initiation scene and their causal role in the near completion of the murder.

5.4.2 Epilogue

Molora's literal endings – the reconciliation scene and epilogue – are essentially non-endings. Klytemnestra's epilogue is a statement of sophisticated classicism, demonstrative of Farber's engagement with the *Oresteia* trilogy and, in particular, her use of *Agamemnon* and *Libation Bearers* as sites of (textual) memory to which Klytemnestra and Farber return to resist the closure of *Eumenides*. Critical tendency to underplay Farber's engagement with and re-visioning of the tragedies is striking in relation to the play's ambivalent ending and the relationship between *Molora* and *Eumenides*. A survey of these responses evidences attempts to reconcile the conclusion of Aeschylus' play – the judgement of Athena and the placation of the Furies – with *Molora*'s narrow avoidance of matricide. Eric Dugdale, for example, reads the truth commission's project of reconciliation alongside Aeschylus' aetiology of the Areopagus court. To Dugdale, the necessity of Athena's conciliatory gesture to the Furies only strengthens parallels with the TRC, in which reconciliation trumps 'procedural justice'.¹²⁹ Glenn Odom recognizes that reconciliation remains unfinished at *Molora*'s close but does not link this with the potential for ambiguity at the conclusion of the trilogy.¹³⁰ Even

¹²⁹ Dugdale (2013, 140-42).

¹³⁰ Odom (2011). Odom suggests that 'tragedy requires closure whereas reconciliation is explicitly continuous', but his short-sightedness may stem from his explicitly historicist stance to literature. He complains, somewhat bafflingly in relation to *Molora*, that classical reception work is

in an analysis that takes into account anti-triumphalist readings of the *Oresteia*, the truth commission remains the framework through which *Molara*'s relationship with Aeschylus is understood. Van Weyenberg acknowledges Zeitlin's feminist reading of the trilogy as one that undermines state sanctioned male supremacy, but from this she makes only a general point about the TRC's failures of inclusivity and the way in which the turn from matricide by Elektra and Orestes is not the same as forgiveness.¹³¹ I propose that it is memory, not forgiveness, that is the issue at *Molara*'s close, in which the (temporary) turn away from matricide is not the same as forgetting and the residual memories of Klytemnestra and Elektra render resolution impossible.

Klytemnestra cowers on the floor of the playing space after being saved from Elektra by the chorus. Elektra and Orestes eventually help their mother to her feet before she retreats to her testimony table, while the siblings embrace. In directorial terms, reconciliation is uncertain: Elektra, Orestes, and Klytemnestra remain divided on stage. Klytemnestra delivers the play's epilogue from her position of isolation:

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.
Look now – dawn is coming –
Great chains on the home are falling off.
This house rises up.

too 'invested in the relationship between a particular play and its Greek counterpart than in the relationship between the play and its indigenous context' (p. 48). See also L. Kruger (2012, 373).

¹³¹ Van Weyenberg (2013, 131-37, 125-26), referring to Zeitlin (1978).

For too long it has lain in ash on the ground. (p. 79)

The final four lines of *Molona* are excerpted from Ian Johnston's translation of Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* (961-64) and derive from the choral song in celebration of the matricide and in anticipation of the display of bodies. In Aeschylus, Orestes exhibits the corpses of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus in an act that recalls and 'remembers' Clytemnestra's own triumph over Agamemnon and Cassandra. However, this is not simply a case of Farber converting a hymn to matricide to a statement of reconciliation. Farber engages with the irony of the choral song in Aeschylus' play, in which the appearance of resolution will soon give way to (a) further drama, as Orestes is pursued by the Furies in to the next play.

Farber uses stage direction to undermine the tenor of the epilogue. As noted, Clytemnestra evokes 'the residue of revenge' that falls '[l]ike rain', before '[a] fine powdery substance gently floats down' on to the cast and the audience (p. 79), intimating a continuance of the revenge-fueled drama rather than its resolution. Clytemnestra's assurance that 'dawn is coming' is undercut as the 'lights fade to black' (p. 79), which reflects the thwarted hopes of the chorus in *Libation Bearers*. There are references throughout Aeschylus' trilogy to light as 'a symbol of hope, healing, victory, release', including in an earlier song by the chorus in *Libation Bearers*, which associates Orestes with 'freedom's blazing light' ('ἡ πῦρ καὶ φῶς ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ/ δαίῳν' 863-64).¹³² However, resolution remains unfulfilled until the triumph of *Eumenides*, in which the promise of light is realized on stage as Athena welcomes

¹³² Sommerstein (1989, 278).

torchbearers to light the procession (‘φέγγει λαμπάδων σελασφόρων’, *Eum.* 1022).¹³³ In *Molora*, Klytemnestra’s testimony begins as ‘neon lights above the tables...flicker on’ (p. 21) and, as noted, comes to end in the epilogue when all stage lighting is extinguished. This marks the shift in reception to prioritize remembrance and disclosure, in which testimony effectively brings past suffering to light – quite literally on Farber’s stage – but fails to reach any kind of triumphant conclusion.

Klytemnestra’s epilogue includes explicit appeal to dispossession that speaks not only to the South African context (‘we who made the sons and/ daughters of this land, servants in the/ halls of their forefathers...’) but also to *Eumenides* in a way that renders problematic her continued presence on stage and in the ‘house’ of Atreus.¹³⁴ In *Eumenides*, Athena tempers the Furies with the promise of a legitimate place as part of the Athenian state and her final gesture is to lead the now-transformed Furies to their new home (1022-25). Surprisingly, they

¹³³ Sommerstein (1989, 279). Lothar Müthel’s *Oresteia* (1936), *Die Orestie*, staged in Berlin, used light in *Eumenides* to displace the darkness of the previous two plays. Müthel used the translation of Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1896). See Fischer-Lichte (2017, 143-65).

¹³⁴ Readers of the published version of *Molora* will recognize a version of these lines from Farber’s foreword: ‘Forced to live as a servant in the halls of her own father’s house, Elektra waits for her brother Orestes to return from exile to the land of his ancestors and take back what is rightfully theirs. The premise of this ancient story was striking to me as a powerful canvas on which to explore the history of dispossession, violence and human-rights violations in the country I grew up in’ (pp. 7-8). Van Weyenberg (2013, 94) draws on this same citation and reads it as Farber’s account ‘for the relevance of the myth of the house of Atreus to post-apartheid South Africa’.

retain their function as agents of memory who inflame violence, only Athena stipulates that they divert their arts from civil war to foreign aggression (848-69). Athena achieves the transformation of the Furies by way of resettlement, in which the Kindly Ones find a welcoming home in Athens (834-36). I suggest that the topographical solution to the Furies, and the potential for unease at their presence within the Athenian *polis*, takes on new resonance with the politicization of space in South Africa. Post-apartheid, the truth commission made attempts to address the spatial effects of institutional racism on the non-white population, often holding hearings in buildings from which black South Africans had been excluded. The reclamation of space can be understood alongside the devolution of the TRC process, with hearings held in speakers' villages and towns, which suggests a relationship between remembering, geography, and community.¹³⁵

Klytemnestra's epilogue draws on the potency of the family 'house' in Aeschylus and its resonance to the politics of dispossession in South Africa. The bloodline of the Atreus family at the heart of the *Oresteia* drama is manifest in the first play of the trilogy with the palace *skene*-building. Oliver Taplin notes the expressiveness of the house as both physical entity – as something that conceals and reveals – and as symbol – so that who controls the house, controls the action.¹³⁶ Clytemnestra's interactions with the *skene*-building best marry its literal and figurative resonances, as her mastery over Agamemnon is performed by way of,

¹³⁵ Cole (2010, 9).

¹³⁶ Taplin (1977, 459): '...not only is the *skene* worked into the theatrical and scenic fabric of the *Oresteia*, it is also, as the house, prominently and significantly used in the poetry and imagery of the plays.'

and prefigured by, what Taplin describes as her ‘control of the threshold’.¹³⁷ Orestes’ triumph over his mother is thus described in terms of architectural control and we see this lauded in the excerpt of *Libation Bearers* that Farber revisits in the epilogue (‘This house rises up’). Without the realization of matricide, however, to whom does the house of Atreus belong?¹³⁸

Without a skene building in *Molona*, the goings on inside the palace are re-enacted in the performance space. However, the significance of the original house, and the integral part it plays in the murders, remains. The idea of the house as a physical entity that is both witness to and implicated in the crimes of the family is first introduced by Aeschylus in the Watchman’s prologue. Farber reuses this section of the speech in Klytemnestra’s opening testimony and its meaning gains new emphasis in the mouth of someone for whom the house acts as a kind of accomplice in the ancient plays:

The house itself, if it took voice, could

¹³⁷ Taplin (1977, 299-300). She stage-manages Agamemnon’s entrance into the palace to meet his death (Aesch., *Ag.* 972), before revealing the palace-contents: making a spectacle out of the bodies of her victims (1372).

¹³⁸ Orestes’ return and reclamation of the house of Atreus, celebrated in *Libation Bearers*, also echoes the way in which Aegisthus describes his personal triumph at the end of *Agamemnon*, as one exiled and dispossessed: ‘I became a man/ and Justice brought me home’ (1607). The dual claims of Aegisthus and Orestes to Argos in Aeschylus undermine the clear justice of Orestes’ revenge. Both men express their commitment to vengeance in the same way. Aegisthus: ‘Now I could die gladly, even I -/ now I see this monster in the nets of Justice’ (*Ag.* 1610-11); Orestes: ‘Let me kill her. Then let me die’ (*Lib.* 438). Farber transposes Orestes’ declaration to the moment after the murder of Aegisthus, immediately before the attempted matricide (p. 71).

tell the case most clearly. But I will only
speak to those who know.

For the others – I remember nothing. (p. 22; cf. *Ag.* 27-39)

In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Cassandra's early, disorientated exchange with the chorus sees her anticipate the murder that Farber's Klytemnestra recalls in testimony and Cassandra describes the house in terms that aptly align its function with that of a receptacle for dead bodies, a 'slaughter-house of men' (ἀνδροσφαγεῖον, *Ag.* 1096).¹³⁹ She asks: 'Apollo Apollo my destroyer -/ where, where have you led me now? what house (στέγην)' (1085-87), in which στέγος also refers to an 'urn' in Sophocles' *Electra* (1165).¹⁴⁰ The juxtaposition of house with urn, like the 'slaughterhouse', looks forward in Aeschylus to the murders of Agamemnon and Cassandra and then on to the return of Orestes, the anticipated saviour of the house – literally and figuratively - and the centrality of the urn to his plans for revenge. With *Molona*, however, the absence of the physical house in the form of the *skene* and its replacement with the grave of Agamemnon shifts attention to Klytemnestra and her remembering. In this way, Klytemnestra performs the function that the Watchman anticipates of the house, she 'tell(s) the case most clearly' in her testimony. Moreover, in bearing witness, Klytemnestra unites the dual meaning of 'στέγος': she *is* the house that speaks and what she speaks about, and reveals, are the memories of dead bodies: Ephigenia's, to be mourned, and Agamemnon's, to be vaunted over. The sacrifice of Ephigenia and the murder of Agamemnon underpin Klytemnestra's opening and closing speeches, in which remembering has clearly not

¹³⁹ Part of Gwyneth Lewis' *Clytemnestra* (2012) takes place in an abattoir.

¹⁴⁰ Chaston (2010, 165).

brought closure. Farber's end therefore nods to the same memories whose linguistic echoes undermine the reconciliation of Aeschylus' trilogy.¹⁴¹

5.5 Conclusion

Fifteen years after the final report of the TRC was presented to the then President, Thabo Mbeki, South Africa's pursuit of reconciliation and its promise to draw a line under years of imperialism and anticolonial struggle remains incomplete.¹⁴² The legacy of the truth commission is mixed, as reparations are still unforthcoming and many victims have been left disappointed at the lack of legal, punitive redress for their suffering: their compulsion to remember and name injustice unsated by the act of public recollection.¹⁴³ To Farber, the transformation of unwieldy vengeance to legal retribution is not, as some readers of the *Oresteia* would have it, a welcome turn 'from primitive ritual...to civilized institution', and the reconciliatory ethos of the truth commission is also not entirely free from shades of ambivalence.¹⁴⁴ Farber's play communicates an uncertainty with regard to institutional justice

¹⁴¹ See Wohl (2005, 152).

¹⁴² All accounts of the TRC recognize the ongoing effects of the violence – literal and figurative – of apartheid, see e.g. Cole (2010); Sanders (2007); Ross (2003).

¹⁴³ Kashyap (2009).

¹⁴⁴ Fagles and Stanford (1966, 20). See also, e.g., George Steiner (1961, 169) for whom the trajectory of the trilogy represents 'an affirmation of unequivocal progress'.

and its pursuit that is well expressed in Sophocles' *Electra* by Chrysothemis: 'But sometimes even Justice herself causes harm' (1042).

Farber asks us to look again at the function of memory in the Greek plays and especially to the turn from memory-driven vengeance at the final juncture of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* trilogy. In giving due prominence to the complexity of Farber's response to the ancient texts, I have demonstrated how her revisionist reading works not only to address South Africa's political transition in the 1990s from the perspective of gender but also, beyond the intersection of classical reception and post-apartheid theatre, to offer a feminist reframing of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Farber's reception is remarkable for its sensitivity to the relationship between women and memory, which she achieves by depicting the women in an endless process of looking back and remembering, which makes use of the 'remembering' between the tragedies of the House of Atreus and gestures to Penelope as an epic model for perpetual grief. Farber omits the murder of Clytemnestra/Klytemnestra and the final play of Aeschylus' trilogy from the text her reception (although it remains central to its plot) to call attention both to the ambivalence of Aeschylus' ending and to the consequences of non-retributive justice. The cycle of revenge that sees Orestes kill Clytemnestra only to be pursued by the Furies is replaced by the cycle of grief that sees Klytemnestra and Elektra reach an uneasy settlement that will perpetually unravel and replay for the next performance.

6. CONCLUSION: FROM RESISTANCE TO INDETERMINACY

As women continue to engage with classical literature in ever greater numbers and in ever more nuanced ways, there is increasing need to develop a new model for classical reception that responds to the dominance of the female reader andrewriter. This thesis makes the first steps towards fashioning this new aesthetic model on the ironic, ambivalent, and indeterminate classicism of Virginia Woolf. Oswald, Farber, and Cook, as well as the comic-serious treatments of martial masculinity in Logue and Longley, showcase at least one of Woolf's strategies of rereading. Moreover, these receptions largely set the feminist shibboleths of Fetterley's resisting reader askew (see Cook's perverse reception of rape in Ovid and the exhilarating suffering of Farber's Klytemnestra and Elektra) and demand a theoretical framework that can engage with and recognize the multivalence of women's reading and rewriting in terms that are related to but not subsumed by the advancement of feminist politics. The interactions between the works of Barthes, Cixous, and Gallop help to spotlight what is at stake for the contemporary female reader who rewrites and manage the tension between rescue, rehabilitation, and post-structuralist play that the Woolfian reader negotiates. Even Oswald's close reading of Homer's *Iliad*, which is clearly the most conventional reception under consideration, has the capacity to surprise, as with the parody and anachronism of her simile that likens Hector to 'a man rushing in leaving his motorbike running'.

Woolfian irony and ambivalence suggest a method of rereading classical literature that finds an ancient prototype in Aristophanic comic-seriousness (σπουδαιογέλοιοι), as the playwright invites us to look back to epic masculinity, and its anticipation of classical tragedy,

and laugh until we cry. Oswald, Logue, and Longley all upend the dignity of the Homeric warrior to challenge the heroic code for which he fights and dies, and both Oswald and Longley embed their parody within the proto-tragic lamenting voice of Andromache. However, all three writers, in keeping with Aristophanes, remain attentive to the horrific cost of war, and a model of Woolfian irony helps to trace the slippage between laughter and tears. I showed how Oswald's treatment of Hector is more ambivalent than Longley's, and how the female writer is less enamoured with the radical potential of the γόος and readier to engage with the tragic narrative that surrounds the hero, than her male counterpart. In Longley's poems, 'The Helmet' and 'The Parting', Andromache's evasive lament defies Hector's excessive manliness (ἀγνηγορίας ἀλεγεινῆς, *Il.* 22.457), and his wife and child, rather than Hector himself, are the victims of war. Oswald's attentiveness to the γόος ridicules but also regrets the war project and does not strip Hector of his dignity entirely. Oswald treats the possibility of pacifist epic reception with indeterminacy and offers a powerful reminder of the entanglement of commemoration in the glorification of war.

Oswald waivers in her condemnation of Hector, which makes the strains of irony in her poem especially Woolfian: her rendering of Homer offers less of a counter-narrative to the heroic project than a fraught examination of the limits of resistance. Farber's reception of Aeschylus makes this sense of 'stuckness' quite literal, as her play hovers between *Agamemnon*, *Libation Bearers*, and their tragic intertexts. Farber also approaches the classical material with an ambivalent irony that denies the reader/audience any clear sense of whether the uneasy reconciliation that her characters reach at the end of the play marks an improvement on the 'ancient end', a deterioration, or something in between. On the surface, Farber foregrounds the female voices of Elektra and Klytemnestra to redress the relative

silence of female testimony in the TRC. However, Farber offers neither woman complete rehabilitation and they remain highly unsympathetic – and even unknowable – in their fixation on private grief. Despite Farber’s excision of the text of *Eumenides*, the questions that Aeschylus’ trilogy poses about resolution and political expedience linger. Similarly, Oswald ‘dismisses’ the heroic narrative of the *Iliad* while the themes on which the epic fixates - glory, fame, and remembrance – continue to limit and shape her response to war. Oswald and Farber do not resist but test the limits of, and often self-consciously collude with, their classical sources, and it is perhaps no surprise that the receptions of these two writers who reread the works that are most associated with masculinity and the canon – the *Iliad* and the *Oresteia* – are the most ambivalent with regard to the promise of feminist intervention via the female voice. The γόος is the site of much re-vision across this thesis, although none of the women writers under consideration suggest that women’s lament (and Achilles’ in the case of Cook) is anything other than deeply equivocal: at once challenging and reinforcing the status quo.

Homeric epic exercises an especially profound influence over the works I examine in this thesis, although the apparent preference for the *Iliad* over the *Odyssey* marks a notable departure from the fervent feminist activity centred on the latter epic from the 1990s.¹ Nevertheless, the potential for the *Odyssey* as a vehicle for Woolfian irony, ambivalence, and

¹ See e.g., Clayton (2004); Cohen (1995); Felson-Rubin (1994); H. P. Foley (1995); Katz (1991); J. J. Winkler (1990); Wohl (1993); Zeitlin (1995). And earlier, see H. P. Foley (1978); Marquardt (1985); Murnaghan (1987).

indeterminacy is not neglected by Farber, nor, albeit more obliquely, by Oswald and Cook.² While Oswald, Cook, and the reception(s) of and by Aristophanes return to the battlefield epic, the lens through which they reconsider the *Iliad* is arguably Odyssean. Oswald, Cook, and Farber chip away at the monuments of the *Iliad* and Aeschylus and recast the masculine narratives of the battlefield and legislative justice in the light of the *Odyssey*'s attentiveness to women's voices, sensitivity to storytelling and subjectivity, and interest in the domestic sphere. The reception of Aristophanic comedy by Woolf and Oswald, and its use to undermine epic martial masculinity, is even more remarkable considering the traditional association of Old Comedy with excessive, and misogynistic, masculinity. Nevertheless, the traditional purposes of comedy – to pull the rug out from under tragedy's feet, to speak freely against official ideology, and to provide relief after a trilogy of tragedies – create an imaginative space primed for subversive activity for the ironic female reader.

The practice of reading the *Iliad* or the *Oresteia* by rereading *Lysistrata* or the *Odyssey* uncovers the multi-layered and polyvocal readings and rewritings in evidence across this thesis. The two-way dialogue that typifies classical reception studies expands in this model to encompass and expose the multiple, even indeterminate, number of interlocutors that

² The poetics of Homer, and especially the sense of an aesthetic that emerges in the *Odyssey*, is something that I would like to examine in relation to my interest in ambivalence and indeterminacy. The poem is remarkably attentive to the emotional, psychological, even physical effects of epic song, which are conditioned by the involvedness or detachment of the listener; see, for instance, the unforgettable grief (πένθος ἄλαστον, *Od.* 1.342) of Penelope or the groans (γοάσκειν) of Odysseus at 8.92. See e.g., Halliwell, (2012); Peponi (2012, 33-69); J. I. Porter (2012);

inform each instance of rereading and confuse or interrupt relationships of influence between readers, writers, and rewriters. Cook's *Achilles* comes closest among the receptions that I examine to marry the dizzying intertextuality of Barthesian play, the textual-*cum*-material writing of Cixous's *écriture*, and the perverse, ambivalent feminist reading of Gallop. Cook's novella is the most satisfying and pleasurable to me as a reader, and her experiments with form and content deserve wider critical attention and most clearly make the case for the significance of women's classical reception to the discipline. Cook's treatment of the classical material is never ironic: she takes the dangers of the battlefield and the incontrovertible destiny of Achilles intensely seriously. And yet her approach to the warrior complicates and uncovers a kind of exhilaration and sensuality associated with the heroic code that connects men on and off the battlefield.

Cook's work also intimates how Woolf-the-model-reader and the theoretical scaffolding of Barthes, Cixous, and Gallop can be directed towards some level of aesthetic evaluation for classical reception.³ *Achilles* is such a successful reception in the Woolfian

³ Martindale's engagement with the (male) reader has also developed to consider an aesthetic of classical reception, as he looks out from the reading/writing of Eliot to Walter Pater and Immanuel Kant. See especially Martindale (2005), also (2001), (2006), (2008), (2013a). On Pater, Martindale (2006, 8) writes: 'For a classicism to be successful, in Pater's terms, it needs to be significant in both its classical aspect and in its modern one, not to subsume either one into the other'. The friction between past and present that Martindale recognizes as central to Pater's conception of the past emerges in the creative tension that I recognize as central to classical reception and that, as with the critical reception of Farber's *Molara*, is sometimes too readily cast aside in favour of likeness.

mould as the breadth of Cook's narrative and the imbrications of her source material reward multiple readings (as well as being evidence of multiple readings by multiple readers). More specifically, the revelation of Keats in the final chapter alters the complexion of the rest of the work and almost demands rereading with Keats in mind. Cook establishes Keats as a model reader and writer for her work, and his inclusion as a historical-*cum*-fictional character obfuscates the teleological model of classical-allusion-as-authorial-influence. The forwards-backwards dynamic that Cook sets in motion and models in her reception calls attention to how indeterminacy enables, even expects, reading and rereading and so on, and contrasts with the relative accessibility of readings that simply resist.

The writers of more 'successful' receptions, among which I count Oswald and Farber in addition to Cook, also seem to engage self-consciously with reading in terms of literary history or 'the tradition', which will most likely be male-dominated (and often misogynistic). This theme first emerged in my reading of Liveley's chapter on third wave feminism and reception hermeneutics and was modelled by Woolf's engagement with, rather than rejection of, Swinburne in her reception of the myth of Procne and Philomela.⁴ Oswald rereads Homer through the soldier poets of the First World War and, albeit less explicitly, Farber writes from within a tradition of theatrical classical reception in South Africa that is dominated by Athol Fugard. There seems to be no clear imperative to read these men in an explicitly gendered

Woolf's own engagement with Pater opens up the possibility of reading Pater, as Martindale suggests, but via Woolf. For Woolf and Pater, see Meisel (1980).

⁴ Liveley (2006b, 56-60) for Alice Jardine's rereading of Lacan, Derrida, and Deleuze over Cixous, Irigaray, and/or Kristeva.

way: while Farber appeals to women's oppression to complicate the whiteness of Fugard's *Klytemnestra*, Oswald is perhaps more concerned with reading and writing as a civilian, rather than specifically as a woman, back through a tradition that demands experience. Cook, for her part, uses the gendered discourse that surrounds the poet in life and death to complicate, but not do away with, distinctions between the male and female reader; after all, it is the frisson that emerges out of the tension between sameness and difference that enlivens Cook's poetics. Farber's approach to crediting the male translators that she uses for her play is a little different still: for while her published play-text footnotes her borrowings, the voice of the translator disappears into the actors' (and, by implication, Farber's own) in performance. From this perspective, part of the 'failure' of the *Lysistrata* Project may lie in its inattentiveness to the male tradition of reading Aristophanes and its entanglement with masculinity and misogyny. Blume and Bower assumed *Lysistrata* was a play about and for women, though perhaps if they had looked at the collaboration of Smith and Beardsley, for instance, they might have thought a little harder and differently.

The issue of gender and its expression in and formation through creative endeavour is never far from any project that takes women's writing as its central preoccupation. From the earliest considerations of women's writing, feminist literary critics confronted the question of whether there is a discernible difference in women's contribution to the creative arts. The desire to pin down and organize theoretical approaches around an object of study – women's writing – inevitably invites the charge of essentialism. Gayatri Spivak's concept of 'strategic essentialism' may offer something of a compromise, as it allows for the formation of

temporary coalitions to address shared political goals.⁵ However, it is difficult to associate the women currently attracting attention in classical reception with the minority groups for whom Spivak formulates her term. More likely, the essentialism of women's writing (however strategic) not only flattens differences between women but reproduces wider inequalities. And it is with some discomfort that I recognize that this thesis maintains the continued neglect of all but white, typically Anglophone women writers and, on a broader scale, reflects the persistent erasure of non-white voices, perspectives, and influences from the discipline.⁶

The movement to redress women's exclusion from classical reception studies will need to address the issue of class and its entanglement in educational opportunity, in addition to and in correspondence with race.⁷ For instance, seven of the ten white women interviewed by Theodorakopoulos and Cox in their special issue on women's writing in the online journal, *Practitioners' Voices*, had access to a classical education that included Latin.⁸ Moreover, the

⁵ Spivak (1990) [1984].

⁶ Haley (1993); see especially (pp. 23-24) as Haley reconsiders the terms on which Skinner (1986) reads and appropriates Virgil's Creusa for feminist scholarship in Classics from her black, feminist standpoint.

⁷ For class and classical reception, albeit without a focus on the intersections of social class and gender, see e.g., Hall (2008b); McElduff (2006).

⁸ See the interviews with Tiffany Atkinson (2013), Barbara Köhler (2013), and Jo Shapcott (2013). For the full issue, see F. M. Cox and Theodorakopoulos (2013c). For the relationship between

kind of ironic playfulness and remarkable intertextuality that characterizes my model for the female reader and rewriter of classical literature is heavily dependent on forensic treatment of, and comprehensive engagement with, the ancient material as literary texts.⁹ These questions of, among others, access to Classics, high/low culture and aesthetics, and disciplinary boundaries revisit and stress the lasting importance of the work published under the rubric of the ‘democratic turn’.¹⁰ The *Lysistrata* Project is a stark example of the need for critical as well as creative engagement with classical material, where the democratization of the field is

women’s access to classical education in the twentieth century and women’s creative responses to antiquity, see F. M. Cox (2015).

⁹ See the conflicting approaches of Martindale (2010) and Goldhill (2010) in their respective emphases on classical reception as literary and cultural practice. See also Goldhill (2002).

¹⁰ See Hardwick and S. J. Harrison (2013b). For access to Latin in a UK context, see J. Paul (2013). For the interaction between the discourses of creativity and authenticity in the reception of ancient drama, see Gamel (2013). For women’s writing and the democratic turn, see the individual essays of F. M. Cox (2013) and Theodorakopoulos (2013). Theodorakopoulos examines the reception of the Catullus-Lesbia relationship in contemporary women’s historical fiction, which is a genre often discredited as low-brow and feminine (p. 277-78). The assessment of this chapter in Hardwick and Harrison’s introduction – as ‘revealing a somewhat sentimentalized view of the poet’ for a popular audience (2013a, xxxii) – hints at the tension in the democratic turn for women’s writing that finds its fullest expression in the chapter by F. M. Cox and Theodorakopoulos (2013b, 298):

Ovid’s survival in versions of culture aimed at the masses is indicated by the numbers of his works that have appeared on bestseller lists ... Even the heartsick Ovid, sending his book back to the civilized world from exile in order to ensure a version of survival, could hardly have dared imagine so rich a future over 2,000 years later. But, what richer place for the future of his books, than their transformation into the volumes proliferating the Waterstones three for two bargain tables?

more than a case of increasing participation.¹¹ To my mind, the Project, which attracted women from across the globe regardless of their prior knowledge of ancient comedy or engagement with the classical text, has far more to say to cultural studies than it does to classical reception.¹² However, the question remains as to where that leaves the increasing majority for whom a classical education is unattainable and their only exposure to the texts of antiquity is via broad cultural translation?¹³

¹¹ See Hardwick (2013a). Hardwick emphasizes the need for some kind of crossover between academic research and creative practice: the ubiquity of ‘feminist’ *Lysistratas* makes the play the ideal candidate for Hardwick’s vision for ‘public scholarship’ in Classics.

¹² See Gamel (2013) for her ‘typology of authenticities’ in modern re-performances of ancient drama that evidence the democratic turn. Her treatment of ‘expressive authenticity’ (pp. 185-86) is most relevant to the *Lysistrata* Project, wherein the practitioner ‘does not have to be a specialist to understand, respond to, and work on artefacts from another culture, and that such work can and does bring out emergent meaning in those artefacts valid for both the participants and the script’ (p. 190). However, as Gamel makes clear, the turn away from a model that privileges historical accuracy in theatrical reception does not negate the need to think through the appropriateness of interpretative choices.

¹³ Martindale (2013a) considers the proliferation of classical reception in mainstream, English-speaking film as an example of the misplaced emphasis in classical reception studies on ‘relevance’ and the need to develop an aesthetic criteria for what qualifies as an object of enquiry for classical reception studies: ‘Classics is more alive to my thinking in Joyce’s *Ulysses* or the poetry of Seamus Heaney than in *Gladiator* (2000: Ridley Scott). And does *Gladiator* or *Alexander* (2004: Oliver Stone) initiate us into a serious or profound dialogue with antiquity? ... To avoid misunderstanding I say again that what is wrong with *Gladiator* in terms of its suitability for a Classics syllabus is not that it is

As we ride on feminism's fourth wave, Zajko's predictions for future sites of politically-engaged reception seem to be bearing fruit.¹⁴ Academic work is re-emerging as a site of political resistance and re-vision across US and UK contexts, with groups such as Classics and Social Justice and the Women's Classical Caucuses (est. 1972 US, est. 2015 UK) and websites such as *Eidolon* (est. 2015) making the case for a form of academic practice attuned to the cultural weight of the classical past and its contemporary reinventions.¹⁵ The articles featured on *Eidolon*, for example, explicitly respond to the immense cultural capital of Classics, where reading classical literature and writing academic criticism are inherently political tasks that demand the kind of self-reflexivity and 'long view' that Liveley identifies as crucial to the practice of feminist reception.¹⁶

a popular film but that it does not present a thoroughly imagined classical world' (p. 176). As a counterpoint, Whelehan (1994) examines the usefulness of 'trash' fiction for feminist literary criticism, especially when read alongside literary fiction. Whelehan suggests that popular, genre fiction, which often prioritises genre over the author, helps to foreground the role of the reader.

¹⁴ Zajko (2008, 204-5).

¹⁵ For Classics and Social Justice, see <https://classicssocialjustice.wordpress.com/home/> (accessed 13 December 2018). For *Eidolon*, see <https://eidolon.pub/> (accessed 13 December 2018). For Classics and social reform in Britain in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, see Stead and Hall (2015); especially Hall (2015) for women, Classics, and the early Labour Party.

¹⁶ Liveley (2006, 65).

This febrile intellectual atmosphere is ideal for new feminisms in Classics and new feminist classicisms to emerge, and the female reader who reads politically and aesthetically is ideally placed to help renew the discipline. The essays in *Eidolon* are remarkable for their self-reflection, as writers scrutinize their identity through their relationship to the discipline. Clearly the freedom afforded by the personal essay genre plays no small part in this, but the ubiquity of the personal voice across the platform evidences wider shifts that owe a great deal not only to the insights of second wave feminism but also to the engagement with the personal voice in academic writing in Classics from the mid-1990s.¹⁷ The interest in the relationship between scholarship and subjectivity also coincides with a wider turn to theory in the interpretation of classical texts, although it remains to be seen whether feminist theory and, with it, women's critical reading and rewriting will enjoy the attention that it arguably

¹⁷ The issue of the personal voice has historical links with feminist theory, e.g., N. K. Miller (1991). For this reason, it is no surprise that the earliest statements on subjectivity and classical scholarship came out of a volume about feminism and Classics, see Rabinowitz (1993, 1); Haley (1993). The collection of essays in Hallett and Van Nortwick (1997) on 'the personal voice in classical scholarship', which take N. K. Miller (1991) as their provocation, evidence the relationship between subjectivity and interpretation (the personal voice in theory), as well as the relationship between interiority and professional identity in terms of what makes a classicist (the personal voice in practice). As Martindale (1997b, 78) notes in that volume, the personal voice has especial relevance for the critic who reads the reader and rewriter of classical literature: 'in practice, the distinction between (primary) literature and (secondary) criticism blurs or can be blurred, not least in the processes of reception'. For the role of Classics in the formation of (Western) identity more broadly, see Hall (2007a). I look forward to reading F. M. Cox (forthcoming) for the relationship between the personal voice, Classics, and literary criticism.

deserves.¹⁸ For instance, one of the exciting new additions to the body of work on classical reception, *Deep Classics*, largely neglects both feminist theory and women's writing.¹⁹ The organizing principles for the collection of essays are the simultaneous fascination with but unknowability of the classical past, but while Shane Butler's introduction twists and turns between Homer, Borges, Darwin, Freud, and Byron, among others, Virginia Woolf, who offers what is perhaps the definitive statement on the simultaneous unknowability and seduction of ancient Greece, is nowhere to be seen.²⁰

The work of the female reader who rewrites in the Woolfian model can offer an interpretative sounding board for classicists to re-vision their own critical readings of classical texts (in the way that Martindale originally envisaged for classical reception). For instance, Alison Sharrock, in her edited volume, *Intratextuality*, calls attention to themes of digression,

¹⁸ M. Heath (2013) makes the case for the value of critical awareness for reading classical literature. See also Schmitz (2007). The essays in De Jong and Sullivan (1994) and S. J. Harrison (2001) demonstrate the fruitfulness of theoretical engagements with classical texts. However, none of the essays in the former volume engage with feminist theory in any sustained way. Sullivan's introduction, which surveys the influence of critical theory on the discipline, suggests that 'contemporary feminist theory may alienate some philologists because, like Marxism, it has a decidedly activist side to it' (1994, 12). In the Harrison volume, see Doherty (2001). McManus (1997, xiii-xiv) recognizes the relative resistance to feminist theory in literary studies in comparison to social/historical approaches to the ancient world.

¹⁹ S. Butler (2016b).

²⁰ S. Butler (2016a). See V. Woolf (2003).

repetition, and fragmentation that have reappeared throughout this thesis as part of women's ironic, ambivalent, and/or indeterminate classical reception:

Reading intratextually means looking at the text from different directions (backwards as well as forwards), chopping it up in various ways, building it up again, contracting and expanding its boundaries both within the *opus* and outside it.²¹

The essays in Sharrock's volume neglect the relationship between gender and intratextuality, which is an oversight that attention to the female reader and rewriter could remedy.²² Oswald, Cook, and Farber are all clearly intratextual readers of their various sources: each fragments and rearranges the ancient material to tell different stories or the same stories in new ways and their receptions call attention to how intratextuality is a form of *rereading*.²³ All three writers

²¹ Sharrock (2000, 4).

²² The slightly earlier work on classical closure in Roberts et al. (1997) is similarly inattentive to gender. D. Fowler (1997b, 10) briefly references Cixous and Irigaray and the irresolution that characterizes feminist *écriture*.

²³ Iser (1971) makes the connection between the indeterminacy that involves the reader in the co-creation of meaning and the fragmentation (of sorts) of nineteenth century serialized novels; see also, Iser (1978, 191-92). There is a longstanding relationship between the fragment and the feminine/female reader/writer that is associated with work on Sappho, see e.g., Balmer (2013, 59-102). The fragment also became central to the Imagist poetics of H. D. and Ezra Pound (both of whom translate Sappho), see e.g., Rohrbach (1996). For Mary Barnard's translation an Imagism, see Barnsley (2013). For the 'aesthetics of the fragment' as the counterpoint to Western literary/philosophical emphasis on unity, see DuBois (1995, 31-54). Anne Carson's translation of Sappho's poetry is remarkable for the translator's decision not to fill in the blanks in Sappho's fragmentary verse. Carson sometimes uses square brackets to indicate missing text and explains her

play with the sense of an ‘ending’ for their narratives: the death of Hector in *Memorial* both is and is not the end of the story, just like in Homer, and the apparent reconciliation at the end of *Molira* is more of a temporary pause in the enmity between the characters, just as the institutional closure in Aeschylus is far from assured. The unexpected introduction of Keats in ‘Relay’ not only sends the reader back to the start of the novella but also represents an alarming (and delightful) ‘digression’ from what had appeared to be a biography of the Homeric hero. Cook’s Keats is at once superfluous to and vital for an understanding of Achilles’ life story, and this dynamic between relevance and irrelevance, which is constantly shifting as Cook reveals and conceals different aspects of Achilles’ character, is what makes the experience of reading the novella so dazzling. Sharrock’s introduction thinks through how to ‘get a different perspective on [textual] unity if we were to think about reading in a non-linear manner’, and I would suggest that the strategies that the women in this thesis exhibit in their reading and rewriting of classical literature could help to crystallize, or add an unexpected dimension to, what is at stake with intratextuality as an approach to critical and creative (re)reading.²⁴

use of brackets and blank space in terms of their impact on the reader: ‘it will affect your reading experience, if you allow it. Brackets are exciting. Even though you are approaching Sappho in translation, that is no reason you should miss the drama of trying to read papyrus torn in half or riddled with holes or smaller than a postage stamp – brackets imply a free space of imaginal adventure’ (2002, xi).

²⁴ Sharrock (2000, 35).

This thesis engages with and adds my voice to the growing number of classicists for whom the echoes of classical material in postclassical poetry, prose, and theatre offer invaluable insight into the longstanding project of rereading antiquity. Martindale's reader who rewrites remains a vital interlocutor between the classical past and the modern scholar, and, as the sub-discipline of classical reception studies reaches the end of its third decade of uninterrupted activity, Martindale's legacy, and his reader, demand renewed scrutiny. The neglect of the female reader in Martindale's formulations for classical reception (and his model in the 'provocation' of Jauss's reception aesthetics) is an omission that becomes ever more conspicuous, and surely less sustainable, as women writers continue to dominate the contemporary creative field. The usefulness of classical reception theory to address the endurance of the texts of antiquity across the millennia will remain limited until it redresses the neglect of women's reading and rewriting. This thesis makes the case for the recognition of the significant contribution that women who read and rewrite classical literature have made and continue to make to the discipline.

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