

**COLLECTIVE TRAUMATIC MEMORY AND ITS THEATRICAL MODELS: CASE STUDIES
IN ELIE WIESEL AND AESCHYLUS**

by

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This dissertation synthesizes recent considerations that have emerged from theories of psychological trauma (namely, Post-Traumatic Stress) and cultural trauma (via sociologists Jeffrey Alexander, Neil Smelser, and Ron Eyerman), into what is called “collective trauma.” Further theoretical frameworks of socially distributed memory and collective memory are then employed to create a more robust understanding of the hybrid nature of both normative and traumatic memory. Using anthropologist Clifford Geertz's “models of” and “models for,” as well as linguist George Lakoff's and philosopher Mark Johnson's similarly-constructed notions of “metaphor” and “event,” the collective trauma concept is then brought to bear on three theatre events (plays in performance) – Elie Wiesel's two English language plays, 1973's *Zalmen* (or, *The Madness of God*), 1983's *The Trial of God*, and Aeschylus' 458 BC production of *The Oresteia* (*Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, and *The Eumenides*).

Chapter One delineates the theoretical framework described above. Chapter Two combines *Zalmen* and *The Trial of God* into a single case study of texts and performances, in which it is determined that the former play is a failed model of individual and collective traumatic memory, while the latter is a successful model of those. This chapter focuses on the 1973 production at the Arena Theatre in Washington, DC, as well as its brief Broadway run at the Lyceum in 1974.

Chapter Three employs the additional tools of physical and linguistic evidence, the etymology of the word trauma in Greek literature, and classicist Pat Easterling's process of revealing reception through

evidence interpolation. Easterling's process and the theoretical considerations of Chapter One construct a picture of Athens' Great Dionysia in 458 BC. In so doing, Chapter Three reveals *The Oresteia* as a strong model of and for individual, collective, and cultural traumas. The brief conclusion uses collective memory as a litmus test for reflexivity and the agency of victims as trauma moves outward, from the collective into the cultural realm.

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I.0 CHAPTER ONE – TOWARD A THEATRICAL THEORY OF COLLECTIVE TRAUMATIC MEMORY

I.1 INTRODUCTION: “WEISEL’S TRIAL”

In late 1943, when future Nobel peace laureate Elie Wiesel was a prisoner in Auschwitz, he was befriended by a Talmudic scholar. One night, the scholar took the then 15 year-old Wiesel to a barracks, where he was the sole witness to a performance. Three fellow prisoners, each renowned Jewish scholars, formed a *beit din*, “a rabbinic court of law to indict the Almighty” (Brown vii). Over the course of several nights “witnesses were heard, evidence was gathered, conclusions were drawn, all of which issued finally in a unanimous verdict: the Lord God Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth, was found *guilty* of crimes against creation and humankind” (*ibid*).

Wiesel’s reaction to his experience in 1943 fits the most current definitions of psychological trauma – “persistent re-experiencing” (his futile attempts to recreate the event in later artistic works), helplessness, and a “numbing of general responsiveness” (he could not cry), all with symptoms “present for more than one month” (*DSM –IV-TR* 309.81). The memory also appears latent; it is notably absent from Weisel’s seminal testimony, *Night*, published in English in 1960.

Wiesel’s ultimate response to this traumatic memory, the 1979 play *The Trial of God*, however is not merely an autobiographical expression of traumatic suffering. In setting the

Auschwitz trial of God in a remote era and location (the 17th century Ukraine), and in fictionalizing this instance of personal trauma, he made it a shared and shareable experience, one that transcended individual consciousness and suffering, historical time, and cultural reference. In the movement from private experience, in which he was the only witness, to public retelling, in which readers and audience are positioned to *bear* witness, Wiesel translated his trauma from the individual to the collective realm, in an attempt to alleviate the trauma that logically cannot (and, as Wiesel states repeatedly, ethically *must not*) be his alone. The wise minstrel, Mendel, asks of the other characters in the play a question, which speaks to the collective nature of trauma and traumatic memory: “What is there left for *us* to do?” (Wiesel 132, emphasis added).

Wiesel’s response to this trauma he suffered during the Holocaust is the narrativizing of it, done so out of the context of his individual experience in Auschwitz. While disjointed or dissociated from his own subjective reality, the story of trauma in *The Trial of God* recognizes the experience of something shared by a community of victims. As will be shown at several instances in this dissertation, the employment of metaphor is deeply intertwined with the communication of trauma, both when the traumatized individual attempts to communicate her/his trauma to a increasingly larger audiences, and when collectives of traumatized individuals share their memories of limit events¹. Wiesel, as author and theatre-maker, moves the traumatic into the collective, social, and cultural realms, by sharing it, ritualizing it, narrativizing it, and performing it (the *purimschpieler*’s play-within-the-play), and marking it with a historicity inseparable from the collective experience of Jewish suffering. Furthermore,

¹The terms “limit event,” and less often “limit situation,” are used to denote the experience which gives rise to trauma (which is the reaction to that experience). These terms have many definitions within the social sciences. They are used here to describe an event that does or has the potential to create a traumatic response.

Wiesel manipulates metaphorical expression, pertaining especially to those things in the play which are “indescribable.” In essence, Weisel’s characters take the fragments of Jewish meaning systems – theology, the process of a trial, the holiday of Purim, the Russian *pogroms*, the nature of and justifications for suffering – and rearranges them, in order to form a narrative of traumatic memory. It can (and will) be argued that, without a witnessing audience (in this case, the 15 year-old Wiesel), the trauma of the Auschwitz trial could not *be* a trauma². Additionally, by placing that traumatic present in a fictive past, Wiesel inscribes not just the experience of Jewish suffering, but also inscribes a model of and for Jews *in* suffering. In so doing, he also makes the story of that traumatic suffering available to a much broader audience, allowing them, if they are willing, to bear witness to a trial-in-performance, a negotiation of the trial in Auschwitz which Wiesel witnessed in 1943. The process of dramatizing and “fictivizing” his own traumatic memory therefore makes it possible to navigate and interpret a *shared* traumatic memory.

Wiesel described the impetus for writing *The Trial of God*: “Inside the kingdom of night, I witnessed a strange trial. Three rabbis – all erudite and pious men – decided one winter evening to indict God for allowing his children to be massacred. I remember: I was there, and I felt like crying. But there nobody cried” (Wiesel *Trial of God* introduction, no page). The memory of this mock trial haunted Wiesel for many years, fueling not only his traumatic constriction (the inability to express emotions related to the trauma) and crisis of faith, but also his anamnesiac need to recreate and make meaning of the event. While the anecdote is conspicuously absent from his inaugural work (the 1958 testimony *La Nuit*, translated into English in 1960 as *Night*), Wiesel underwent a series of attempts at recollection, in variety of

²The same is true of the Russian rabbi's trauma, which Wiesel claims to have witnessed in 1965, then written in *Zalmen*.

forms. He attempted this re-creation as a novel (*The Gates of the Forest* in 1966), as a poem and cantata (*Ani Ma'amin*, set to music with the help of composer Darius Milhaud in 1972), and as an abandoned tragic play. But to him, none of these incarnations seemed apt for the recollection of such a memory. Finally in 1978, Wiesel took up the project a final time as a play, but this time as a *Purimschpiel* (a play set during the Jewish holiday of Purim) within a play. The differences between *The Trial of God* and former versions of the story were manifest in a distancing of time, place, and the removal of the story from the Holocaust itself; the play the Ukrainian village of Shamgorod in 1649, immediately before the second outbreak of the Chmielnicki *pogroms* against the Jews. Wiesel describes this decision as the basis for the successful retelling of his trauma:

At one point, the subject comes and seizes you and imposes upon you its own rhythm, its own mode. I hinted in some of my books at a scene I had witnessed in the camp: God being judged by three rabbis. One day I decided that since I was the one who had witnessed it, I had to do justice to the theme. I wrote almost a full novel. It didn't work. I wrote a poem. It didn't work. Then I decided I would move the same theme back to the sixteenth [sic] century. And it worked. (Wiesel and Franciosi 79)

Wiesel's struggle to recount the memory suggests the fragmentary, elusive nature of the traumatic memory, as does his attempt to narrativize and integrate it into a form comprehensible to himself (as traumatized witness) and others (moving outward from fellow victims as carrier groups, to initial audiences as witnesses, to ever expanding societal circles as audiences). The final, satisfactory location of this recollection within a theatrical work underscores theatre's metaphorical power in negotiating traumatic memory. This power is further evidenced by the repeated use of "theatre metaphors" in clinical understandings of trauma and other psychological

phenomena throughout the 19th and 20th centuries³. As a result, there is an established and longstanding theatricality to certain psychological theories, particularly the psychology of memory, which have played and continue to play heavily into the conceptualization of trauma.

Both *The Trial of God* and Wiesel's earlier 1968 play, *Zalmen* (or *The Madness of God*), are theatre events in which traumatic memories are far than motifs; they are foundational to dramatic progression. The recollection of traumatic memories in both works are negotiated bilaterally (and with varying degrees of success) between individuals and collectives of rememberers. Through deeper analysis of these works in performance, traumatic memory is shown to be not merely individual or collective, but is also *simultaneously* encoded, recalled, interpreted, and otherwise negotiated through individual and collective operations. It is with these understandings in place that this dissertation begins its exploration of the theatre event as a fertile site for the exploration of the cooperative nature of individual and collective traumas, specifically, as this nature pertains to traumatic memory.

Such theatre events do not function independently from the fact that traumas are encoded, recalled, and interpreted on the collective level, and that all three of these putatively mnemonic steps (and indeed, the very labeling of the memory itself as traumatic) is interpreted and thereby qualified in both the individual and collective realms. Likewise, such theatre events do not function without affective impact on the audience, both as single individuals and as a collective. Accordingly, such theatre events represent one of many cultural activities uniquely positioned to help the researcher navigate two key theoretical polemics: between individual and collective

³Pertinent uses of "theatre metaphors" include Freud and Breuer's use of catharsis, Baars' "theatre of consciousness." The specific use of metaphor in this dissertation is explained in Section C of this chapter.

understandings of trauma, and between what are generally considered “clinical,” “literary,” and “sociological/cultural” conceptual matrices of trauma.

If theatre theory is to be one of the contributors to a more robust trauma theory, this study must be grounded primarily in how traumas are understood *theatrically*. The primary goal of this dissertation is to begin bridging the gap between theatrical, psychological, sociological, and anthropological notions, revealing theatre as a site where, just as the individual and the collective meet, so might the understanding of individual and collective trauma.

I.2 THESIS

The humanities of a culture, specifically its performance activities (rituals, religious rites, and especially theatre), establish their own specific behavioral “models” (Geertz 93).

...cultural patterns are “models,” [in] that they are sets of symbols whose relations to one another “model” relations among other entities, processes or what-have-you in physical, organic, social, or psychological systems by “paralleling,” “imitating,” or “simulating” them. The term “model” has, however, two senses – an “of” sense and a “for” sense – and though these are but aspects of the same basic concept they are very much worth distinguishing for analytic purposes. (*ibid*)

Geertz continues to describe models “of” involving “the manipulation of symbol structures so as to bring them... into parallel with the pre-established non-symbolic system, ...expressing their structure in synoptic form – as to render them apprehensible; it is a model *of* ‘reality’ (*ibid*, emphasis retained). A model *for*, by contrast, is “...a model under whose guidance physical relationships are organized: it is a model *for* reality.” (*ibid*) It is postulated here that theatre

events, at least those that are part of and reflect upon psychological and social systems (especially those that will later be called “meaning systems”), constitute both models *of* and models *for* aspects of human behavior, including, under specific circumstances, traumatic memory. These theatrical models of/for traumatic memory are often distinct from ones developed by that culture’s scientists and mental health practitioners, whose activities are geared toward the treatment of individual, family, and small group trauma. With this in mind, this study will analyze the intersections of therapeutic and cultural constructions of trauma (where they exist), coping, and where possible, recovery⁴, using traumatic theatre events and traumatic memory as the nexi of these intersections. In this analysis, it is hoped that the trauma definition may gain a further richness in terms of agency, audience, and the interpretive, interactive and collective natures of widespread trauma.

Theatre events that address the witnessing and experiencing of group limit events⁵ as traumas hold the potential to interpret traumatic memory in three specific ways. First, theatre events, as cultural activities, can provide models of/for individual and collective traumatic memories. As such, theatre events are interpreted events, negotiating activities such as memory, on a series of cooperating and oscillating individual and collective levels, dealing with both meaning and affect, as well as the interconnection between the aforementioned levels through the subject matter of the theatre event. While the theatre event is liminal, the processes of interpretation are not restricted to that liminality; interpretation occurs with the expectation of

⁴The reader may note here that the familiar but rarely defined phrase “working through” is avoided wherever possible. This is because the term, which originated in Freud's text “Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through,” is excluded because of its unwieldy definition and usage throughout the history of psychology, as well as its exclusion of more recent psychological conceptualizations and therapies directly related to trauma. While certain theorists employed in this dissertation use the term, a deeper exploration of its use in these cases reveals less clarity than is needed for this dissertation's specific purposes.

⁵Limit events that are potentially traumatic are distinct from trauma itself, as established by the psychological understanding of traumatic stress (Lasuik and Hegadoren “Part I” 15). This distinction is not always made in literary and social/cultural theories of trauma.

production before it is performed, while it is being performed, and long after the production has ended. As a result, the theatre event must be treated dramaturgically as inseparable from the play's performance history.

Traumatic expressions, namely recollections of traumatic memories before any kind of audience (including theatrical ones) hold both affective and metaphorical powers. In these ways, the individual retelling of traumatic memories and the collective performance of traumatic memory share similarities of hitherto under-explored conceptual value. In addition, traumatic memories as individual retellings and collective performances are distinguishable into models *of* and models *for* trauma, through the analytic lens established by cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz. The metaphorical power of traumatic expression is in its manifestation as a model *of* trauma, while the metaphorical power of what will be defined later as a "theatre of trauma" manifests culturally and collectively as a model *for* trauma. Both are instrumental in establishing the "culture patterns [that] have an intrinsic double aspect... [that] give meaning, that is, objective conceptual form, to social and psychological reality both by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves" (Geertz 93). However, when the act of bearing witness to one's own victimhood occurs in a theatre event, whether that victimhood is held primarily in the makers of theatre, its audience, or both, the "double aspect" of traumatic meaning has the potential to be fully manifest, as a model *of* and *for*.

Second, theatre events, as sites of collective, cooperative interpretations by artists and audiences, have the potential to reveal the oscillation and cooperation between individual and collective traumatic memories. Traumatic or otherwise, memories in the theatre are subject to layers of interpretation, all simultaneously responsive to the individual (artist and individual audience member) and collectives (collaborating artistic community and audience). This

oscillation phenomenon is best understood through the lens of reception, collective memory, and socially-distributed memory, all three of which will be heavily relied upon in the subsequent two chapters.

Finally, theatre events, through the interpretation of traumatic memories, represent the victims' potential reclamation of the traumatically-fragmented "logico-meaningful connections" (Sorokin 5-6) or "meaning systems" (Smelser 37)⁶, thereby creating the potential for victim agency of those memories, and laying a groundwork for individual and collective "coping" (Herman 224). This understanding of theatre events which deal with traumatic memories is inherently tied to both the ethical and cross-disciplinary impetus for this study, found in the Rationale section.

This study functions under a series of five frameworks (described in sections c, e, f, g, and h of this chapter) which bridge theatre theory (the necessarily central and primary mode of inquiry) and theories drawn from sociology, psychology (specifically cognitive psychology), cultural anthropology, and memory studies. Accordingly, the primary project of this study is to locate a number of theoretical understandings and methodologies that are not simply kindred or parallel, but complementary, with strong potential for cross-disciplinary utility. While a dissertation study is necessarily limited to the subject and scholarly orientation of the writer, it can indicate and further define the need for an interdisciplinary spirit of exploration. Accordingly, the secondary goal of this study is to provide a small contribution toward the "cross-disciplinary call to arms," found in the Rationale section below. The Rationale and Conclusion sections explain in depth why such explorations are vital to trauma research.

⁶For the purposes of ease and theoretical continuity, the latter term will be used in this study.

I.3 THE THEORETICAL SITES: MODEL, METAPHOR, AND EVENT

Fitting in with, and perhaps more importantly, bringing current the applications of Geertz's "models *of*" and "models *for*," are the notions of "metaphor" and "event" that emerged in the writings of linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark L. Johnson in the 1980s and 90s. Lakoff and Johnson rejected the presumption that "metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone" (*Metaphors* 3), positing instead that "most of our conceptual system is metaphorically structured" (56). "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (5). Metaphors are, additionally, interconnected through subcategorizations, meaning that one mode of action (which can represent a mode of behavior), can also be utilized to represent another (9). Where Lakoff and Johnson (helpfully) summarize their understanding of metaphor, the relationship with and usefulness in terms of Geertz earlier work becomes quite clear:

Metaphors have entailments through which they highlight and make coherent certain aspects of our experience. A given metaphor may be the only way to highlight and coherently organize exactly those aspects of our experience. Metaphors may create realities for us, *especially social realities*. A metaphor may thus be a guide for future action. Such actions will, of course, fit the metaphor. This will, in turn, reinforce the power of the metaphor to make experience coherent. In this sense metaphors can be self-fulfilling prophecies. (156, emphasis added)

Both models and metaphors, according to Geertz, Lakoff, and Johnson, encode human behavior under *specific sets* of circumstances. The power of the model or metaphor is directly related to its efficacy as a meaning making system – that is, how effectively it constructs a coherent reality

within sets of past and future circumstances. The concepts of models and metaphors have some overlap. Additionally, while models are more general in their conceptual boundaries, metaphors are more encompassing in their linguistic influence. “We live our lives on the basis of inferences we derive via metaphor” (Lakoff and Johnson *Metaphors* 273).

The choice to label theatrical performances “events” as opposed to “acts” or “performances” is also rooted in the philosophical work of Lakoff and Johnson. Events (along with causes, changes, states, actions, and purposes) belong to a category they label “event-structure concepts” (*Philosophy* 170). They describe the characteristics of this category as both literally embodied and necessarily metaphorical: “The concepts of... event and all other event-structure concepts are not just reflections of a mind-independent reality. They are fundamentally human concepts. They arise from human biology. Their meanings have a rather impoverished literal aspect; instead, they are metaphorical in significant, ineliminable ways” (171). The objective experience of an event is, in essence a fiction, and “what remains is an embodied realism that recognizes that human language and thought are structured by, and bound to, embodied experience” (233). In short, events are metaphorically expressed in nearly countless ways, as opposed to objectively felt in one or only a handful of ways. Through this understanding of *event*, even such things as traumatic memory can be understood metaphorically, and therefore, theatrically, as part of a larger meaning system, no matter how broken or fragmented that meaning system may be.

The performance histories of Elie Wiesel’s *Zalmen* (also called *The Madness of God*) and *The Trial of God* are analyzed as theatre events, as metaphorical webs, and as models, all of which construct the interchange between individual and collective traumatic memory. A similar methodology is used for *The Oresteia*, with a focus on a single theatre event (the premiere at the

Theatre of Dionysus in Athens, 458 BC). Because only one performance is being analyzed, closer attention can be paid to the historical moment in which the event took place, as well as the milieu of social, ritual, psychological, and mnemonic circumstances which informed the spectatorship of a single, albeit it socially divided, audience.

I.4 RATIONALE: A CROSS-DISCIPLINARY CALL TO ACTION

The modern history of trauma spans roughly 150 years, with periods of interruption and reemergence largely corresponding to social and political movements, particularly those surrounding the collective experiences of international wars and natural disasters. “The study of psychological trauma has a curious history – one of episodic amnesia. Periods of active investigation have alternated with periods of oblivion. Repeatedly in the past century similar lines of inquiry have been taken up and abruptly abandoned, only to be rediscovered much later” (Herman 7). Literary critic and historian Ruth Leys supports Herman’s interpretation of the historical development of trauma studies, asserting that trauma as a concept has and does “lack cohesion” (6). Sociologist Neil Smelser concedes that “the study of trauma is by now an industry and its literature is mountainous” (31). However, there are questions as to what degree the humanities (particularly theatre) and social sciences such as sociology and anthropology can contribute to the study of trauma, and where scholars in these fields should focus their energies. Concerning his own sociological exploration of cultural trauma, Smelser admits, “The most promising avenues of insight appear to be in the definition of trauma; its status as a negotiated process; the roles of affect, cognition, and memory in traumas; and the roles of defense against, coping with, and working through traumas” (32).

Leys references anthropologist Allan Young, stating that trauma is “premised on an error: far from being a timeless entity with an intrinsic unity, as its proponents suggest, PTSD is a historical construct that has been ‘glued together by practices, technologies, and narratives with which it is diagnosed, studied, treated, and represented by the interests, institutions, and moral arguments that mobilized these efforts and resources’” (Leys 6, from Young 5). Trauma’s history is one of intense polemic, which the social sciences and humanities have both ameliorated and contributed to. The interdisciplinary call, however, has been issued almost solely from within the psychology profession. “We are ultimately ill served by the arbitrary boundaries that implicitly assume human behavior can be divided neatly for the benefit of the researcher. ... We cannot train a future generation of trauma researchers without a multidisciplinary approach” (DePrince and Freyd 4). Such a need for trauma discourse across disciplines, and any attempt therein to expand the understanding of trauma must seek to include “multiple levels of analysis” (Keane xxi), to eliminate the “arbitrary divisions between constructs” (DePrince and Freyd 3, 4), and to utilize opportunities “to join other fields such as women’s studies and sociology in understanding how various forms of oppression, violence, and trauma are perpetrated and maintained in society” (Freyd and DePrince 308).

Judith Herman, a psychiatrist and one of the foremost experts on trauma in the late 20th century, has also expressed the need for a multidisciplinary approach to trauma studies:

In this new, more conventional phase of scientific inquiry, there is some cause for concern that integrative concepts and contextual understanding of psychological trauma may be lost, even as more precise and specific knowledge is gained. ... As the field of traumatic stress studies matures, a new generation of researchers will need to rediscover

the essential interconnection of biological, psychological, social, and political dimensions of trauma. (240)

The impetus for this study arose largely from the needs expressed above, and hopes to answer in some small way the call for a multidisciplinary approach to the understanding of trauma. As important as it is to employ academic conceptualizations of trauma, it is also vital to apprehend alternative conceptualizations, especially those created by the victims and those closest to them, within the contexts of their understanding (or lack thereof), and by social, meaning-making activities such as theatre, already in place or newly created, that can assist in the process of recovery.

Theatre's answer to this call lies in presenting a site where individual and collective meet and share a variety of interpretive roles. Because theatre itself is such a site, it is fertile theoretical ground to navigate the often polemical relationship between psychological and collective traumas, which are discussed more in depth below.

I.5 CULTURAL TRAUMA DEFINED

Studies in cultural trauma began in earnest in the late 1990s at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS, part of Stanford University as of 2008). The CASBS colleagues, made up of sociologists Jeffrey Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Piotr Stompka Richard Giesen, and Neil Smelser, developed the earliest definitions of social and cultural traumas. Their theories placed emphasis on the reaction (as an open-system response) to the limit event (specifically, to its interpretation by a victim populace or carrier group and commemoration before an ever-witnessing group or audience), as opposed to the event itself. Other theoretical

landmarks include “meaning-systems,” “historical indeterminacy,” “the naturalistic fallacy,” the “speech act,” and ethical responsibility.

Neil Smelser offers formal definitions of “culture” and “cultural trauma,” building on the “logico-meaningful” method developed by late sociologist Pitirim Sorokin. “As a system, a culture can be defined as a grouping of elements – values, norms, outlooks, beliefs, ideologies, knowledge, and empirical assertions (not always verified), linked with one another to some degree as a meaning-system (logico-meaningful connection, in Sorokin’s words)” (Smelser 37 and Sorokin 5-6). It can be deduced from the Smelser/Sorokin definition that, in the broadest sense, culture is a network of meaning-making systems (meaning-systems) that enhance and perpetuate the success and survival of both the individual and the collective.

We may now advance to a formal definition of cultural trauma: a memory accepted and publicly given credence by a relevant membership group and evoking an event or situation which is a) laden with negative affect, b) represented as indelible, and c) regarded as threatening a society’s existence or violating one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions. The obvious observation to add at this point...is that if a historical event or situation succeeds in becoming publicly identified as a cultural trauma, then this certainly imparts an air of urgency – a demand for those who acknowledge it as such to come to grips with it. (Smelser 44)

The contribution of Smelser and his contemporaries to the social sciences was the promotion of thinking about both individual trauma and collective reactions to widely-felt, culturally-disruptive events as open system responses, open to (and, at least in part, constructed by) interpretive matrices.

The above proponents of cultural trauma theory assert that trauma is socially constructed, as opposed to universally experienced in a single measurable way by all victim groups.

Therefore, events that are potentially traumatic to one culture at a given historical point are not necessarily traumatic to other cultures, or are not necessarily traumatic to that first culture during *another* historical period. This idea, called “historical indeterminacy,” hinges on two assertions: “no discrete historical event or situation automatically or necessarily qualifies in itself as cultural trauma, and the range of events or situations that may become cultural traumas is enormous” (Smelser 35). These assertions broaden the ontological scope of cultural trauma, to both the benefit and risk of the concept⁷.

In order for a private (that is, individual) trauma to be recognized by a society as a trauma, the victim must communicate with a “carrier group” that acts as a kind of first audience to the recollection of trauma (Alexander 11, Weber 468). Only then does it have the potential to become cultural trauma. This is not to say, however, that the affect arising from individual, psychological trauma is completely culturally relative. Rather, trauma, on the cultural level, arises primarily from reference points found in the culture’s narrative framework. Cultural traumas are comparable, if only superficially, with individual affect and expression at the point where systems of meaning-making are first disrupted.

The contributions of these early cultural trauma theorists can be divided into two movements⁸. The first involved the re-appropriation of Freudian thought into the matrix of social, cultural, and individual limit events. Scholars such as Neil Smelser have actively called for the restoration of Freudian psychoanalysis to the methodological foreground of trauma

⁷See Wulf Kansteiner, as cited in section I.6.

⁸These “movements” are arbitrary creations of the author of this study.

studies. Such notions of cultural trauma are directly responsive to Freud's studies of hysteria, its etiology, and his cultural critique of western civilization. However, Smelser and Alexander are also careful to stress the empirically and experientially unreliable nature of Freud's theories.⁹ Nevertheless, Freud's key concepts and language, from his work on hysteria to his self-rejected seduction theory, figure heavily in the analyses of cultural traumas undertaken by the former members of CASBS.

Cultural trauma theorists who have contributed to the second movement, particularly Alexander¹⁰, invite the inclusion of public, victim-oriented analyses. They also call for ethical responsibility in the midst of these attempts to understand traumas. As Alexander explains, trauma is an open-system response, as is a culture or collective's reaction to a potentially traumatic event. "Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (1). The open-system response, which is implicit in Alexander's definition, is the interchange between communicator and audience (the traumatized and those who can recognize or deny the trauma). According to Alexander, cultural trauma depends upon the theories of the "carrier group," which was introduced by Max Weber, and the "speech act," introduced by philosophers John Austin and John Searle and later simplified by Alexander (11-12). By centering the communicative aspect of the traumatic response in his theoretical framework, Alexander expands the moral gamut of trauma beyond those who would typically

⁹It is of note, however, that this is not the primary focus of their projects.

¹⁰Many cultural trauma theorists, including Jeffrey C. Alexander, have worked in both of these movements.

assist the traumatized individual (i.e., loved ones of victims and members of the helping professions).

...this new scientific concept [of cultural trauma] also illuminates an emerging domain of social responsibility and political action. It is by constructing cultural trauma that social groups, national societies, and sometimes even entire civilizations not only cognitively identify the existence and source of human suffering but “take on board” some significant responsibility for it. Insofar as they identify the cause of trauma, and thereby assume such moral responsibility, members of collectivities define their solidary [sic] relationships in ways that, in principle, allow them to share the sufferings of others... By the same token, social groups can, and often do, refuse to recognize the existence of others’ trauma, and because of their failure they cannot achieve a moral stance... In other words, by refusing to participate in...the process of trauma creation, social groups restrict solidarity, leaving others to suffer alone. (Alexander 1)

These two movements carry the notion of cultural trauma to the present day, while the overall notion of cultural trauma remains vehemently contested by many scholars on psychological and sociological grounds.

I.6 INDIVIDUAL AND CULTURAL TRAUMA THEORIES AS DIALECTIC PROCESS

Wulf Kansteiner mistakenly iterates that the aforementioned sociologists are affiliated with the Frankfurt School, claiming Theodore Adorno’s *Dialectics of the Enlightenment* (with Max Horkheimer) and *Negative Dialectics* were the progenitors of cultural trauma theory (Kansteiner

206). Notwithstanding cultural trauma theorists and their detractors, intersections of psychological and cultural trauma theories illuminate both the current polemical and dialogic atmosphere between psychology and the other social sciences, while revealing trauma as a concept that is interpreted primarily within strict disciplinary boundaries, leading to “arbitrary divisions between [trauma] constructs” (DePrince and Freyd 3). According to trauma and literary theorist Michelle Balaev,

The concept of trauma as timeless, repetitious, and infectious supports a literary theory of transhistorical trauma by making a parallel causal relationship between the individual and group, as well as between traumatic experience and pathologic responses. The theory indicates that a massive trauma experienced by a group in the historical past can be experienced by an individual living centuries later who shares a similar attribute of the historical group... Therefore, historical traumatic experience is the source that marks and defines contemporary individual identity, as well as racial or cultural identity. However, the theory of intergenerational trauma limits the meaning of trauma in literature because it conflates the distinctions between personal loss actually experienced by an individual and a historical absence found in one's ancestral lineage... [It] collapses boundaries between the individual and group, thereby suggesting that a person's contemporary identity can be "vicariously traumatized" by reading about a historical narrative or due to a shared genealogy that affords the ability to righteously claim the social label of "victim" as part of personal or public identity. In addition, blurring the distinction between absence and loss would lead to the view that both victim and perpetrator maintain the same relationship to a traumatic experience and exhibit the same responses. (149)

Wulf Kansteiner echoes Balaev's concern, while searching for a new vocabulary to express what is both historically and psychologically traumatic in nature, as opposed to what merely falls under the cultural and literary expressions of violence and suffering.

...the search for new terminology will help fill a troubling gap in the literature about the legacy of traumatic events. We need psychological concepts for the analysis of processes of social and cultural transmission which address the reproduction of power and violence but which avoid the moral and existential excess of the trauma claim. Such new concepts... will help us better understand our emotional engagement and investment in violence and let us map out the vast, uncharted psychological territory that lies between the experience of extreme trauma on the one hand and the much more frequent encounter with representations of violence on the other. (Kansteiner "The Genealogy of a Categorical Mistake" 195)

Both Kansteiner (*ibid*) and Dominic LaCapra (xiv) warn that if a new vocabulary is not developed, and if the use of trauma concepts remains erratically transhistorical (at the expense of historical specificity grounded in personal testimony or, according to Kansteiner, objective historicalism), loss and absence will be irreversibly conflated. The predicted result is that the number of "trauma victims" will increase exponentially, until trauma itself becomes simply an analogue for all of human suffering, regardless of its severity.

While Kansteiner provides both a compelling argument and a useful warning, his understanding of the "limit case" (206, called in this study "limit event") is based upon what Lakoff and Johnson explain to be an "objective, mind-independent" (171) understanding of historical events. As a result, a more utilizable middle ground between Eyerman's work (whom Kansteiner spends a great deal of ink attacking) and Kansteiner's warning would seem to be a

more theoretically productive course of action, one that would allow metaphor (as understood by Lakoff and Johson) to have more theoretical play. What is more, and even more noteworthy, is that theatrical expressions of trauma (both collective and individual) rest upon metaphors themselves, that, as shown in the following chapters, would otherwise be inexpressible in the midst of traumatic suffering.

I.7 THEATRE EVENT AS DIALECTIC SYNTHESIS

Primarily because of the above, the theatre event becomes a fertile site for the dialectic synthesis between individual and collective trauma – especially, individual and collective traumatic memories. Indeed, if it were possible to overlay the theoretical “maps” of the individual/cultural trauma dialectic and the performer-audience relationship, one would see strikingly similar “peaks and valleys” (e.g., polemics, theoretical nil spaces, trends of study, and schools of thought). These overlapping similarities represent aspects of the utility of the theatre event as a negotiator of trauma theories. They also reveal that the interchange between performer and audience has metaphorical (as well as theoretical) play in the negotiation of victim and culture. The key to this latter point lies in Alexander’s explanation of the “speech act” as a “double act” – one which expresses a truth claim to an audience, while remaining subject to “illocutionary” success or failure. (12)

The goal of the speaker [carrier group] is persuasively to project the trauma claim to the audience-public. In doing so, the carrier group makes use of the particularities of the historical situation, the symbolic resources at hand, and the constraints and opportunities provided by institutional structures. In the first place, the speaker’s audience must be

members of the carrier group itself. If there is illocutionary success, the members of this originating collectivity become convinced that they have been traumatized by a singular event. Only with this success can the audience for the traumatic claim be broadened to include other publics within the “society at large.” (*ibid*)

Alexander not only roots the outward (audience-oriented) validity of the trauma claim in the speech act; he also delineates how trauma emanates outward from individual victim to victim (carrier group), to increasingly larger audiences, based upon its success in both portraying and constructing the victim’s and then the victim group’s traumatic reality.

It has been established above that a theatrical performance (which includes the expectation of and circumstances behind the performance, the live performance itself as a cooperative interpretation between artists and audience, and the post-performance interpretive matrix) constitutes an “event.” This “event” falls into the category of Lakoff and Johnson's “event-structured concepts,” in which metaphors drawn from embodiment are the richest possible forms of expression. Additionally, the case has been made, within a theatrical context, for the utility of the “speech act metaphor” in conceptualizing collective trauma. According to theatre scholar Eli Rozik:

Speech act theory has contemplated the possible explanation of metaphor as a specific *kind* of speech act, combining proper (literal) and improper (non-literal) elements (Searle, 1988). A word is 'improper' if it is used in a non-literal capacity. Any improper term is potentially metaphorical. Indeed, there is no problem in having a metaphor in the propositional content (p) of a speech act, as currently integrated theories of both metaphor and speech activity. However, speech act theory has not considered the possibility of a kind of speech act which is metaphorical in itself. The difficulty resides in

integrating both an object of description and a kind of description of such an object. Seemingly, such a combination entails blurring the existential boundaries between a referential world and a description of such a world or, in other words, between the extra-linguistic and the linguistic/semiotic spheres. In the theatre, however, and in the so-called Theater of the Absurd in particular, there are many cases that can only be understood if it is assumed that such a combination of principles has materialized. (Rozik 204, emphasis added)

The most immediate question for a theatrical case study of this kind now becomes whether a specific theatre event, which portrays traumatic memory, has a metaphorical power great enough to become one or more illocutionary acts, which can subsequently verify the trauma claims of a victim group for a larger, witnessing audience. When theatre represents trauma, it also holds the potential to negotiate *collective trauma*, which is posited here as the dialectic synthesis of individual and cultural trauma. As cultural trauma is an open-system response, so is collective trauma, and likewise is a theatre event. These considerations will be appropriately scrutinized in the case studies analyses, presented in the subsequent two chapters.

I.8 COLLECTIVE AND SOCIALLY-DISTRIBUTED MEMORY AS REFLEXIVITY

Regarding trauma, victimhood, and the sociological need for reflexivity, Jeffrey Alexander writes:

We know from ordinary language... that we are on to something widely experienced and intuitively understood. Such rootedness in the life-world is the soil that nourishes every social scientific concept. The trick is to gain reflexivity, to move from the sense of

something commonly experienced to the sense of strangeness that allows us to think sociologically. For trauma is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by society... We have come to believe, in fact, that the scholarly approaches to trauma developed thus far actually have been distorted by the powerful, commonsense understandings of trauma that have emerged in everyday life... in contrast to which a more theoretically reflexive approach to trauma must be erected. (2)

The five works of theatre that make up this dissertation's case studies (Wiesel's *Zalmen* and *The Trial of God*, and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, and *The Eumenides*) provide textual, dramaturgical, historical, metaphorical, and embodied portrayals of trauma and traumatic memory. In order to gain the reflexivity necessary for an in-depth analysis of traumatic memory's functions within a theatre event (and how that theatre event provides models *of* and *for* traumatic memory), a more-than-cursory understanding of memory is critical. This understanding must acknowledge theoretical landmarks that are substantively, metaphorically, and ontologically analogic to ones often found in the negotiation between performer and audience.

The process that leads to this understanding must involve doing away with the pseudo-academic, arbitrary reduction of memory to an "in-the-head" phenomenon. Historian and Holocaust expert Alon Confino helps to shape this enhanced notion of memory.

Used with various degrees of sophistication, the notion of memory, more practiced than theorized, has been used to denote very different things, which nonetheless share a topical common denominator: the ways in which people construct a sense of the past. It has been used to explore, first, the memory of people who actually experienced a given event, such as the memory of Holocaust survivors. In addition, it has come to denote the

representation of the past and the making of it into a shared cultural knowledge by successive generations in “vehicles of memory” such as books, films, museums, commemorations, and others. (Confino 1386)

In keeping with Confino’s thesis, this “Reflexivity” section starts with a more robust notion of memory than can be empirically quantified, thereby moving this study toward an enhanced understanding of traumatic memory as it is *potentially* encoded, stored, retrieved, and interpreted, especially within interpersonal frameworks. The question of whether (and if so, how) there can be *group traumatic memory* will be developed over the course of the case studies found in Chapters Two and Three. For the time being, a brief overview of potential sites of group traumatic memory will be explored cursorily, in order to avoid later confusion.

A foundational definition of memory is usefully found in Sandu Frunză’s considerations of the ethics, religion, and memory of Elie Wiesel’s seminal work – the testimony *Night*: “...Memory is shown as an invitation to participation in a *common set of meanings, values and actions*” (94, emphasis added). For the purposes of this study, the most basic understanding of memory is of a unity between what is *intrapersonally* experienced and *interpersonally* negotiated. “...Human cognitive processing is sometimes, perhaps even typically, *hybrid* in character: it spans not only the embodied brain and central nervous system, but also the environment with its social or technological resources” (Barnier, et al. 33). Individual memories, as well as both socially distributed and collective memory, are hybrid, multi-directional, interdependent, and oscillatory in their manifestations.

One of the most useful and complete descriptions of collective memory can be found in Ron Eyerman’s “Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity”:

Here collective memory is defined as recollections of a shared past “that are retained by members of a group, large or small, that experienced it” (Schuman and Scott 1989, 361-62). Such memories are retained and passed on either as part of an ongoing process of what might be called public commemoration, in which officially sanctioned rituals are engaged to establish a shared past, or through discourses more specific to a particular group or collective. This socially constructed, historically rooted collective memory functions to create social solidarity in the present. As developed by followers of Durkheim such as Maurice Halbwachs (1992), memory is collective in that it is supra-individual, and individual memory is always conceived in relation to a group, be this geographical, positional, ideological, political, or generationally based. In Halbwachs’ classical account, *memory is always group memory*, both because the individual is derivative of some collectivity, family, and community, and also because a group is solidified and becomes aware of itself through continuous reflection upon and re-creation of a distinctive, shared memory. Individual identity is said to be negotiated through this collectively shared past. Thus while there is always a unique, biographical memory to draw upon, it is described as being rooted in a collective history. Here collective memory provides the individual with a cognitive map within which to orient present behavior. In this sense, collective memory is a social necessity; neither an individual nor a society can do without it. (Eyerman 65)

Psychologist Amanda J. Barnier’s study (co-written with three other authors, including scholars of philosophy and cognitive science) lays the framework for an understanding of memory as both “in-the-head” and “in-the-world,” and which not only responds to but exists because of *both* internal and external forces. The usual lay or academic understandings of memory, like those of

trauma, involve multiple and initially irreconcilable conceptual frameworks, in which concepts are defined along disciplinary boundaries. But a worthy and ultimately useful consideration is that memory and trauma, like a theatre event, is multi-directionally constructed between subject and interpersonal audience, and does not nor has ever existed in a socio-cultural vacuum.

One motivation for adopting a perspective in which cognition [such as memory] is embedded, distributed, or extended begins with reflection on the fact that neural systems do not operate in causal isolation from their environments. Moreover, the nature and level of causal integration across the divide between individual and environment suggests that cognitive systems themselves often involve the coupling of neural, bodily, and external systems in complex webs of continuous reciprocal causation. (*ibid*)¹¹

Memory, during all of its cognitive stages, is as much an *interaction* (between the remembering individual and the individual's community and environment) as it is a cognitive *action*. "This focus on the social distribution of cognition is particularly appropriate in thinking about memory, since encoding, storage, and retrieval in real-world contexts all frequently involve the cognitive activities of more than a single individual" (*ibid*).

Almost as if it were inevitable, Barnier and her colleagues promptly use as support examples of memories that are potentially traumatic:

...In some cases it is appropriate simply to sum individual memories, for instance those of a bunch of strangers who happened to witness the same accident. But in other cases— if, for example, these witnesses later discuss or debate intensely the details of the accident

¹¹Barnier and her colleagues also echoes the call for interdisciplinary dialogue. "[We] believe that both psychologists and humanities scholars can contribute directly to better understandings of the relations between broader studies of national or cultural memory and the typical individual or small-group focus of cognitive psychology with its empirical methods" (34-35). This dialogue allows for the placement of group memory within a spectrum of forms, complexities, and agencies, elucidating some forms of group remembering as "little more than aggregates of individual rememberers, while others involve collective agents as truly emergent entities" (Barnier, et al. 36; Poirier and Chicoisne 215; Wimsatt 279).

among themselves—the account of the past which emerges may differ significantly from such an additive mere juxtaposition of individual memories. (36)

They go on to distinguish such group memories, which they now call (and in this study shall likewise be called) “socially distributed memories” (*ibid*) from “collective memory.” While socially distributed memory has given rise to proposals for further empirical research, collective memory is “a broader concept less answerable to empiricism (Gedi and Elam 30). The theory of socially distributed memory considers multiple agencies; recollection as a group is seen as sometimes involuntary, sometimes intentional, and the groups themselves have varying degrees of internal identification, cohesiveness, and communicative proximity over time. Barnier and her associates then cast their theoretical net farther, by extrapolating from their theory the different purposes or agendas that motivate the group process of recollection. Through this extrapolation, they foreground memory’s multiplicity of function. “Alongside the importance of forging, maintaining, and sharing an accurate grasp of past events, the activity of remembering itself keeps the past alive for a variety of present purposes, which is one reason why the qualitative and affective tone of our memories is often entangled and renegotiated in our practical reasoning over time” (35).

With these considerations in mind, two overarching criteria emerge for categorizing socially distributed memory: “the *durability* and *reliability* of the extended cognitive system that results from the functional integration” (Barnier, et al. 37 citing Wilson and Clark *in press* and Wilson “Collective Memory” 232, 234, emphasis added). In terms of retrieval, remembering may occur in isolation or “under a range of increasingly collaborative conditions with other people” (36). Other criteria are necessary, however, namely agency, cohesiveness, and plural subjectivity. “The stories of the shared past, of the events that we remember, are continually

renegotiated as we improvise and riff around them with more or less control, and thus they come to have their own autonomy and integrity and internal tensions and lacunae” (37). These last three criteria (agency, cohesiveness, and plural subjectivity) are found in abundance in the conceptual matrix of collective memory, and can be applied as an additional set of defining boundaries between that matrix and socially distributed memory.

Collective Memory, as a sociological phrase coined by Maurice Halbwachs around 1925, and as a cross-disciplinary location of contention and negotiation of memory, collectivity, narrative, and nationality, functions not only as an expression of a social mechanism of meaning (what Sorokin would perhaps have called a logico-meaningful system). It also functions as a system of metaphors that are much more useful than those which employ trauma and memory in a more general, cursory sense. According to philosophy scholar Robert A. Wilson,

...The cognitive metaphors [of collective memory] crystallize agency. But that is simply to answer a question about one metaphor by invoking another, and we can do better than that. The idea is that since human beings with minds are paradigms of agents, we can make the agency of non-human entities more perspicuous by attributing cognitive capacities to them. In effect, adopting the cognitive metaphor with respect to groups assimilates those groups to our paradigmatic agents, human beings, and so allows us more easily to see them as agents in their own right, and view them accordingly. Thus, the cognitive metaphor makes more vivid the competing claims that groups make, the ways in which groups can be both causally and morally responsible for certain actions, and the justifications given for treating groups in certain ways. (Wilson 234)

While Barnier and her colleagues use the term “collective memory” (37), its use here in this dissertation is in establishing conceptual boundaries for memories more deeply in the territory of

group cognition than in collective memory, and to identify the collective memory concept (in the contexts mentioned above) as a separate and ultimately useful category to explain various mechanisms of social recollection. "...the type of collaboration, the nature of the group, and the roles adopted by group members during collaboration may all be crucial predictors of group memory performance. Another important feature of real-world social remembering is that it usually occurs for personal and potentially emotional and significant autobiographical events" (41).

Barnier and her colleagues draw upon the research of the past three decades, negotiating three categories of group memory: transactive memory (38), collaborative recall (40), and social contagion (41). They note the three concepts are influenced, each in varying degrees, by three assumptive frameworks: Triggering Thesis, Social Manifestation Thesis, and Group Mind Thesis, detailed as follows. "The Triggering Thesis: remembering is a cognitive process that takes place inside individuals, although it can be initiated, at either the encoding or the retrieval phase, by social phenomena" (37). "The Social Manifestation Thesis: remembering is a cognitive process that can only be manifested or realized when the individuals engaged in that process form part of a social group of a certain kind" (*ibid*). "The Group Mind Thesis: remembering is a cognitive process that groups themselves, rather than the individuals that compose those groups, engage in" (38). These theses differ in both the location and agency of memory – that is, whether remembering is manifested primarily in-the-head or outside of it (or both), and what the primary force(s) influencing remembering are. Empirical considerations include the circumstances of encoding, the level of cohesiveness within groups during encoding and retrieval events over time (and, implicitly, whether groups convene prior to or because of encoding), and whether the encoding and retrieving processes are accidental or intentional.

From there, they construct an integrative conceptual framework, and the current empirical limitations are noted; memory studies in laboratory settings use simple, unimportant information (such as word lists) which have no real-world emotional context (42). They note that, even in circumstantial studies of real events, the memory items analyzed are “semantic rather than autobiographical” and not “emotional and important everyday memories” (41).

Two of the central problems within the current research on socially distributed memory systems involve the types and purposes of remembering groups. Groups that encode an event “accidentally” (individuals happen to be together when the event occurs) will behave differently, from the outset and over time, than groups in which individuals depend upon each other for the recollection of memory items and the interpretation of such items. There is also the assumption of entropy in group memories when they are considered in tandem with individual memories.

Overall, the findings from collaborative recall experiments are limited by the types of groups and the types of stimuli studied so far. Researchers have also tended to focus primarily on individual cognition and on the negative outcomes of group remembering (i.e., does the group remember less than the individual?). But in real-world group remembering, accuracy is only one goal of recall, and operates alongside social goals, such as establishing relationships or making a good impression, developing and maintaining intimacy, teaching and informing others, and eliciting or providing empathy. Thus, group memory may be qualitatively, not just quantitatively, different from individual memory. Laying aside these limitations, the collaborative recall paradigm offers a robust methodology for indexing the effects of discussion on memory, both during the discussion itself and on subsequent individual recall... The focus of comparisons... [has been] on the amount of information recalled; specifically, the number

of contagion items recalled... However, other qualitative factors that are relevant to real world, autobiographical remembering, such as emotion and motivational value, have not been examined. (Barnier, et al. 41-42)

In many ways, Barnier and her associates' work exhibits a theoretical tension similar to the one found in cognitive psychology's study of trauma, manifest in the differences between laboratory and experiential evidence. Additionally studies of socially-distributed memory potentially have the same ethical implications as laboratory-based traumatic memory studies – concerns about recreating memories that are traumatic to the subjects (van der Kolk, et al. 12).

With proper agency, collective and socially distributed memory in the wake of trauma provides the foundation of this study's theatrical, interdependent, models of/for individual and collective traumas. Socially distributed and collective memory making may have the potential to imbue traumatic memory with interpretive, metaphorical processes, which are notably lacking in the trauma which arises from individual victimhood, due primarily to the usually fragmentary nature of individual traumatic memories. While allowing the scholar to gain reflexivity in perceiving the traumatically-oriented theatre event, it will also be shown that these diverse understandings of memory can provide a litmus test for the breadth and impact of trauma as it first moves to the collective level.

I.9 DISSERTATION OUTLINE

This dissertation is arranged in a three-chapter format, with a concluding section after Chapter Three. Chapter One has outlined the context of the topic, the thesis, the target materials for the case studies, the rationale, and a series of theoretical frameworks. This chapter has additionally

traced both the polemic and potential in the individual/cultural trauma dialectic, naming the theatre event as a highly fertile site of dialectic synthesis and theoretical expansion. It has also established that this study was undertaken because of the interdisciplinary call to deepen and enrich the trauma concept. This dissertation centers on the thesis that certain theatre events hold the potential to reveal (through models *of* and *for* the interdependent nature of individual and collective traumatic memory).

Chapter Two undertakes the first of this dissertation's two case studies: the texts, socio-historical contexts, dramaturgies, and performance histories of Elie Wiesel's two full-length plays, *Zalmen* (or *The Madness of God*) and *The Trial of God*. This chapter includes dramaturgical backgrounds for both plays, as well as outlines of their brief performance histories. The application of trauma, socially distributed memory, and collective memory theories are then brought to bear on to the texts of the plays. The analyses of traumatic circumstances in both plays are then "tested" against the plays' critical receptions. Through these analyses, *Zalmen* is understood as a failed attempt at communicating collective traumatic memories (as a model *of* collective traumatic memory), while remaining an important step in Wiesel's process of negotiating his own traumatic experiences. *The Trial of God* is understood as a much more successful work as a model *for* collective traumatic memory, bringing to a conclusion Wiesel's attempts to communicate and interpret the traumatic memory of the trial episode he experience while in Auschwitz.

Chapter Three deals with the three tragedies of Aeschylus' *The Oresteia* – *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, and *The Eumenides*. First produced in 458 BC and shortly after the outbreak of the First Peloponnesian War, the plays featured complex metaphors linking the theatre event with legal proceedings, military maneuvers, public rituals, and the realities of war.

Particularly of relevance to this chapter are how *The Oresteia* remembers (largely metaphorically) the traumas of the Persian Wars and acknowledges the spectatorship of its veterans. The plays, seen as a single performance event, reveal traumas of individual, familial, collective, intergenerational, and cultural forms. These are not merely viewed through the lens of modern trauma theory, however; within the ancient cultural milieu of Greek language and literature, notions of wounding, madness, and the expressions of an (as yet unified) theory of consciousness, a picture of how the ancient Athenians viewed trauma begins to emerge. Reception through the interpolation of physical and textual evidence, a method introduced by classicist Pat Easterling, becomes essential in understanding the individual and intergenerational traumas of *Agamemnon*. Through the lens of intertextuality, *The Libation Bearers* is discovered to be the nexus of the plays' individual and collective traumas. The end of *The Libation Bearers* and the whole of *The Eumenides* presents the most deeply metaphorical representations of traumatic memory, embodied by the Erinyes (Furies) and played out in the mythic, allegorical, and historical Areopagus court. With the plays closely analyzed, the chapter concludes with the analysis of the historical arc of events and circumstances experienced by the audience, as well as strong suppositions about who made up the premiere's audience in 458 BC, and under what social and historical circumstances they received the plays.

The brief Conclusion section expounds on the metaphorical nature of collective traumatic memories onstage. It also revisits the theoretical matrix, in order to compare the models of/for traumatic memory that arose from *Zalmen*, *The Trial of God*, and *The Oresteia*. This section then reflects on the possibility of future sites of study for theatre and collective trauma. Additionally, this final section is meant to answer further the “interdisciplinary call to action” detailed in the rationale section of this chapter.

II.0 CHAPTER TWO – CASE STUDY 1: ELIE WIESEL'S *ZALMEN* AND *THE TRIAL OF GOD*

II.1 “THEATRE OF TRAUMA:” TRAUMATIC MEMORY AS AN INDICATOR OF COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

Given the theoretical framework established thus far (as well as the aims of this study), trauma has been conceptualized as something “widely experienced and intuitively understood” (Alexander 2), and apprehended through the frameworks of troubled and sporadic histories and intellectual genealogies (Herman 7, Leys 6). Also, trauma is, both in its individual and collective versions, readily comprehended and contested as a *disorder of memory*, with mnemonic symptoms ranging from (most frequently) fragmentation to (least frequently) an indelibility of memory for the limit event, and from the persistent intrusion of memory to its complete vacuity. It has also been shown that the contesting of trauma concepts runs parallel to the contesting of the nature of memory itself. Be that as it may, traumatic and normative memory are distinct from one another.

Traumatic memories differ from normal memories. The traumatic memory recurs involuntarily against the wishes of the rememberer, in contrast to our studied efforts to remember what we have forgotten or dreaming reverie. In the traumatic memory the past defines and determines the present actions and thinking of the rememberer, whereas in

normal remembering the needs of the present determine what is called up associationally from the past. (Leed 87)

Accordingly, memory is a fertile theoretical ground for understanding trauma as a disorder of memory, one with both psychological and social causes. A robust study of traumatic memory must therefore consider both the individual and the collective.

Amanda Barnier and other proponents of socially distributed memory, as well as proponents of transactive and collective memory, have convincingly postulated memory as a function not purely “in the head,” but as something subject to levels of interpretation within a collective, regardless of the degree of cohesiveness of that collective when the antecedent event occurs.

Sometimes we learn (often to our delight or relief, sometimes to our dismay) that others have had similar experiences. And when we have experienced something alongside other people—for example, when a group of us went through some phase of life together as a cohort, or when we have deliberately engaged in a course of joint action – our later accountings and attempts to understand “how it went” can be of great emotional importance for both individuals and the enduring group. In the strongest such cases, long-standing groups return often to rethink or talk through the same shared past events and experiences, perhaps reevaluating their lives or their relationships in part on the basis of, or by way of, reinterpretations of the shared past. Significant reconsideration and redirection of values and plans can be not only triggered by but also enacted in renegotiation of some still-live past. (Barnier, et al. 47)

Traumatic memory is the most suitable way of approaching an enhanced model (or models of/for) trauma as it is expressed and interpreted through the theatre event. Traumatic

remembering, while distinct to the individual, is also almost universally marked by the difference from and disruption of normative memory, as noted above by Leed. If the disruption of memory (via forgetting, persistent remembering, fragmentation, non-narrativity, fixation, or dissociation) is a near universal in the symptom matrix of individual traumas, then it would seem to follow that the disruption of *group memory* (collaborative, transactive, collective, cultural, or socially distributed) is likewise a manifestation of collective trauma. Such a conclusion, however, cannot be made on the basis of mere assumption or through the “sin [of] uncritical analogizing” (Smelser 32). In light of the aforementioned advances in the studies of social cognition, socially distributed memory, the movement toward psychological and empirical analyses in collective memory studies, and (in the instance of theatre) the consideration of performance histories, one can move toward “richer taxonomies” of memory (Barnier, et al. 37), and therefore, traumatic memories. These richer taxonomies are measured through their durability and reliability, and are subject to considerations of group cohesion, group purpose, and recall, all as apprehended over time (*ibid*).

Trauma is at once private and public (communicated to one or more others), inasmuch as an individual trauma left unspoken cannot pass through the social mechanisms of disclosure, communication, narration, and formalized treatment. But this passage through the social indicates little about shared experience. Considering the historical specificity of Holocaust trauma, for example, as well as the intensity, depth, and repetitious nature of its shared experience, the aforementioned oversight on the part of both the private and public spheres seems profound.

Delineating a “theatre of trauma” necessitates the exploration of traumatic memory internal to the plays under consideration (with regard to shared trauma among characters), as

well as an external exploration (in the nexus of creator, character, performer, and audience).

Dramaturgy, also, with attention to source material and the playwright's own description of the creative process, helps to flesh out the relatively scant production histories of these plays.

We may now understand trauma as both individual and collective, and that the individual and collective traumatic realms are somehow interconnected, affecting each other in multi-directional ways. With that understanding established, the background of Wiesel's plays will be introduced within their historical and authorial contexts. Then, looking for evidence of both individual and collective traumas will be the first step of analysis for each play. Using the theoretical framework constructed in Chapter One, the nature of the interchange between individual and collective traumas will be assessed, both as they pertain to the internal world of each play, and the plays in performance. The former will be assessed through the lenses of "metaphor" and "model" as described by Lakoff and Johnson and Geertz, the modified notion of cultural trauma ("collective trauma"), and the understanding of how each play contributes to the notions of individual and collective (and cultural) traumas, as both dialectic process and synthesis. The latter will be analyzed through dramaturgy and performance history, in order to bring into relief both potential and actual audiences, how traumatic memory is imparted to such audiences, and to elucidate the nature of the plays in performance as they confront, interpret, and value traumatic memory. Finally, each play's analysis will be tested for the reflexivity called for by Jeffrey Alexander, using the theoretical frameworks of collective and socially distributed memory.

Through these analyses, the two plays will be assessed for their ability to portray and convey individual and collective traumas. It will be shown that, while *Zalmen* and *The Trial of God* at first seem generally unrelated, they are closely linked because they are part of Wiesel's

process of conveying and interpreting traumatic memories on the individual and cultural levels. While *Zalmen* ultimately fails to convey collective trauma in such a way that allows illocutionary success and the transmission of traumatic memory to increasingly larger collectives, it is an important stage in Wiesel's attempts, which come to fruition in *The Trial of God*, a play with a high degree of illocutionary success, and a model of collective traumatic memory.

II.2 DRAMATURGICAL BACKGROUNDS OF ZALMEN AND THE TRIAL OF GOD

There are a few tools with which to gather the relatively scant performance histories of Elie Wiesel's plays – *Zalmen* (subtitled *The Madness of God*, first published in 1974) and *The Trial of God* (first published in English in 1979) – outside of a handful of interviews and Wiesel's memoirs *All Rivers Run to the Sea* (1996) and *And the Sea Is Never Full* (2000), and a small number of critical reviews. These texts, however, make up copious front-end dramaturgical resources, which elucidate the potential audiences of these plays, and help construct what Susan Bennett calls “the idea of the theatrical event” (86). There are also certain strategic advantages to these particular plays, as sites of modeling trauma and traumatic memory (a matter that will be dealt with in Conclusion after Chapter Three).

For both *Zalmen* and *The Trial of God*, there are, however, fairly substantial histories of composition, many of which have been imparted by Wiesel himself in the form of lectures, letters, earlier drafts, interviews, the same or similar stories in non-dramatic genres, and the foundational narrative found in his written, semi-autobiographical Holocaust testimony, *Night*. While there is the disadvantage of a brief performance history, there is the unique advantage of multiple primary and secondary source materials, existing in various forms and styles, spanning

the 45 years from the American publication of *Night* in 1960, through the 1974 publication of *Zalmen*, to the latest publication of *The Trial of God* with commentary by theologians Robert McAfee Brown (xviii) and Matthew Fox in 1995 (176)¹².

This background section also accounts for the history of Wiesel's creative processes with regard to each play, the writings and figures who influenced the initial creation of the plays, and purported authorial intent, mainly in Wiesel's own words. This section also provides an introduction to the performance histories of both plays.

Zalmen or *The Madness of God* was first presented in French as a radio play, directed by René Jentet, sometime before 1973.¹³ The impetus for the play was Wiesel's visit to the USSR on Yom Kippur Eve in 1965, during the *Kol Nidre*¹⁴ service.

My own eyes were glued to the handsome but seemingly lifeless face of an old man seated on the *bimah*, facing the congregants. He was the Rabbi... He seemed to be living elsewhere, resigned, beyond hope, foundering in a faraway past, even, perhaps, into oblivion. Suddenly a mad thought crossed my mind: Something is about to happen; any moment now the Rabbi will wake up, shake himself, pound the pulpit and cry out, shout his pain, his rage, his truth. I felt tension building up inside me; the wait was becoming unbearable. But nothing happened. Nothing interrupted the solemn and disquieting *Kol Nidre* service. The old man remained a prisoner of his past, his fear. (*Zalmen* vii)

¹²Out of necessity, the English translations of these works (all originally in French) are used. However, references to the original compositions, as mentioned in English translations of Wiesel's other memoirs, will be used.

¹³Neither Wiesel nor any critical source gives a date for the French radio production, though *All Rivers* indicates it must have been shortly before the world premiere of the stage play in America (Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., during the 1973-1974 season).

¹⁴*Kol Nidre* is a ritualized declaration in preparation for the Day of Atonement, in which past and future vows are publicly renounced and nullified. "It refers to vows assumed by an individual for himself alone, where no other persons or interests are involved" (Birnbaum 490).

Before progressing further, it is important to explore the potentially traumatic origins of *Zalmen*. Wiesel, as a survivor of the Holocaust, no doubt interpreted the above anecdote through the framework of his own traumatic memories, reintegrated over decades through the processes of remembering, memorializing, and writing about them. The period of Soviet oppression of Russian Jews, also over decades, was no doubt a series of limit events that gave rise to traumas. However, as delineated in Chapter One, trauma is not the event or events themselves, but the *reaction* to them. There is evidence for at least one limit event (the night of the service), but no real evidence of a traumatic response, either on the individual or group levels. Wiesel's "mad thought" is an act of the imagination, placed eventually in the realm of dramatic and fictional possibility. Here is the point where Wiesel's attempt to portray collective traumatic memory to a larger audience becomes difficult; as there is no individual trauma displayed, there can be no carrier group. As will be seen, the trauma of *Zalmen* is ultimately shapeless and incommunicable, but nonetheless important to understanding Wiesel's attempts to portray trauma and traumatic memory theatrically.

Set in the mid 1950s, during the "Thaw" (early post-Stalin era), and during a time when "terror and silence still dominate the Jewish communities" (viii), *Zalmen* attempts to give the Rabbi from Wiesel's Russian encounter (called "Levin" in *All Rivers Run to the Sea*) a traumatic voice, instilled in him by God through the presumably mad title character. "...in my play I would seek to correct the injustice done to Rabbi Levin: on stage I would allow him to do what he never dared do. That would be my theme" (496-497). In the original radio play, the part of *Zalmen* was split between the title character and another beadle called Berle, who was comic and wise, but not mad.

In contrast to *The Trial of God*, *Zalmen* seems to draw very little inspiration from other works of literature or theatre; Wiesel notes in the first edition of the English version that it is “conceived as testimony rather than as a work of imagination” (*Zalmen* viii). As a result, the historical situation of a synagogue of Russian Jews in the mid 1950s are combined with the wish for an alternative story for Rabbi Levin to create the background for the play. The synagogue is headed by a council, with a key member (in this case, the Chairman) being under the watchful eye and direct control of the local Communist Party. The Inspector, who is “Commissar of Jewish Affairs at the Ministry of Culture” (*Zalmen* no page), tells this council of the arrival of foreign actors, two of whom are Jewish, for the synagogue’s *Kol Nidre* service. Both the Communist and Jewish contingents of the play are apprehensive that these actors will learn about the suffering of Russian Jews, particularly in that community.

Like *The Trial of God*, the events which inspired *Zalmen* have been treated in Wiesel’s earlier work. In *The Jews of Silence: A Personal Report on Soviet Jewry* (first published in English in 1966), the story of the Rabbi, whose full name was Yehuda-Leib Levin, and his community are told in greater detail than in the later memoir *All Rivers Run to the Sea*.¹⁵ It is clear from the earlier account that the foreign actors, unseen and unheard in *Zalmen*, stand in as a proxy for Wiesel himself. Wiesel recounts that he was first looked upon with suspicion, then with fascination.

It was when I began to pray aloud, in witless desperation, that the barriers fell. ... They listened closely, they drew nearer; their hearts opened. They crowded me. The crush was unbearable, but I loved it. And the questions poured out. Are there Jews in America? In Western Europe? Are they well off? Any news from Israel? ... All they

¹⁵In *The Jews of Silence*, however, little mention is made of the rabbi’s silence, and no mention is made of Wiesel’s mad thought that the rabbi would speak out about his suffering.

wanted was to hear me talk. They refused to answer my questions. “Better not ask,” said one. Another said the same. “We can’t say, we can’t talk,” said a third. Why not? “Because. It’s dangerous.” They turned to me with hunted looks. I could never be one of them, because I would never be in their place. The wall of fear had risen to cut us off. “Don’t talk,” one said to me. “Just pray. That is enough. How good it is to know there are young Jews in the world who still know how to pray.” (*Jews of Silence* 29-30)

This anecdote, combined and the one related above (about the Rabbi’s silence and Wiesel’s “mad thought”) make up the primary circumstances of the play. The Soviet Jewish community, despite the Thaw, are still oppressed by and afraid of the Communist agents who ensure their silence and separation from the larger Jewish world. They cannot speak of their suffering to people outside their ever-shrinking circle, and are afraid to speak it aloud even to each other. Outsiders are treated with extreme mistrust and ambivalence. The synagogue-goers in *The Jews of Silence* become the synagogue council in *Zalmen*. The council is made up of eight members: the Rabbi, the council Chairman, the Doctor, Chaim, Shmuel, Zender, and Motke. They are the representatives of a collective (the unseen congregation of the synagogue), though they themselves make up a collective as well. They also speak and act for the larger collective of the synagogue congregation. The collective of the council is one of loose cohesion, due to questions about the true motives and affiliations, namely, those of the Chairman and the Doctor.

The Chairman is continually visited by or called to visit Soviet Communist officials, and is assigned with the task of keeping the Jewish community in line with Soviet directives. He upholds tradition inasmuch as it keeps the peace between Jewish and Soviet factions. “Keep your confession for services. Go on. Arrange the table, the chairs. It’s going to be a short day” (8). He commands, even in small ways such as the arrangement of chairs, many of the rituals

that reify Jewish identity. He bemoans the tardiness of council members (7) to a meeting he himself has called, at the behest of his Soviet handlers. He explains the proverbial rules of the game, though he himself has no substantial power to create or change those rules, just the ritualistic trappings through which they are enacted. He is respected, but held at a distance because of his presumed collusion with the local Soviets.

Throughout the play, the council members interpret and reinterpret membership in the “community” (the synagogue) – who is part of it, who is not, who is welcome or unwelcome. Among the many examples of this continual interpretation of membership is the highly contentious relationship between the Chairman and the Doctor¹⁶. The Chairman says of him, “...he remains the outsider, the friendly outsider... [to the Doctor] Your detachment is offensive. You do nothing, you say nothing, you expect nothing – do you know what that means? That means you are not one of us!” (29-30). Upon hearing the news of foreign, Jewish actors coming for Yom Kippur Eve, similar tensions concerning the boundaries of community arise.

SHMUEL. Jews... Jewish actors...

MOTKE. Must be important people...

SRUL. Unbelievable, I tell you, unbelievable...

DOCTOR. Foreign Jews...

ZENDER. I had forgotten they exist.

RABBI. Foreign Jews but Jews nonetheless.

CHAIRMAN (*Harshly*). Foreigners who happen to be Jewish. [...]

¹⁶The stage directions also note concerning the Doctor: “Why has he joined the congregation? Out of disillusionment? Out of yearning for knowledge, for identity? His colleagues do not understand it; neither does he. They are suspicious of him, perhaps even envious. He is an outsider” (11). It is unclear whether these are Wiesel's own words.

MOTKE. I had started to think that we, in this forsaken town, were the last Jews on earth.

RABBI. So that's it, then. Tonight we'll see Jews who have come to see us from far away.

CHAIRMAN. Jews who will go back to wherever they came from. We remain. [...]

MOTKE. Let's make it a celebration.

SRUL. What an occasion, what an occasion!

CHAIRMAN. An occasion – yes – you're right. An occasion to keep quiet. Do you want a synagogue or not? Listen to me: Don't interfere with our guests – avoid them.

Don't embarrass them with complaints, don't try to arouse their pity. Leave them alone.

[...] This is no time for nostalgia. If you think we are going to throw ourselves into their arms, you are wrong. [...] They will be watched and so will we. (17-19)

The “wall of fear” and the persistence of silence are drawn from Wiesel's original experiences, and deliberately intensified. While such fear and silence are fictivized in *Zalmen*, and it is ultimately unclear whether they are traumatic or simply oppressive, and therefore not reflective of a historically-specific, collective trauma. In their silence, no member of the council (or indeed, any character in the play) specifically mentions the limit events which led to their group traumatization.

Other themes and tensions from Wiesel's earlier work become theatrical conventions in *Zalmen*. “Since I always need a madman to enliven my fictional landscape, I confronted the rabbi with a madman, whom I called Zalmen... His role was to act as a catalyst to the rabbi, urging and inciting him to go mad on the evening of Yom Kippur, to hurl the truth of his suffering into the face of an indifferent, complacent, and complicitous world” (*All Rivers* 497).

Silence (in which the truth is not accessible) and madness (in which the truth can be uttered) are opposite polarities, and there seems to be little ground between these two extremes.

Furthermore, the madman is a recurring character in a large number of Wiesel's works, first appearing as Moché¹⁷, the mad beadle, in *Night*, and recurring, after several literary permutations, as Hanna in *The Trial of God*.

The Trial of God (As It Was Held on February 25, 1649, in Shamgorod) was first published in 1979 in French as *Le Procès de Shamgorod*, but probably premiered at least one year prior to the French publication.¹⁸ The play was inspired by an incident that occurred while Wiesel was in Auschwitz (described in the introductory section of Chapter One); that story was related in several drafts and genres before arriving in its final dramatic form. Scholars have argued whether the play is really a theological work of “agnostic misotheism,” (Schweizer 17), a “theology of protest” (*ibid*), or “a modern re-reading of the Book of Job” (Bloomenthal 250), and whether the play represents “the inversion of worship, the negation of piety, and the farce of a religious morality play” (Schweizer 161). Despite disagreements about the nature of the play, it “enjoyed considerable success, thanks in part to the superb performances of the casts in Paris, Oslo, West Germany, and on numerous American university campuses” (Kolbert 40). Wiesel himself described it as “a tragic farce” (*Trial* 1).

It's a kind of Purimschpiel, [a] play that was customarily performed on Purim, the annual day of fools, children, and beggars... When I had written *Zalmen*, ...I thought it would be my only play. It's no longer in the [concentration] camp, it's somewhere else. It's no longer a tragedy but a comedy. It's a Purimschpiel. And the only way to do such a *Purimschpiel*, as a Purmischpiel, is a play. You can indict God on Yom Kippur; it's a

¹⁷Sometimes rendered as “Moshe,” “Moishe,” or “Moshele.”

¹⁸There are no publications by Wiesel that specify a premiere date.

tragedy. But indict God on Purim, it's not even a tragedy. It's much more. It goes one step beyond. It's laughter, philosophical laughter, metaphysical laughter. (Wiesel *Conversations* 79)

As indicated above, *The Trial of God* has significant thematic, character, and plot connections to the Book of Job, as well as Kafka's *The Trial*. "[T]he book of Job and *The Trial of God*... are both silent on the religious nature of life after suffering. In both works, abuse has traumatized the text into a deep silence" (Bloomenthal 256). *Job*, specifically, details the *continual* suffering of an individual and his family – a leitmotif very much present in Jewish history and collective understanding.

As to why the play is set during the Chiemlemski Pogroms of 1648-1659, Wiesel has only stated that it "didn't work" set during the Holocaust (*Conversations* 79). That does not undercut the Holocaust as the seminal limit event which led to *The Trial of God's* creation; it is clear that the inspiration from the play was drawn from a particular event Wiesel experienced in Auschwitz, though it is conspicuously absent in *Night*. Arguments concerning *The Trial of God's* "agnostic misotheism" are also discredited by the play's relationship to Wiesel's lifelong faith:

As a child in Sighet I would repeat my prayers; daily rituals contain their own miracles. I still believe this. But today it is their human dimension that matters to me. "And God in all this?" asks one of my characters in *The Trial of God*. I would answer: the very question contains the miracle. What is a question if not the element that allows a human being to transcend himself? A morning prayer tells us: "Every day the Creator renews His creation." In other words, miracles abound, only man is sometimes blind. (*Never Full* 376)

The Trial of God attempts to deal with certain theological questions that have been persistent in Wiesel's mind.

I think back to Job's children, those he was given as a reward after the test God and Satan had made him endure. What did they think of the problems their parents had endured? And of the innocent brothers and sisters who had been sacrificed because, on high, there had been some doubt of Job's piety? Did they try to find out who their elder siblings had been? ...In my play *The Trial of God*... I have Job return so that we may hear his protest. Does faith in God always, invariably, do honor to God? In other words, is religious fanaticism also a path that leads to God, and is that what He desires? (*Never Full* 379-380)

Job's children may be represented or suggested by (if not completely analogous to) the innkeeper Berish, his daughter Hanna, and Berish's Christian servant, Maria. Berish proclaims, "I want to understand why He is giving strength to the killers and nothing but tears and the shame of helplessness to the victims" (*Trial* 43). Hanna, the victim of rape trauma during the first Shamgorod pogrom, is described by Wiesel as "Mad? Absent. Humiliated, stained. Young, fragile" (*Trial*, no page).

There is evidence from interviews with Wiesel, as well as other literary analyses, that the three minstrels (Medel, Avrémel, and Yankel) are suggestive of the first three Hebrew Patriarchs, who were first treated in *Ani Ma'amin*. According to literary theorist and critic Rosemary Horowitz:

Ani Ma'amin [the choral piece that preceded *The Trial of God*] is in the form of an extended dialogue between the patriarchs and God. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob call God to account for the suffering of the Jewish people during the *Shoah* [sic]. As witnesses,

the patriarchs plead with God to intervene. A chorus, comprised of the Jewish people throughout history, laments, asking the age-old questions of theodicy, what is the source of evil, does suffering have a meaning, and when will the agony cease. Nevertheless, and in spite of the entreaties of the patriarchs and the lamentations of the chorus, God remains silent. The Patriarchs, however, refuse to silence their protests. (78-79)

Ani Ma'amin is structured much like *The Trial of God*, in that the three who question God are observers (and in the case of *The Trial of God*, judges of a *din Torah*). However, the three minstrels, unlike the Patriarchs, are also victims of a collective traumatic experience, not merely witnesses. Still other theorists, especially those outside the Jewish faith such as Jacob Friesenhahn (7-8), have interpreted either Sam (who is revealed to be Samael of the Talmud, or Satan in a more general biblical understanding) or the three minstrels, all initially defenders of a rationalistic God inseparable from a traditional theodicy, as suggestive of Job's friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Regardless of exact analogies, all of these biblical figures have had substantial influence on the characters in *The Trial of God*.

There are also thematic and structural aspects of *The Trial of God* that are very similar to the work of Franz Kafka, particularly his 1925 novel *The Trial*. Not only does Wiesel, at different times in his life and writing, cite Kafka as one of his greatest inspirations, but the continual reinterpretation and dialectic relationship between Kafka's work and the Book of Job is nearly indisputable. Northrop Frye called Kafka's *The Trial* "a kind of 'midrash' [homiletic story] on the Book of Job"¹⁹, (195)²⁰, even going so far as to claim Kafka's collected works "form a series of commentaries on the Book of Job" (Anatomy 42). The courtroom metaphor (that is,

¹⁹For an extensive study on the traumatic nature of *Job*, see theologian Dan Mathewson's *Death and Survival in the Book of Job: Desymbolization and Traumatic Experience* (2006).

²⁰See also Sussman (59), as well as the commentary of theologians like Scholem (212-213), and Rosenzweig (160).

metaphor in keeping with Lakoff and Johnson's understanding) is equally persistent (but of varying implicitness) in the Book of Job, *The Trial*, and *The Trial of God*. Lasine, a German literature scholar, notes,

...the Book of Job and [*The Trial*] both employ an extended legal metaphor to involve the reader in making basic decisions concerning moral agency. However, this comparative analysis also has significant implications for the interpretation of [*The Trial*] itself. Kafka scholars usually assume that K.'s guilt must stem from either his deeds or his very being. [However,] the guilt attracting the court is generated by K.'s absolute failure to live as a personally responsible, yet social, human being-in Biblical terms, his failure to do justice (Mic. 6:8). From this perspective the court is a sensitive moral agency designed to give K. the opportunity to undergo a moral metamorphosis; it is neither an oppressive, bureaucratic organization nor even a representative of strict, absolute justice without mercy. (195)

Lasine's and, it would seem, Kafka's conclusions about moral agency and personal responsibility echo the defense of God presented by Sam/Satan in *The Trial of God*:

I do not dispute the events, but consider them to be highly irrelevant to the case before us, Your Honor. I do not deny that blood was shed and that life was extinguished, but I am asking the question: Who is to blame for all that? After all, the situation seems to me simple indeed: men and women and children were massacred by other men. Why involve, why implicate their Father in Heaven? ...When human beings kill one another, where is God to be found?²¹ You see Him among the killers. I find Him among the

²¹Friesenhahn astutely notes this question is "often associated with Wiesel's *Night*" (8). Cf *Night* (82-83).

victims. ...Are you suggesting that the Almighty is on the side of the killer? (*Trial of God 128-129*)

While the metatheatrical is merely hinted at in *Zalmen* (with the unseen actors), it is an outright convention in *The Trial of God*. While the trial is considered morally “real” (that is, having full moral implications despite being a “mock” trial) and in fact continues beyond the events of the play (158), it is set within the boundaries of a *purimschpiel*. Berish says at the end of Act One, “You want to perform in honor of Purim? Good, let’s stage a trial! Against whom? Imbeciles, haven’t you understood yet? Against the Master of the universe! Against the Supreme Judge! That is the spectacle you shall stage tonight. It is that or nothing” (55). Within the triply theatrical frame of the play, the play within the play, and the holiday protections against blasphemy provided by the tradition of the *purimschpiel*, Mendel replies, ending the act, “Tonight we will be free to say everything. To command, to imagine everything – even our impossible victory” (56).

Hannah is likened (by Wiesel and the minstrels in the play) to Queen Esther, the central character in the story of Purim (89), and by the third act she is invited to play Esther as part of the holiday celebration.

Hanna [as Queen Esther]: And where are my brothers and sisters? Those that need me? Those whom I must save? Where are they? I want to see them! Their children with their innocent voices... their old men with their words of wisdom... their brides, their grooms... Where are they? Dead? Esther has not saved them. No one has. Poor queen. Again, she was lied to.

Yankel: But it's not in the book.

Sam: Then it's in another book...

Hanna: But I hear music. Laughter. Shouts of happiness. I hear a father and a mother wishing each other *mazel tov*. I hear a voice, mine perhaps, yelling, “Arye-Leib, Arye Leib...”

Mendel: Poor Queen Esther. She remembers Hanna. (149-150)

Hanna's taking on of a character is exemplary of one of the primary modes through which traumatic memory, however fragmentary (as it certainly is above), is accessed and interpreted throughout the play. The second is a confessional mode, which emerges mainly during the trial sequence, and involves the act of stepping out of character.

Each of the Jewish characters in the play has experienced a trauma linked to a pogrom in their home village, and these traumas are in some way linked to Sam, though it is ultimately unclear how.

BERISH. I have a strange feeling of having seen you somewhere – here perhaps...

YANKEL. Me too. Perhaps in Drohobitz?

SAM. Perhaps.

AVREMEL. Perhaps in Amdour?

SAM. Perhaps.

YANKEL. In Kamenetz? Yes, in Kamenetz.

BERISH. Here.

SAM. It's possible. (114)

Each of the cities mentioned in this passage (as well as Shamgorod) has both a traumatic and a historical significance; they were all sites of anti-Jewish pogroms during the Chmielnicki Uprising, starting in 1648. The limit events of the minstrels in *The Trial of God* are actual, historical limit events, lending historical and affective weight to the fictive traumas of the play.

It is indicated here and elsewhere throughout the third act that, wherever a past limit event occurred, Sam was present, just as he is present during the pogrom at the end of the play. “Sam is not only associated with the Shamgorod pogrom; he is also consistently suspected of having been at other pogroms” (Faulstick 295). Whether his presence is a metaphor for the cause of the traumas or for the traumas themselves is ultimately unclear to the other characters.

Through the course of Acts Two and Three, the individual traumas of Berish, Hanna, Maria, Avremel, and Mendel are revealed in a confession-like mode. Avremel reveals his past life as a *Mesader Kiddushin* (non-rabbinical marriage officiant), in addition to having been a jester and minstrel.

AVREMEL. Do you know that occasionally people got married simply because I happened to be there? Even after, even during the pogrom, I ran through the streets and the market places, through the cemeteries, calling, “Hey, good people, is there no wedding being planned? How about a marriage celebration while I am here?” I made the living cry. As for the dead, I may have made them laugh.

MENDEL (*Dreaming*). And God in all this?

AVREMEL. I don't know. Was He laughing or crying? (64-65)

Avremel was offering wedding services to both the living and the dead, reminding the living that such ceremonies (ritualized meaning-systems) have lost meaning and purpose in a post-traumatic reality. Avremel was also one who gives formal congratulations during occasions of good fortune, composing songs and proclamations at times that, in light of the traumatic circumstances, were deemed inappropriate. He was also an upholder of the rules under which society functions (moral, ethical, and procedural meaning-systems) before the limit events, even when those rules no longer have a perceivable use. He assumes this role again during the trial

sequence of the play. “We must follow the rules. You may judge someone in his absence but not in the absence of his attorney” (71). Avremel continues to insist on compliance with even the smallest rules of the court, admonishing Berish not to scratch his beard or raise his voice to the judges, and to address each judge as “Your Honor” (*ibid*). It is also Avremel who is the most insistent about the necessity of a defense attorney, even going so far as to claim the trial cannot go on without one. He continues to defend the traditional conventions of the *purimschpiel* (e.g., singing songs, wearing masks, employing humor, and assigning biblical roles) until the very end of the play, when their death during a second Shamgorod pogrom is imminent. As this second pogrom begins, he calls upon Sam to save them, because that, to him, is what did and should happen in the order of things. As the pogrom approaches the inn, he says to Sam, “You are a messenger; do something! ...Order the angels to come to our rescue! ...Think of Hanna – save her! Think of us – Save us!” (160)

Mendel's traumatic memory also involves a pogrom, but in the town of Zhironov, from where he claims to have recognized Sam (146). His recollection is more indicative of an individual traumatic memory.

Sabbath morning. A crowded synagogue – more crowded than usual. I stood on the bimah before the open scrolls and read. That Shabbat we read the commandment to celebrate our holidays in joy. I had hardly finished the sentence when the doors were pushed open. The mob took over. The killers were laughing. I remember the laughing as I remember their shiny swords. Minutes later, it was all over. Not one Jew cried out; we didn't have the time. As I heard the echo of my own words: “And you shall celebrate your holidays in joy” – I found myself without a community. I was still standing; I stood throughout the slaughter. Standing before the open parchments. Why was I spared? Is it

possible they failed to see me because I was standing? I saw blood, only blood. I felt swept by madness. I whispered over and over again: “And you shall celebrate your holidays in joy, in joy, in joy.” And I backed out and left. (146-147)

Mendel's account is more typical of our current understanding of individual traumatic memory – more typical than Hanna's, Berish's, or Maria's for a number of reasons. Certain fragmentary aspects of the traumatic memory (primarily sensory stimuli such as the laughter, the shininess of the swords, the blood, the echo of his own voice, and the scriptural line) are fixated upon and intrude upon the present. Other aspects of traumatic memory, such as an altered sense of the passage of time (it is debatable whether the slaughter of a full synagogue could have taken only a few minutes) and the circumstances that led to Mendel being spared, are glossed over in the retelling, because they were not filtered into the initial traumatic memory.

Berish and Maria relate their traumas, which are inherently linked to Hanna's rape trauma during the pogrom one year before the events of the play. Berish voices his traumatic memories in fragments, often in a way that covers over the extreme affect of the limit event. Maria fills in the gaps of Berish's fragmented story, but cannot readily bring herself to identify as a victim of trauma. Berish begins to confess the trauma he and Hanna experienced.

BERISH. There is none [no defense attorney]...but who is to blame for that? His [God's] defenders? He killed them! He massacred his friends and allies! He could have spared Reb Shmuel the dayan, and Reb Yehuda Leib the cantor, and Reb Borukh the teacher, Hersh the sage, and Meilekh the shoemaker! He could have taken care of those who loved Him with all their hearts and believed in Him – in Him alone! Whose fault is it if the earth has become inhabited by assassins – by assassins alone?...

MENDEL. And Hanna? (*Pause*) And Hanna in all this?

BERISH. Yes, Hanna...Hanna, my daughter. I wanted to have the trial on her behalf. You have seen her. She is barely alive; you can't call that living. She sleeps, she sighs, she eats, she listens she smiles; she is silent: something in her is silent. She speaks silently, she weeps silently; she remembers silently, she screams silently. At times I am seized by a mad desire to destroy everything around me. Then I look at her again, closer, and a strange kindness comes over me; I feel like saving the world. (104)

Berish speaks in what, under non-traumatic circumstances, would be contradictions (speaking silently and screaming silently), indicating he either cannot completely comprehend Hanna's trauma, or he cannot suitably express it. He also stops just short of expressing his own, instead conveying his extreme and conflicting emotions (anger and kindness). In the above passage, Berish does not employ any metaphorical descriptors.

Berish, Hanna, and Maria's traumas are confessed by Maria before the trial begins, shortly before the beginning of Act Three.

MARIA. We were getting ready to celebrate Hanna's wedding... Then *they* arrived. They broke everything. Pillaged all the rooms. Killed the two boys, Hayim and Sholem [Hanna's brothers]. Slaughtered all the [more than 100] guests. Beheaded the mistress of the house. And Hanna – they began torturing Hanna. They did things to the poor child. It lasted for hours and hours. (*She stops*)

MENDEL. Please, Maria, go on.

MARIA. That's all you need to know. That's all there *is* to know.

MENDEL. And the innkeeper?

MARIA. I don't understand.

MENDEL. You told me what happened to Hanna, her brothers and their mother – but not what *they* did to their father.

MARIA. The master fought them with all his strength; he used a hatchet, kitchen knives and clubs; he wounded a few assailants, but he was outnumbered: one against twenty, thirty – more.

MENDEL. Then? What happened then?

MARIA. Nothing.

MENDEL. Go on, Maria! I'm ordering you to continue!

MARIA. I refuse to obey your orders! (*Becomes humble again*) They tied him to the table. Poured wine and alcohol into his throat. And forced him to look.

MENDEL. So he looked. What did he see?

MARIA. I don't know what he saw. Even if I knew, I wouldn't tell you. You have imagination? Use it. Imagine the worst.

MENDEL. I prefer knowing.

MARIA. It's your problem. ...

MENDEL. We want to know, Maria. We must. Perhaps we have been sent here tonight for the sole purpose of learning what happened.

MARIA. You may try, but you'll never succeed. Nobody will. Look here, I was there – and I don't know.

MENDEL. Did you see the innkeeper?

MARIA. Yes, I saw him. I saw what he saw. I cried. I howled like a thousand howling dogs. Not that it mattered. The mob was amused. Excited. The louder I yelled, the more they enjoyed what they were doing.

MENDEL. And the innkeeper?

MARIA. He twisted and twisted; he looked and looked, and I shouted and yelled, and the beasts sneered, and little Hanna was covered with blood. Did she know who assaulted her first? And how many followed? It lasted an hour or two, and more, it lasted a whole lifetime, and they left.

MENDEL. You stayed.

MARIA. Of course I did. (105-107)

This passage is quoted in full to highlight several important points about the limit event – the murder of the Jewish wedding-goers, and Hanna's gang rape which Maria watches and Berish is forced to watch). Maria alternates between refusing to remember and claiming she either cannot remember or did not see what occurred, then admits, “I saw what he saw.” When her traumatic memories are revealed, they are remarkably clear and detailed, not fragmented, as is usually the case with traumatic memories. Nor do these memories seem to be laden with the affect that Maria experienced during the event itself, as is also typical with fragmented traumatic memory. On the one hand, Maria's traumatic memory appears to follow an alternative psychological model, most often associated with child victims; she is able “to retrieve detailed and full memories afterward” and seems “able to remember more from a single event than are the adults who observed the same event” (Terr 309). On the other hand, her emotional response, contrary to similar passages in the play, is bereft of exclamation points and has fewer superlatives, indicating emotional constriction. “...the constrictive process [results] not in complete amnesia but in the formation of a truncated memory, devoid of emotion and meaning” (Herman 46). However, Herman also notes “that a constrictive process also [keeps] traumatic memories out of normal consciousness, allowing only a fragment of the memory to emerge as an intrusive

symptom” (45). While the clinical aspects of Maria's trauma are important, what is also important (perhaps more important) is that Maria's trauma is filtered through Wiesel's understanding and interpretation as a trauma victim. From the standpoint of personal understanding, Wiesel was no doubt drawing upon his own traumatic memories and those conveyed to him in real life circumstances. At the same time, Wiesel was no doubt balancing the verisimilitude of traumatic memories he had experienced and the dramatic effectiveness of those traumatic memories in the context of plot, dialogue, and predicted audience response.

Maria's narrative is also an expression of a collective trauma, starting with a limit event witnessed and experienced by three people (Hanna, Maria, and Berish). It is not merely collective because it was witnessed and experienced by multiple people; the subjective nature of the limit experience, after all, is unique to each individual. Nor is it merely because they are closely associated to each other. These two factors are instrumental in the formation of this particular collective trauma. The collective nature of the trauma is found in the way in which the three characters share the interpretive burden, by re-experiencing memories together and assisting each other in recollection.

Berish and Hanna reinterpret Maria's traumatic memory. Berish employs metaphor, comparing the historical, potential trauma²² of Shushan (found in the Book of Esther) with the trauma of Shamgorod. Hanna has taken on the Purim character of Queen Esther, and is recognized by the other characters at the trial as a blending of herself and the queen, holding the memories of both. (150)

²²It is also remotely possible that Berish is referring to another historic limit event in the destruction of Shushan near the end of the Persian occupation of the city, though continual references to the character and Book of Esther make this less likely than the alternative above.

HANNA. The queen is dead, and yet it is the most beautiful day in her life. Remember, Maria? (*Hanna seems happy*)

BERISH. She remembers, and so do I. ... They killed Arye-Leid [Hanna's fiancée]. And his old father. And the witnesses to the wedding. And the rabbis who were about to perform the ceremony. And the musicians. The guests. They killed and killed... and I remember, I remember...

MENDEL. Go on, innkeeper. Shamgorod, Drohobitz, Zhironov, they are all alike. We must tell the tale, we must remember. Tell us everything. We shall remember.

BERISH. You have heard enough. But not all.

AVREMEL. I listen to you, innkeeper, and I imagine Purim without the miracle of Purim. And I know everything.

BERISH. Imagine the Jews of Shushan – and Shamgorod – mutilated, knifed, disfigured, thrown into the street, into the mud. Imagine their Queen Esther – so sweet and trusting, pure and radiant, imagine her covered with blood and dirt, imagine her lying on the floor with drunkards waiting in line... Can you imagine?

MENDEL. I do not have to imagine; I *know*. (151)

The case for the pogrom of Shamgorod as a collective trauma is quite strong given the above evidence. The memories of several people (Hanna, Berish, Avremel, and Mendel) are working in concert to interpret the limit event at Shamgorod. Memory for the event is being communicated effectively to an empathetic audience (or carrier group) that “must remember,” “shall remember,” and “knows.” The use of the Esther-Hanna rape metaphor, in light of this “knowing,” is shown to be similarly effective. Further evidence of collective trauma is found in the formation of two “stable pairs” – Berish and Hanna, and Berish and Maria. “...the

overwhelming majority of survivors [of concentration camps] became part of a 'stable pair', a loyal buddy relationship of mutual sharing and protection, leading to the conclusion that the pair, rather than the individual, was the 'basic unit of survival'" (Herman 91-92). This unit of survival provided the basis for progressively larger groups of camp inmates, groups that fall under the definition of collective, the coherence of which is determined by participation through communication (Luchterhand 251). The stable pair of Berish and Hanna (or Berish and Maria) is built upon as Mendel, Avremel, and Yankel begin to participate in their social circle, forming a larger collective that comes to interpret traumatic memories through the similarity of shared experience and the group reassembly of fragmented meaning-systems.

The memories recalled and interpreted by what could be called (for lack of better terms) the Hanna-Berish-Maria and the Mendel-Yankel-Avremel collectives, provide strong examples of traumatic versions of socially distributed remembering and the group cognitions that interpret those memories. Both collectives, given at least the most basic level of cohesiveness necessary for collaborative recall, exhibit an "extended cognition based on the complementarity of inner and outer resources, by which neural, bodily, social, and environmental resources with disparate but complementary properties are integrated into hybrid cognitive systems, transforming or augmenting the nature of remembering" (Sutton, et al. 521). Remembering is "scaffolded" and both "intracranial and extracranial" in most cases, because "sharing and renegotiating the past in company is a mundane and significant feature of our lives" (545). This seems especially true of traumatic memories, that are, in the instance of Wiesel's plays, recalled and interpreted primarily through collective collaboration. Further indication of the vitality of a socially distributed model of memory, at least in the case of traumatic memory, may be found in the efficacy of group therapy in the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress (Herman 186).

Regardless of whether a socially distributed model is indicative of normative memory, it provides an essential framework for collective trauma and collective traumatic memory. In this model, preexisting cohesion of the collective can exist, but is not necessary, according to Sutton:

Encoding can be shared or unshared, and where it is shared, this can be due to mere accident (as when a number of bystanders happen to witness the same incident on a street corner) or to a history of joint action. Retrieval can occur in isolation (in various ways and for various purposes), or under a range of increasingly collaborative conditions with other people, in groups of varying size, function, and durability. (Sutton, et al. 545)

In addition, the vocalized collaborative recall of traumas from both of these collectives has also formed a new collectivity, made up of the six characters. The collaborative voicing of traumatic memory solidifies the membership in the new collective, increases cohesion, and allows for the further voicing of traumatic memories. Mendel no longer has to imagine the traumas of Hanna, Berish, and Maria, he now *knows* those traumas (Wiesel *Trial of God* 151). This cohesion brought about by collaborative interpretation allows Berish to identify once again with a Jewish community. It also allows the continuation of the trial beyond the lives of the initial court members – because of the creation of the potential to voice the traumas of ever larger Jewish collectives to ever larger carrier groups, conveying the larger narrative of Jewish suffering.

MENDEL. So – it is going to start all over again. Jews and their enemies will face one another once more. And then? Purim will be over. Who will continue the thread of our tale? The last page will not be written. But the one before? It is up to us to prepare testimony for future generations. Thus I am asking you for the last time: What about the trial? The verdict?

BERISH. As far as I'm concerned, the trial will go on. I haven't changed; I'm not going to change now.

MENDEL. The end is near, and you refuse to forgive?

BERISH. I lived as a Jew, and it is as a Jew that I shall die – and it is as a Jew that, with my last breath, I shall shout my protest to God! And because the end is near, I shall shout louder! Because the end is near, I'll tell Him that He's more guilty than ever! (*Mendel smiles and turns to the defense attorney for his final remarks*) (156)

The end of the play suggests the death of everyone in the inn is imminent, with the possible exceptions of Sam and Maria. As a result, there is a question: how will the trial go on? Who is left to provide, much less continue, the traumatic narrative? Will Maria live to continue to narrate Jewish suffering from the fringes of (just outside) that community? Will Sam continue to defend God? A positive answer to these last two questions seems unlikely. Is it possible that each generation of Jews who experience traumatic suffering must continue this trial, as Berish indicates shortly before the end of the play? It is also possible that, despite the vocalization of trauma to a slightly larger collective (the five Jews and Maria), the interpretation of traumatic memory failed to reach a larger carrier group in the form of the Gentile community, many of whom are bent on destruction of the last Jews in Shamgorod? Considering the presumptive nature of Sam, who is finally called Satan in the concluding moments of the play, this latter alternative seems the most likely.

YANKEL. It's Purim. Let's wear our masks! (*The three judges put theirs on. Sam pulls his out of his pocket and raises it to his face. All shout in fear, and Satan speaks to them, laughing*)

SAM. So – you took me for a saint, a Just? Me? How could you be that blind? How could you be that stupid? If only you knew, if only you knew... (*Satan is laughing. He lifts his arms as if to give a signal. At that precise moment the last candle goes out, and the door opens, accompanied by deafening and murderous roars*) (161)

The last stage direction strongly indicates that Sam/Satan was not only present for the past pogroms, but either caused or assisted in them. What ends the traumatic voicing, and keeps it from being communicated to a potentially empathetic carrier group is what Wiesel has called elsewhere “ontological evil” (Alexander “Moral Universals” 31).

With major influences, literary connections, and trauma introduced, instances of individual and collective traumas can be analyzed in each of the plays. Using Lakoff and Johson’s notion of metaphor, which construct coherent realities (especially social realities) within sets of past and future circumstances through inferring and categorizing modes of behavior, we may ask which conventions, activities, and types of language are *metaphorical for* traumatic experience and memory. In *Zalmen*, these metaphors are centered around the idea of madness, and augmented by the ideas of oppression, God, and community. In *The Trial of God*, they are centered around the metatheatricity of the trial, the connection between performer/audience and actor/character, and in the interchanges of the prosecution and defense.

II.3 ZALMEN AND GOD’S MADNESS AS A FAILED MODEL OF INDIVIDUAL TRAUMATIC MEMORY

Since the subtitle of the play is *The Madness of God*, it stands to reason madness is central to both the theatrical nature of the play and the traumatic experience of the characters. It is noted

above how prominently the madman figures into Wiesel's testimonial and fictional works. "Why do I write?" asks Wiesel in one essay. "Perhaps in order not to go mad. Or, on the contrary, to touch the bottom of madness" ("Why I Write" 200). In other words, madness in the writings of Wiesel is never *just* madness.

Clearly, madness in the case of *Zalmen* is not just a debilitating state of mind, but a complex metaphor for something vital to Wiesel's writing and the workings of his theatrical characters. In *Night*, Moché the Beadle's madness serves as a nexus of mystical faith, a source of wisdom for 12 year-old Eliezer, and a portent of the coming Holocaust. "You don't understand... I wanted to come back to Sighet to tell you the story of my death. So that you could prepare yourselves while there was still time. ...I wanted to come back, and to warn you" (*Night* 17). Madness also seems inseparable from the idea of God.²³ In *Zalmen*, madness opens the door for traumatic recollection, while revealing the struggle between partially co-opted religious traditions that would encourage that recollection, and Soviet-Communist edicts that attempt to silence them. Through Act One, madness is the absence, or at least the overcoming, of fear and silence, and is centralized in the title character.

Zalmen wants to "push [the Rabbi] into madness" (152), an act which the title character believes will allow the voicing of the suffering the Rabbi and his community have had to endure in silence. To Zalmen, madness is the speaking of the truth, and the creativity necessary to find the right words to speak. Madness is creative rather than destructive, healing rather than sickening. In the climactic moments of the first act, Zalmen implores the Rabbi:

You lack imagination, Rabbi! You've lost hope. That's bad enough, but worse – you've closed yourself to imagination! That's unforgivable, Rabbi! For we are the imagination

²³In *Zalmen*, it is ultimately unclear whether the "madness of God" is God's madness or madness *bestowed by* God, or both.

and madness of the world – we are imagination gone mad. One has to be mad today to believe in God and in man – one has to be mad to believe. One has to be mad to remain human. Be mad, Rabbi, be mad! ... You're afraid – I know. Don't be – not tonight. Madness is an answer to fear. Become mad tonight and fear will shatter at your feet, harmless and wretched. ... Tear out your fear by the root! Let it not become your night and your universe, your silence and your lie – or what is worse, your truth, your God!

(79-80)

Madness is also one extreme on a spectrum, cohabiting with belief, faith, God, truth, remembrance, and the voicing of memories that may or may not be traumatic in nature. On the other end of that spectrum is silence, fear, oppression, and the inability to find the truth.

Madness overtakes the Rabbi in his *Kol Nidre* sermon.

(He rises, and suddenly he seems taller, majestic. On the pulpit, to the right of the Ark, a candle is lit. Zalmen removes a tallith from its bag and drapes it over the old man's shoulder's) Tonight, as last year and the year before, I shall recite the ancient prayer of the oppressed, the persecuted, the prisoners of silence: *Kol Nidre, Veessorei, Vekinuyei, Vekonamei...* We proclaim ourselves free from false promises, from vows taken under duress. What we have said is now unsaid. We aspire to a moment of truth, and if that truth shall bring us nothing but tears, so be it. But our bonds shall not be bonds and only by our tears shall we abide. *(There is a change of lighting. Sounds. Zalmen moves into the background. One gets the feeling of being in the synagogue – one can hear the noise of the crowd)* I say and I proclaim – I say and I proclaim – that it is more than we can bear! You, our brothers who see us now, hear the last cries of a shattered community! To you I say: The sparks are dying and our heritage, our very destiny are covered with

dust. Broken are the wings of the eagle, the lion is ill. And I say and I proclaim to any who will listen that the Torah here is in peril and the spirit of the whole people is being crushed! (*A hush falls over the hall. One of the guards moves quickly to extinguish the candles. Some of the congregants are seen backing away toward the exit; others merely lower their heads in shame*) And all the sufferings... the faith, the obstinate and desperate courage, the allegiance to a covenant three thousand years old will have been for nothing... for nothing. If we allow this to continue, if you, our brothers, forsake us, we will be the last of the Jews in this land, the last witnesses, the last of the Jews who in silence bury the Jew within them. And know this, brothers who leave without having spoken to us, that so much silence is breaking my heart, that hope has deserted me. Know that it is more than I can bear, it is more than I can bear... (81-83)

Once the suffering is spoken, madness transforms into a description of potentially traumatic responses, especially the emotions that accompany them.

Sentences tear apart inside me. Words are drained of meaning, they fly away, disperse and fall on me like enemies. They strangle me...the words. Those I speak and those I omit. And all the others, those I have warped, mutilated, debased – now they take vengeance... (*Delirious*) Sheer madness, pure and impure madness, dark madness, liberating madness, salutary madness... Let it come – I won't resist anymore. I'll welcome it with open arms. May it lend me its voice... its darkness... its force. ...*Kol Nidre?* Madness. The sermon...what sermon? I didn't hear any sermons. All I heard was madness – and soon it will all be over. (96-97)

The problem with these reactions being traumatic, at least from a theatrical perspective, is that there is no delineated limit event to which trauma is a reaction. By Act Two, during which the

above monologue takes place, madness has become both the description and experience of suffering, whether it is traumatic or not, on the individual and collective levels. Verbal expression, once accelerated, is now limited; extreme affect and fixation are present, and passive suicidality appears, seemingly without cause, in the final lines of this passage. The Rabbi's relationship with his community, like his relationship with words, is broken. Madness here is metaphorical for not only the voicing of trauma, but the full realization of traumatic reality. While traumatic memory has been liberated through madness, those memories are now part of the Rabbi's tragic reality. Furthermore, meaning has been almost controverted – madness is simultaneously “pure” and “impure,” “dark” and “liberating.” The *Kol Nidre*, a public, community declaration charged with emotion, memory, and hope for the future, is now nothing more to the Rabbi than “madness.”

The Chairman, now turning on his Soviet superiors in Act Two, speaks to the interrogators in defense of the Rabbi, delivering two very telling lines concerning the nature of fear and the potentially traumatic responses which have destroyed his community. “Fear corrects memory and my people are afraid!” (103) Once again, fear is set up as something that corrupts, destroys, silences, and fragments memory. His line one page later not only predicts the ultimate destruction of his community, but also comes closer than any other line to pinpointing the limit event which led to the trauma.

I am the last of my family, but he is the last of a tradition; he is the last Rabbi of this community...If God wishes this town to be without Jews, so be it. But can you imagine what it means to him? Do you know what it means to be the last teacher, the last messenger, the last believer? What it means to realize one's truth will be lost and one's ideals forgotten? Do you know what it means to witness silently, day after day, week

after week, the disappearance – ...the distortion – of one’s faith, one’s image, one’s past in front of everyone’s eyes?” (106-107)

The limit event, inasmuch as it can be called a single event, is the continual disintegration of Jewish community and identity – part and parcel with the destruction of meaning systems that circumscribe the past, define the present, and negotiate the future. Without these meaning systems, the collective disintegrates. With fewer and fewer Jews left to tell the story of the community, the community begins to vanish and lose meaning. What has happened is not just the destruction of one’s individual faith, but also the destruction of those mechanisms which allow for the interaction between the individual and the public. “Disappearance” or “distortion,” while initially a private trauma, is *witnessed by another*, and takes place “in front of everyone’s eyes,” thereby becoming a collective trauma. The question then becomes, by whom and for how long will this trauma be recognized?

The process of madness, typified by the Rabbi and Zalmen, provides the clearest metaphorical link with the individual and collective traumas of the play. The oppression of this particular synagogue by the Soviets, the death of families such as the Chairman's in pogroms, the continual erosion of community cohesion, the silencing of individual voices of suffering (particularly the Rabbi’s), and the prohibition of expression to a larger audience and culture (the foreign Jewish actors) make up limit events. Problematically, responses to these events are marked by a silence almost synonymous with either the inability or unwillingness to access memory. The community, while eroding, is also isolated, with some members even thinking there are no other Jews left. Though, as Wiesel remarked in an interview, “the role of the survivor was to testify,” this community has no one to testify *to*. The speech act is perpetually

interrupted by the lack of a willing carrier group. Even amongst themselves, the causes of suffering are not mentioned, except by Zalmen and the Rabbi, starting at the end of Act One.

Madness moves from being a blessing from God, which allows suffering to be vocalized, to the realization that that suffering is unending. A familiar leitmotif in Wiesel's work is that the blessings of God are not always things to rejoice over. In self-professed madness, the Rabbi realizes that his own way of life, along with that of the community he leads, has lost all meaning and is ending. The meaning systems integral to the Jewish religious practices of that community (e.g., the giving of sermons, expressions of suffering, acts of mourning) are fragmented beyond repair. In brief, the prospect of madness begins as hope and the reality of madness ends as the realization of meaninglessness.

It could be asserted that the madness of *Zalmen* is also a model of individual trauma without any chance for recovery, because madness does not provide a description of efficacious future action. This is evident in two major ways. The first is that madness (a kind of “symbolic system”) is brought to bear on a “nonsymbolic system” (in this case, the Soviet system of oppression which runs afoul of Jewish traditions). The second is the synoptic, processual nature of the “madness” metaphor. Madness, first proposed by Zalmen, then embodied and experienced by the Rabbi, who then reveals it as synonymous with the full realization of hopelessness in suffering, is “a structure in synoptic form” (Geertz 93).

The “symptomatology” of the Rabbi's madness can be viewed partially through the clinical lens of individual trauma, which reveals it to be much more pronounced than most of the traumatic “symptoms” found in *The Trial of God*. The symptoms are revealed in the second act, by the stage directions and during the Rabbi's interrogation by the Inspector and the Police Official. The stage directions at the beginning of the act detail his physical appearance. “Having

performed his sacrificial act, he looks spent. Glassy-eyed, seemingly detached, he listens to the questions, and answers in a tired, resigned voice” (87). He describes his mental state during the sermon he spoke at the end of the first act as “...a moment of unconsciousness, of falling...upwards. A strange moment of dizziness. It came, it went. Then it was over” (88). He remembers the sermon itself, but “...it is far, farther and farther away. I see someone and I don't recognize myself” (89). He details here and elsewhere in the second act his non-recognition of himself during the moments of the sermon, and a sense of disconnection, perhaps dissociation, from the event afterward. The Inspector is not convinced that the Rabbi's description of his feelings and motives during the sermon are authentic. “Stop playing games. Those hallucinations, keep them for your Jews. We are here for a purpose: to investigate a serious matter – to define responsibilities – to evaluate the implications and follow every lead” (90). It is clear from the beginning of this act that the agency over meaning-systems is in the hands of the Soviet authorities, not the Jews. As a result, meaning systems, however fragmented, cannot be reassembled in the search for new meanings, as happens in the collective traumatic response (and seen especially in *The Trial of God* below). Responsibilities, for example, are not discovered, but defined. The Inspector is more concerned with the implications of the event than the motives behind it. He assigns responsibility to the Rabbi, and attempts to extend that responsibility to his community. “Think of your community. You have placed it in danger. Think!” (90)

The Rabbi appears to show dissociative symptoms with regard to his memory of the sermon. “I wonder if...what happened was – how shall I say – real... yes, real. It is the reality of the event that escapes me, not the event itself. ... All this seems to me so... so... I was going to say so confused. But that's not it. Confusion is not the exact term – the images are clear enough. Indeed, they are luminous. Blinding. ...Yes, everything is clear, precise, but... But impossible. It

all seems so... impossible” (91). When pressed on why the event seemed impossible, he invokes what could be considered a difficulty (if not a disorder) of memory: “Perhaps because I thought I knew myself – who I am, what I want to achieve and *what I must remember*” (92, emphasis added). He then invokes the collective nature of hope among the Jewish people, which underscores the cohesion his community has lacked.

RABBI. I had a dream, that's all. And in my dream I came upon a dreamer – it was me.

INSPECTOR. So now I have *two* dreamers on my hands. One wasn't enough!

RABBI. Your generation is opposed to dreams – mine needs them. Every Jewish child is full of dreams – not always his own. He receives them and passes them on, and they are always the same: an ancient kingdom restored, peace on earth, the messianic victory of man over what makes him inhuman. Exciting, passionate dreams... They sound like prayers.

INSPECTOR. No prayers, please! (*He brutally changes tone*) Facts, stick to facts!

RABBI. I don't like facts. I don't even like dreams – I am afraid of the awakening. I prefer to remain on the other side.

INSPECTOR. The other side? But that's called madness!

RABBI. I don't like to name things.

INSPECTOR. You certainly don't like anything tonight. (*He is getting angrier by the minute*) Are you going to talk? I mean really talk? Yes or no?

RABBI. What I would be able to tell you, you already know. What you don't know, I could not tell you; it cannot be told.

INSPECTOR. Force yourself, Rabbi. (92-93)

It is clear that what the Inspector circumscribes as madness is quite different from how Zalmen and the Rabbi interpret it. To the latter two, it is a mystical event, linked to the religious, the communal, and the traumatic. To the inspector, it is resistance, an avoidance of the truth, and “counterrevolutionary” (120). For the Rabbi, “the dream is over” (93); he believes the message of his sermon was not received by his community. Throughout the second act, it is shown that he is right – the traumatic past will not be conveyed and assumed by his community, and therefore will not have the chance to be communicated to a larger, potentially sympathetic carrier group. This potential carrier group, the Soviet authorities in this case, have no intention of receiving such a message, nor do they want to assign any meaning to it but that which is within the boundaries of Soviet propaganda.

Within the bounds of the Inspector's version of that propaganda, there is a cause and process for the Rabbi's madness, and he could not have acted alone. The Inspector says,

But madness doesn't strike all of a sudden, just like that, without warning, like a wild beast pouncing on its prey! Madness has a history, a beginning – it smolders inside you, it burns, then it overflows and explodes. But tell us: What caused the explosion? ...When did you start plotting? When was the first time? The first impulse? The first decision, the first secret... when? ...Why this of all times? Was it the presence of the foreigners? ...What about the others? Who hired you? A member of the synagogue? A stranger? (97-98)

It appears to be a combination of Soviet oppression and the urging of Zalmen that drive the Rabbi to madness. However, the Rabbi himself cannot identify a direct cause for his mental state, let alone voice that causatory suffering.

The meaning-systems of the Jewish collective in the play have been co-opted by the Soviets to such a degree that only “officially” permissible modes of expression and content are allowed. Among the non-permissible but recognized modes of expression is the “counter-revolutionary” form: in which no agent acts alone, and there is a definable cause for any act of disobedience. The purely religious, traumatic, or “mad” justification for the Rabbi's sermon is as unacceptable to the Inspector as it is incomprehensible to him and the Rabbi.

The Chairman is called in, and he attempts, through his familiarity with the Soviet community, to re-inscribe the Rabbi's actions in a way that is comprehensible to the Inspector, but does not implicate the Rabbi as a counterrevolutionary. He strongly denies that anyone else was involved.

Like you [the Inspector], I am a good judge of men. I know my people. They can hide nothing from me. I know their problems, I *interpret their anguish*. I know the boundaries of their courage. Satisfied or not, no one will ever get involved in a scandal such as this. Ever! ...Because they are afraid. It's as simple as that. Afraid. *Fear is the safest of boundaries. ...Fear corrects memory and my people are afraid!* Must I remind you that some of them still keep a carefully packed suitcase close to their beds... just in case?” (102-103, emphasis added)

The Chairman is attempting to gain interpretive agency over the sermon (what he strategically calls a “scandal”), an interpretive agency both the Rabbi and his community have lost. This is as close to the voicing of collective trauma that any character in the play comes. The Chairman is also aligning himself with his Jewish community, of which he has always been on the fringes. “If any others are guilty, then I am too. Guilty of incompetence. Guilty of having been blind. But no one is guilty. That sermon – we never discussed it, not even afterwards. We simply

ignored it” (*ibid*). He tries to lend his credibility to the community he wishes he were a greater part of, in an attempt to save its members from punishment.

To find the perpetrators of the “scandal” (or at least find someone to blame), the Inspector has called in each member of the synagogue council. The Doctor, however, has not shown up to be questioned. The Chairman vacillates between defending him and pointing to him as a perpetrator in order to save the Rabbi.

You cannot compare the two [the Rabbi and the Doctor]. The Rabbi is a Jew through and through. When he weeps, it is the Jew in him grieving. When he keeps silent, it is the Jew in him despairing of language. As for the other one [the Doctor], he doesn't cry, he doesn't weep, he doesn't despair. For him, to be a Jew is an option, a concept – devoid of mystery. And concepts, as you know, can change, adjust, or even vanish. Anyway, they don't hurt. No, these two men have nothing in common. (117)

The Chairman is attempting to reinterpret the event through a modified version of the established Soviet interpretive matrix, and in a way that may also save the Doctor (if the Inspector will believe he is not truly a member of the Jewish community). He begs of the Rabbi, “Don't allow your silence to be misinterpreted” (118).

Alexey and Nina (the Rabbi's son-in-law and daughter) are then called in to answer questions, and Alexey vacillates as well – between expressing his hatred for his father-in-law and attempts to defend him. Their son, Misha, who is with them, is the one person who wants to be there, and the one person the Inspector does not want present (121). While the family professes they were not present at the sermon, Alexey claims reluctant membership in the community.

ALEXEY. So he caused a scandal to demonstrate to me the power of his weapons, since he could not convince me of the merits of his conviction that whether I want it or not, in the eyes of others, I am considered a Jew and always will be – and that whether I like it or not, my lot remains tied to that of all Jews of all times – everywhere. He wanted to show me that were I to be even indirectly implicated, my position would become insecure. You see, by giving him too much importance, you're playing his game. You must take this for what it is – a ridiculously annoying family quarrel.

INSPECTOR. Now, look here! You want to save your father-in-law, fine. But you can't be serious – is *that* really your interpretation?

ALEXEY. It's as plausible as any others! What? This old man – a dangerous enemy of the mighty Soviet Socialist State? A counterrevolutionary? Why would he have waited so long? He – and all of us – lived through infinitely more critical situations – remember? Why didn't he protest then? (130)

Clearly, any reaction to the traumatic past aside from silence is considered transgressive.

The Soviet collective, made up of the Inspector, the Police Official, and guards successfully resist the act of becoming a carrier group for the Rabbi's seemingly traumatic recollections. Through this oppression, even the smallest of carrier groups, within the bounds of the synagogue members, cannot form. They also wield a fear that successfully prevents this. The Rabbi's trauma is ultimately uncommunicated to a carrier group, and not connected to a clear limit event. There are limit events among the synagogue community, but they are only hinted at, remain unrecognized and unvoiced, and have no perceivable traumatic response associated with them. Both the Doctor and the Chairman, who have tried to regain, through interpretation of the Rabbi's *Kol Nidre* sermon, some semblance of collective cohesion for their community, are

unable to do so. The Chairman, unable to gain agency over the interpretation of the sermon, returns to his cynical and acrimonious relationship with the Doctor. The Doctor himself laments about what could have been his new-found community. “Years of searching, of questioning, of waiting – reduced to nothing. To laughter” (164).

The Inspector sums up the Rabbi's inability to communicate his potentially traumatic memories and thereby gain a carrier group in the form of his closest associates and followers. The literal moment of individual traumatic locution (his sermon at the end of Act One), is an illocutionary failure.

Poor hero, poor dreamer. You have lost and I feel sorry for you; you have fought for nothing. Your offering was not accepted. Worse – it wasn't even noticed. How could you have been so naïve? Did you really – really – believe your gesture would shake the earth? Mankind has other worries. Were you counting on the intellectuals? They love ideas, not people. The Christians? Only eternity interests them: theirs and yours. The Jews – your own brothers? In your imagination you saw them marching in the streets of Paris, London, New York, and Jerusalem, shouting that you here are not alone? You thought their anger would explode and shatter human conscience? Well – it's too bad. Your Jews have their own concerns, their own excuses and – who knows? – they may even be the same excuses. When, all over Europe, your people were being exterminated, how many Jews took part in how many demonstrations in how many communities to protest, to shout, to weep – yes, simply to weep? ...Everything went on as if nothing were happening. And today? Life goes on. And those who don't suffer refuse to hear about suffering – and particularly about Jewish suffering. ...Why should we punish you? As far as we're concerned – as far as the outside world is concerned – you have done

nothing. Your dream was the dream of a madman. Why should we make you into a martyr? ...Your revolt, that supreme and exalting gesture which, for you, was meant to bring together and justify the suppressed agonies and hopes of an entire lifetime, of an entire generation perhaps – well, my sad hero, that revolt quite simply *did not take place!* (167-168)

Several things are revealed in this final monologue by the Inspector. He recognizes the potential carrier groups the Rabbi may have hoped to reach (intellectuals, Christians, his own Jews, Jews outside of Russia). He, a Soviet and Gentile, recognizes the interconnection of Jewish suffering in the small synagogue with other historical Jewish sufferings, namely, the Holocaust. He gives shape to the Rabbi's dream of being heard by increasingly larger collectives. The Inspector then lays the blame more on the Jewish people than on the Rabbi himself, accusing them of inaction in the face of oppression and suffering. He punishes the Rabbi by not punishing him, because to punish him would be to give meaning to his actions. Finally, he underscores the utter failure of the Rabbi's "mad" sermon – it was so ineffectual that, for all intents and purposes, it simply did not take place in the eyes of anyone who could have truly witnessed it and acted upon it in time.

As the play closes, the Doctor invokes memory, while the rest of the Council (along with Zalmen) encourage the Rabbi to continue on and lead the upcoming traditional prayers. "After all, what counts is not to forget – isn't that so, Rabbi? Not to forget..." (169). The play ends with Zalmen addressing the audience, reaffirming the failure to communicate traumatic memory. The stage directions state, "Everything has been said and nothing has happened" (170). Zalmen declares, "And you [the audience] believe me! You really believe me! That story I just told you... it never really happened... it couldn't have happened. Never! Not here! Not now!" (170-171) Perhaps most important, and most distinguishable from *The Trial of God*, is that neither the

Rabbi nor his Jewish community ultimately has any significant agency over even the fragmentary meaning systems once used to ensure community cohesion.

The circumstances underscored at the end of the play are tragic, but also traumatic. While the collective trauma of the Rabbi's community, only superficially mentioned throughout the play, is not effectively communicated to a larger carrier group (and therefore cannot become cultural trauma), the absence of effective communication certainly does not mean the traumatic is not present in some manner – quite the contrary. The symptomatology exhibited by the Rabbi make him a strong candidate for a victim of psychological trauma. Among these symptoms is a persistent silence, born from his inability to make sense or inscribe his suffering with meaning, and from the oppression of the Soviet regime. His community, made up of people with both individual and (presumably) shared traumas, are likewise unable to communicate their traumas, as they have no agency over the meaning-systems that are still intact, and are unable to do anything with the fragmented meaning system, for fear of Soviet retribution. As a result, the events of *Zalmen* fall loosely under the definition of collective, but not cultural, trauma.

II.4 – The Fragmentation and Reassembling of Meaning-Systems in *The Trial of God*

BERISH. You are mad, crazy beggars. (Pause.) We are all mad. Purim is over. For good.

MENDEL. So what! Only madmen know how to pay tribute to Purim! Purim is for madmen!

MARIA. Long live madness! Long live Purim! Come, I'm pouring drinks! For everybody, myself included! (37)

Berish's announcement that Purim is forever over begins the convolution of fragmented and broken meaning-systems, and their reassembly in order to make sense of a traumatic reality. At the end of Act One, Berish has asserted that it is useless to ask or beg for mercy from a God who is “merciless” (42). The post-traumatic reality of Shamgorod after the pogrom is incomprehensible to Berish,

BERISH. I want to understand why He is giving strength to the killers and nothing but tears and the shame of helplessness to the victims.

MENDEL. So – you don't understand. Neither do I. Is that enough reason to reject Him? Suppose you understood, would you accept?

BERISH. No, I would not.

MENDEL. Why not?

BERISH. Because I would refuse to understand – I would refuse to understand so as not to forgive Him. (43)

In the above passage, Berish is beginning the process of reclaiming agency over a particular meaning-system, the traditional, theological understanding of God as “the Master of the universe...the Supreme Judge” (55) and God's mercy, so that they can be judged through another fragmented and reassembled meaning-system: the *beit din* trial.

The *purimschpiel* or play-within-the-play is what Mendel describes as a “real...fake trial” (55). The end of Act One marks the beginning of the construction of conventions that will be specific to this trial, the first of which is the conflation of the actual (real) and virtual (performed), a situation which causes some Purim traditions to be upheld, and others to be discarded.

YANKEL. I want to have a good time. And wear my mask.

AVRAMEL. In the courtroom?

YANKEL. ...a Purim without masks is a Purim I don't like.

AVRAMEL. But we are having a trial! (59)

Maria has trouble understanding this conflation for reasons that are unclear; perhaps it is because she does not understand the particulars of a formal trial (67). Perhaps it is also because she is ultimately an outsider, a Christian in a community of traumatized Jews. “How can he swear to do something honestly,” she asks, “when he's performing! [sic]” (67). Shortly after this, she proclaims, “I cannot play a waitress, since am a waitress” (69). Underscoring her role as an outsider in the Jewish community, she asks to be the audience, a part which she is given enthusiastically. In so doing, she reifies the conflation of individual and collective.

MARIA. Oh no, Master. I'm the audience, remember? The people. And the people are more important than anyone. More important than attorneys. More important than prosecutors. And judges. You can do without Your Honor, but not without the people.

BERISH. What nonsense! You are not the people. You are you.

MARIA. Sorry, Master. Don't count on me.

BERISH. Do it for me. [Serve as the defense attorney.]

MARIA. Sorry, Master. Don't get angry at the people; the people won't like it. The people want you to be gentle and tender –

BERISH. I'll kill you, you witch!

MARIA. Why? The people can do anything they please –

MENDEL. Right. Under one condition: that they do not say it...

MARIA. You see, Master, I'm too ignorant... And also, I'm not even Jewish! (76-77)

In negotiating this convention, Maria is not just becoming a proxy for a collective, but also a silent witness, observing from the outside – in other words, an audience to the carrier group. However, this is not a convention established frivolously in circumstances that are virtual, as evidenced by the minstrels' insistence on the maintaining of a formal *beit din* convention – that the defense (God) have an attorney present for the proceedings. Berish replies, “Well, if you insist on an attorney, there is nothing we can do, except abandon the whole idea” (78). The lack of a defense is the central problem and inciting action of the second act.

The meaning behind the trial, while partly theatrical in nature, is deeply, metaphysically important and lasting in an inter-generational sense. Berish states, “We know perfectly well the trial won't change anything: the dead will not rise from their graves. We judge because we wish to know. To understand. In order to understand others, I must understand you too!” (86). While the selective conventions of the *purimschpiel* are used, they are not devoid of a meaning deeper than that of their original intent; in fact, their ability to *make meaning* has been fundamentally altered by the traumatic circumstances which preceded the play (the pogroms in Shamgorod and surrounding Jewish villages). Mendel later states, “Our judgment may prove useless but not meaningless!” (91) This is further evidence of the reassembly of the meaning-system contained in the *beit din*, toward the negotiation and interpretation of trauma. This fact is presented by Mendel in the form of a challenge to Berish. “Purim signifies absence of knowledge, refusal of knowledge. Are you going to change tradition? Establish a new one? On whose authority?” (*ibid*) The reassembly of even fragmented meaning systems is contested – indicating that both the fragmentation and reassembly can be symptoms of collective trauma, and that the reassembly, whether it ultimately leads to recovery or not, can be, to the collective, *post-traumatic*.

II.5 GOD ON TRIAL: METATHEATRICALITY AS MODEL *FOR* COLLECTIVE TRAUMATIC MEMORY

The metatheatrical nature of a trial of God, within the context of a *purimschpiel*, within a play (technically making it meta-metatheatrical), lends itself to a kind of traumatic recollection that is more collective in nature than that found in *Zalmen*. The inclusion of non-Jewish characters as participants in a remembrance of trauma also opens up the *purimschpiel* trial as the best and most complex example of traumatic remembrance thus far. The trial for the *purimschpiel* is proposed by the innkeeper Berish, who with his daughter has suffered the traumas of her rape and the destruction of their entire community in a pogrom one year before. While these traumas are highly individual in many regards, Berish insists upon speaking for the traumatized (albeit defunct) community. “You would like to hear the victims? So would I. Bet they do not talk. They cannot come to the witness stand... The witnesses for the prosecution are the dead. All of them... I implore the court to consider their absence as the weightiest of proofs, as the heaviest of accusations... Let their testimony enter your conscience and your memory!” (129-130) The matter of speaking for and hearing from the dead provides a point of contention for defense throughout Act Three. This contention underscores the disputed nature of the trauma, both in regards to whether it can be collective (since only two have survived the limit event to be traumatized), and whether it can rightfully be disseminated to a carrier group, and thus fall under the category of a cultural trauma. The latter of these concerns is answered through the course of the play, as the three minstrels each confess traumatic experiences similar to those of Berish’s broken community.

As in *Zalmen*, meaning systems ranging from prayer to traditional Jewish celebrations to the trial itself, are deeply fragmented. What distinguishes the events of *The Trial of God*, however, from *Zalmen* is that these fragments are in the process of being *reorganized* to serve the “post-traumatic” interpretation of community and the negotiation of new meanings. This reorganization of fragmentary meaning systems allows the players to “utter words no one has ever uttered before. And ask questions no one has ever asked before. And give answer no one has ever had the courage to articulate before. And to accuse the *real* accused” (*Trial of God* 56, emphasis retained). Unlike the characters of *Zalmen*, these players are reassembling meaning systems, not as they were, but as they are currently useful in telling the story of trauma. In so doing, they are also gaining agency over these meaning systems and their traumatic memories. This agency places traumatic experience and recollection in *The Trial of God* within the context of collective trauma.

The trial makes up nearly the totality of the play's subject matter, though it does not take place until the third act. Act One is the presentation of the idea to “stage a trial... against the Master of the universe” (55). Act Two is the selection of characters for the *purimschpiel* and the mapping of theatrical devices and rules of conduct (which shown below as one example of the reassembling of a fragmented meaning system). The three minstrels agree to be the rabbinical judges of the *beit din*. Berish enthusiastically agrees to be the prosecutor. Maria agrees to play “the audience” (76). Lacking a defense attorney, the trial cannot proceed; then the mysterious figure Sam (feared by Maria and later revealed to be Samael/Satan) appears and agrees to act as the defense.

Evidence of the collective trauma is revealed throughout the process of the trial in the form of broken meaning systems, specifically in the refutation and incomprehensibility of once-

stable metaphorical operations. The central example of the destabilization of metaphor is the notion of God-as-father.

SAM. Why implicate our Father in Heaven?

BERISH. You want to leave Him out? Turn Him into a neutral bystander? *Would a father stand by quietly, silently, and watch his children being slaughtered?*

SAM. By whom? By his other children!

BERISH. All right, by his other children! Would he not interfere? Should he not?

SAM. You are using images, let me add mine. When human beings kill one another, where is God to be found? You see Him among the killers. I find Him among the victims.

BERISH. He – a victim? A victim is powerless; is He powerless? He is almighty, isn't He? He could use His might to save the victims, but He doesn't! So – on whose side is He? Could the killer kill without His blessing – without His complicity?

SAM. Are you suggesting that the Almighty is on the side of the killer?

BERISH. He is not on the side of the victim.

SAM. How do you know? Who told you?

BERISH. The killers told me. They told the victims. They always do. They always say loud and clear that they kill in the name of God.

SAM. ...Since when do you take the killers' word for granted? Since when do you place your faith in them? They are efficient killers but poor witness. (128-129)

First, the metaphor "God is father" is revealed to be defunct. A father would not allow the suffering of his children, yet, according to Jewish theistic principles, God the Father allows the suffering of his children. For Berish, and by proxy, his community, God as both metaphor and

overarching meaning system is irrevocably broken by the limit event (the pogrom one year earlier).

Next, Sam vehemently argues Berish has no right to speak for the dead, and it is in this argument that Sam attempts to refute the declaration of the pogrom as anything more than an individual trauma, by negating the nature of *witnessing*.

SAM. What gives the prosecution the right to speak for the dead?

BERISH. I know them alive. I witnessed their death.

SAM. So what? Does he know, is he empowered to know what they felt and thought before they died? He depicts them as accusers – or witnesses for the prosecution. What if they felt differently? Suppose they chose, at that supreme hour, to repent! Suppose they were pleased – yes, pleased – to leave this ugly planet behind them and enter a world of eternal peace and truth?

BERISH. That's too much! Even for him! (*To Sam*) You really believe that people want to die, love to die? That they are happy to die? Either you're crazy or cynical! Woe to God if you're His defender! (130)

Perhaps most compelling is the appearance of madness-as-trauma in the form of the rape victim Hanna. By her own behavior, and by the way characters who know her react to her entrance late in Act Three, it is apparent that Hanna is mad, but not yet that she is a victim of trauma. "I wanted to have the trial on her behalf," says Berish. "You have seen her. She is barely alive; you can't call that living. She sleeps, she sighs, she eats, she listens, she smiles; she is silent: something in her is silent. She speaks silently, she weeps silently; she remembers silently, she screams silently" (104). By the third act, it has been revealed that such silence is in part the inability to express a traumatic past.

Among Hanna's individual traumatic symptoms, dissociation of identity and the conflation of past and present are the most apparent; she confuses her own reality with that of Queen Esther's. (116) Unlike the other characters, who will step in and out of their *purimschpiel* characters to argue with each other or discuss the implications of the trial, Hanna appears to have no agency in the melding of herself and the character of Queen Esther who, while traditionally part of the Purim celebration, is not a part of the trial *purimschpiel*

As Esther, Hanna calls for a character from her own (that is, Hanna's) past – Arye-Leib, her lover and one of the long dead victims of the Shamgorod pogrom. This, along with her assertions that she hears often unwanted music, laughter, and conversation from the past clearly indicate *traumatic re-experiencing*. Judith Herman notes that “Long after the danger is past, traumatized people relive the event as though it were continually recurring in the present. They cannot resume the normal course of their lives, for trauma repeatedly interrupts. It is as if time stops at the moment of the trauma. The traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously into consciousness” (37). Rather than feeling genuine emotion in reaction to what is currently happening, she is feeling and responding primarily to the emotions of the past, either just before or during the limit event.

In contrast to Hanna's traumatic re-experiencing, Berish can describe the events in the past tense, with a consciousness rooted in the present. “She remembers, and so do I... They killed Arye-Leib. And his old father. And the witnesses to the wedding. And the rabbis who were about to perform the ceremony. And the musicians. And the guests. They killed and killed...and I remember, I remember” (151). Hanna does not ever mention remembering these events – she sees them, hears them, and *feels* them as if they were happening in that moment.

She experiences them again and again, unbidden, and therefore cannot interpret them in the way Berish and the others attempt to through the trial.

From a slightly different standpoint, one may also see Hanna's dissociation, as the intrusion of past traumatic experience into her *imagined* reality. She cannot play a role, use her imagination, or even participate in a cultural/religious tradition without the memory of her past trauma encroaching on her present. In the formal language of trauma, she is dissociated (Herman 44), emotionally constricted (42), and suffering from persistent, unwanted re-experiencing of the event (37), with affect linked to that past experience rather than to the present.

Smelser defines cultural trauma as “a memory accepted and publicly given credence by a relevant membership group and evoking an event or situation which is a) laden with negative affect, b) represented as indelible, and c) regarded as threatening a society's existence or violating one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions” (33). In both *Zalmen* and *The Trial of God*, the memory of a past pogrom is accepted and given credence by varying degrees. The synagogue council, silenced by fear and the oppression by Soviet officials, does not have agency over meaning systems that maintain their collective and cultural cohesion and identity. While meaning systems would be allowed to operate, they are fragmented and therefore cannot; the Rabbi's sermon is not allowed to be a recollection of suffering, a declaration of perceived truth, or even a welcoming of those outside the community but inside the culture. The gathering inherent to the *Kol Nidre* service is limited: cordoned off from the larger Jewish culture and invaded by non-Jewish officials. Speaking of the trauma through traditional meaning systems further damages collective cohesion, as it will lead to punishment by the Soviet official, and because the would-be speakers of the trauma no longer have agency over those meaning systems.

While collective and cultural trauma are still at work in *The Trial of God*, complete with all of the characteristics delineated by Smelser, there is a profound difference with regard to the fragmented meaning systems – they are being reorganized within the liminal space of the *purimschpiel*, in order to construct a new vocabulary far beyond the traumatic response. Without this reorganization, the events of the play would be morally and logistically impossible for several reasons. If the meaning system theodicy were not fragmented and its pieces reorganized, an omnibenevolent God, the “Supreme Judge” (55) could not be placed on trial, nor could an “impossible victory” for the prosecution (56) be considered as an outcome. Without the fragmentation and reorganization of the *beit din* and the *din Torah* Satan would not be allowed to defend God, nor would a madwoman be allowed to be the primary witness for the prosecution, nor would God be tried *in absentia*, or be tried without the possibility of a verbal response or a physical presence.²⁴

II.6 FICTIONALIZATION AND COMMUNICATION TO LARGER CARRIER GROUPS AND AUDIENCE-PUBLICS

Wiesel’s placement of a Holocaust experience (the Auschwitz trial) during a Russian pogrom in the mid 17th century, as well as his altered portrayal of a Russian synagogue’s rabbi in the late 50s, invites questions as to the metaphorical power of these events when confronting real, historical trauma. Not the least of these questions are whether these fictionalized plots can suitably represent actual traumas and traumatic memories, and whether they, ultimately as works of fiction, can lead to the recognition of collective and cultural traumas. Similar conflict about

²⁴According to Kosher Law, the defendant in a *beit din* must be offered the right to appear physically and defend himself.

the historical accuracy of Wiesel's testimony, *Night*, have been raised, and it is through a brief exploration of that polemic that similar questions about his drama will be addressed. By fictionalizing, traumatic memories are potentialized, and brought into the collective realm. *Night*, *Zalmen*, and *The Trial of God*, therefore, are neither truly memoir nor testimony, but something unique and more universal. In fictionalizing these historical and personal events, the potential for them to be heard by broader and broader audiences (thereby allowing them to be moved into the realms of collective and cultural trauma) is increased. Instead of seeing them as a corruption of traumatic recollection, they should instead be seen as part of the *process* of that recollection.

Many scholars have expressed misgivings about *Night* as a purely accurate account, citing categorical, stylistic, and factual discrepancies that appear to contradict traditional, generic considerations of memoir or testimony. Daniel Schwarz categorizes *Night* as a "fictionalized autobiographical memoir of the Holocaust," but does not include "the indictment of Wiesel for transforming his nominalistic memoir into novelistic form." (249) Likewise, Sue Vice notes the essential aspects of style in imparting any form of memory in writing.

"...it should be remembered that even *Night*, Elie Wiesel's survivor testimony, necessarily uses novelistic methods: it is retrospective, it is clearly the result of narrative choices and omissions, and its first-person narrator is at a distance from its character, whose name, Eliezer, is different from that of the author... Testimonial uncertainty is often different from the kind of fictive instability I have been concerned with in this book, although – as the case of Wiesel suggests – the two categories are not always neatly separable." (176)

Vice's chief concern, in her book *Holocaust Fiction*, is what is generally considered the "scandalous" (1) – work of unclear agency and deceptive intertextuality, the purpose of which is as questionable as the text's ultimately exploitative historicity (200)²⁵. Vice asserts, however, that the first-person character of *Night* and its narrating author are *undeceptively* distinct (164, emphasis retained). There is no attempt made to "elide the distinction between character and narrator," as is the case in Benjamin Wilkomirski's (aka, Bruno Grosjean's) pseudo-memoir, *Fragments* (*ibid*). When taking into account the body of work that preceded *Zalmen* and *The Trial of God*, it becomes clear that no attempt was made in these pieces either. Wiesel is transparent, in both introductory material and later interviews and memoirs, that the fictionalization of the events in the plays are *reworkings* of traumatic themes based in traumatic memories that have already been conveyed. Particularly in the case of *The Trial of God*, this reworking of the Auschwitz trial memory in different forms and genres is integral to the continual process of traumatic recollection, reinterpretation, and integration.

Schwarz attempts to shed further light on *Night*'s supposed stylistic discrepancies, positing Wiesel is "distilling memoir into narrative form" (253). The end result of the edits under Wiesel's control was that "he reconfigured an existential novel about the descent into moral night into a somewhat affirmative reemergence to life" (Schwarz). Schwarz, in foregrounding stylistic discrepancies, ignores other, practical aspects of the book's first publication, which Wiesel reflects upon in his 1994 memoir.

Lindon [Wiesel's publisher] was unhappy with my probably too abstract manner of introducing the subject. Nor was he enamored of two pages which sought to describe

²⁵No doubt recently-uncovered fabrications of Holocaust memoirs and testimonies have contributed to an increased politicization of the academic critic's approach to *Night* and similar texts. The highly-publicized cases of Herman Roseblat, Laurel Rose Willson, and Bruno Gorsjean, as well as pseudomemoirs of drug addiction, come immediately to mind.

premises and early phases of the tragedy. Testimony from survivors tends to begin with these sorts of descriptions, evoking loved ones as well as one's hometown before annihilation, as if breathing life into them one last time. Lindon also preferred to open the story with the portrait of Moishela, the beadle of our synagogue. (Wiesel *All Rivers* 416-417)

As with *Night*, *Zalmen* and *The Trial of God* were subject to revisions to gain and hold audience attention, adherence to accepted theatrical conventions, not to mention unauthorized changes made by theatre artists enacting the plays.

Reflecting upon his first work nearly 25 years later, Wiesel describes in detail the concerns he had before writing *Night*.

I knew the role of the survivor was to testify. Only I did not know how. I lacked experience, I lacked a framework. I mistrusted the tools, the procedures. ...How does one describe the indescribable? How does one use restraint in re-creating the fall of mankind and the eclipse of the gods? And then, how can one be sure that the words, once uttered, will not betray, distort the message they bear? So heavy was my anguish that I made a vow: not to speak, not to touch upon the essential for at least ten years. Long enough to see clearly. Long enough to learn to listen to the voices crying inside my own. Long enough to regain possession of my memory. Long enough to unite the language of man with the silence of the dead. (Wiesel *A Jew Today* 15)

In addition to theatrical conventions, the process of reworking, universalizing, and integrating traumatic memories, Wiesel also made certain choices because he *did not know* how to portray the traumas of his past in the most effective way possible. However, the veracity and metaphorical power of these fictionalized traumatic memories are found in his professed concern

the he could mis-convey those memories. “Was I explicit enough? Did I miss what was essential? Did I serve memory well? In fact, if I had it to do over again, I would change nothing in my deposition” (Wiesel *All Rivers* 113-114). Scholars who note that the purpose of *Night* is to convey a form of memory have attempted to allay his concerns. According to religious studies scholar Sandu Frunzã, “...Wiesel succeeds in establishing an ethics of responsibility towards otherness, without minimizing the importance of God’s presence in history. ...From the very first meeting with Elie Wiesel’s texts, the reader will note the central place of keeping alive the memory of the holocaust [*sic*]” (95).²⁶

Wiesel has extensively detailed the many reasons writing, and the various types of memory it required. Among these types is traumatic memory. When taking this into account, and recognizing traumatic memory in light of Wiesel’s self-declared motivations and misgivings, and the conceptualization of trauma through collective and cultural modes, there is a strong case for *Night*, *Zalmen*, and *The Trial of God* not just as a memoir, but as a primarily traumatic recollection. Also, a brief return to Judith Herman’s work on the treatment of psychological trauma proves especially useful in this analysis. In establishing a framework for treatment, Herman prefaces with “The core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others. Recovery, therefore, is based upon the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections. Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation” (133). A broader perspective on the latter of these

²⁶With regard to why *Night* itself is so important to this study of theatre: Wiesel says of his works, “If in my lifetime I was to write only one book, this would be the one. Just as the past lingers in the present, all my writings after *Night*, including those that deal with biblical, Talmudic, or Hasidic themes, profoundly bear its stamp, and cannot be understood if one has not read this very first of my works. Why did I write it? Did I write it so as not to go mad or, on the contrary, to go mad in order to understand the nature of madness, the immense, terrifying madness that had erupted in history and in the conscience of mankind? Was it to leave behind a legacy of words, of memories, to help prevent history from repeating itself? Or was it simply to preserve a record of the ordeal I endured as an adolescent, at an age when one’s knowledge of death and evil should be limited to what one discovers in literature?” (5)

core experiences (disconnection) reveals the individual traumatic response as the disruption of social interactivity, of the encoding and retrieval memories in social contexts, and of access to social cognition. When considering simultaneously theories of individual, collective, and cultural trauma, the mnemonic fracture of the multidirectional relationship between individual and collectives, further elucidates the problematic nature of conveying traumatic memory. By recognizing this pattern of outward radiation, with its continual repercussions for the individual victim, the profound and essential link between individual and collective traumas is brought into sharp relief. If the studies initiated by Amanda Barnier and her associates are taken to their inevitable conceptual conclusions, this disruption includes the realm of “socially distributed memories,” and therefore the *construction of meanings over time*. The disruption of socially distributed memory as collective, social, and cultural meaning-making system – what Sorokin would call a “logico-meaningful” connection (5-6), and what Smelser would call a “meaning-system” (37) – caused by the violent separation of the individual from the group apparatus of any of these systems, constitutes a collective, social, or cultural trauma, respectively.

Ultimately, as important as the above analysis of the veracity and metaphorical power of fictionalized traumatic memories are, Wiesel’s own claims as a victim of the Holocaust are just as vital to the claim.

I wrote to testify, to stop the dead from dying, [to] justify my own survival. I wrote to speak to those who were gone. As long as I spoke to them, they would live on, at least in my memory. My vow of silence would soon be fulfilled; next year would mark the tenth anniversary of my liberation. I was going to have to open the gates of memory, to break the silence while safeguarding it. (Wiesel *All Rivers* 318)

It is essential to understand that, in the nearly inevitable motivation to pathologize text when its genesis is a traumatic response, the text is not be the traumatic response itself, but the *negotiation* of a traumatic response during the attempted processes empowerment and connection essential to what Herman calls “stages of recovery” (131). The recovery process is divided into three stages: the establishment of individual safety (162), the allowance of “remembrance and mourning” in which the “work of reconstruction actually transforms the traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor’s life story” (175), and reconnection through the recognition of “commonality” which begins with “the discover that one is not alone” (215). The discrepant natures of *Night*, *Zalmen*, and *The Trial of God* are ultimately useful reconstitutions and revaluations of the past, revealing the impeti toward retelling that have strong variances in style, genre, and even content, but for purposes that transcend any possibility of deception for its own sake. These variances should not necessarily be viewed as discrepant, but as *processual*, as Wiesel tells and retells the trauma of the Holocaust over the course of decades, for audiences that contain various levels of belief in the events and depths of understanding.

II.7 SOCIALLY DISTRIBUTED AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN ZALMEN AND *THE TRIAL OF GOD*

Campbell reiterates the premises of collective and socially distributed memory as processes.

Sharing memory is how we learn to remember, how we come to reconceive our pasts in memory, how we come to form a sense of self, and one of the primary ways in which we come to know others and form relationships with them, reforming our sense of self as we come repeatedly under the influence not only of our own pasts as understood by others

but of the pasts of others... [Sharing memory] amounts to more than cuing, then somehow the integrity of the self as a record of its own history has given way and is giving way all the time and in ways that we cannot even track. (Campbell 3-4)

Zalmen and *The Trial of God* are not merely attempts to share traumatic memories with an audience; characters share memories with each other in the process of recovering and giving meaning to their individual and collective traumas. Without the collective and its shared recollection, these traumatic memories could not be given voice. By reorganizing the fragments of traumatically shattered meaning systems, the collectives in each play create a new communicative norm. “Another feature of culturally significant events is that one’s social group can dictate a set of norms about how we should react or think about such an event” (Barnier, et al 45). The determination of “reacting and thinking” no doubt includes the social negotiation of individual and socially distributed memories. These norms, at least according to by Barnier and her group, indicate that negative emotion and the perception of social disruption are mitigated over time more so in collaborative than in individual recollections. In *Zalmen*, this collective interpretation helps to open the way for traumatic and other expressions of emotion: “When Jews pray together something happens. It will be difficult to hold back our joy, our feelings” (25). When praying together with the plural pronouns and verb forms of the *Kol Nidre*, they are no longer “abandoned even by imagination” (49), and outsiders are able to “hear the last cries of a shattered community” (82) and understand that “the spirit of a whole people is being crushed” (*ibid*). They are also able to invoke memory and imagine an ideal future as a collective. “Every Jewish child is full of dreams – not always his own. He receives them and passes them on, and they are always the same: an ancient kingdom restored, peace on earth, the messianic victory of man over what makes him inhuman” (92). In the end, the Inspector, in lieu of punishing the

Rabbi, tries to erase the voicing of the collective trauma, ordering all present to “bury it. If anyone speaks of it – don’t listen. Erase it from your memory, from your vocabulary.”

Presumably obedient, the collective allows the trauma to recede away from the cultural sphere, pass out of the collective, and retreat into the individual.

By contrast, *The Trial of God* is structured on the expectation of group recollection.

While Sam asserts that Berish cannot speak for the dead, collectivity is enhanced as each member of the court, from each of the minstrels, to Berish, to Hanna all confess their traumas, revealing remarkably similar affect and mnemonic images which appear related. Even Maria, the Catholic outsider, is able to share her trauma, perpetrated by Sam, in the *beit din*. This last fact shows how the meaning system of the Jewish legal proceeding has been reorganized, allowing for the traumatic experience of the pogrom not to be limited to individual, or even collective, stretching instead into the realm of culture and possibly beyond.

By rooting the plots in a culturally-recognizable set of limit events, and invoking a widespread, if not universal, core of individual traumatic responses to the Holocaust, Wiesel’s plays construct a model *of* collective Holocaust trauma. By removing, if only nominally, the historical specificity of the limit event, Wiesel is actually increasing the metaphorical power of the traumas experienced by the characters, by Wiesel himself, and by those who share the limit events of the Holocaust. By broadening his capacity for theatrical play and fictive exploration, his plays construct both models *of* and models *for* collective trauma, edging on the potential of some form of, albeit incomplete, recovery.

II.8 PERFORMANCE HISTORY AND CRITICISM OF *ZALMEN*

Zalmen's world premiere as a stage play was at the Washington Arena, during their 1973-1974 season, under the direction of Alan Schneider. It starred Dianne Wiest, Robert Prosky, and Joseph Wiseman. It was also taped for public television and released on January 8, 1975 with the same cast. It played on Broadway at the Lyceum Theatre, with the same director and most of the original cast (excluding Wiest and Prosky), from March 17 to April 3, 1976. It was also produced in Germany, and Wiesel writes extensively about a disastrous performance at the Habimah (National Theatre) in Tel-Aviv, Israel. A very sparse production history²⁷ ends with a single production on May 1, 2011, produced and directed by Guila Clara Kessous, under Wiesel's direct tutelage, at Harvard University. This performance history will be used to complement the study of *Zalmen* in this chapter.

Many of the above assertions I've presented about the nature of trauma in *Zalmen* are not restricted to a close reading of the plot. Reviews of the Broadway production at the Lyceum emphasized the effect a play about Soviet oppression would have on an American audience, at the expense of the traumatic circumstances that oppression caused. All reviewers questioned the use of the foreign actors as both symbol and plot device, and the consensus was that they were ultimately unsure about both. The play was ultimately interpreted by American critics more as an anti-Soviet play than a Jewish drama, which decentralized the individual and collective traumatic experiences that are only hinted at in the text of the play, but well-described in the earlier work *The Jews of Silence*. The majority of critical writings originate from the Broadway production, which ran at the Lyceum Theatre for 22 performances, from March 17, 1976 to April

²⁷The play is often missed by Wiesel scholars. Jack Kolbert's supposedly comprehensive book *The Worlds of Elie Wiesel* fails to mention it at all.

3, 1976²⁸, and the televised version of the play which was recorded during the Arena Stage run, and aired twice in 1975 on the “Theater in America” series on public television.

Clives Barnes suitably relied on the connection between *Zalmen* and Wiesel's prior working of similar themes, the non-fiction book *The Jews of Silence: A Personal Report on Soviet Jewry*, originally published in English in 1966. This connection contributed to Barnes following the thematic choices of the previous work, and foregrounding the political issues of Jews in the Soviet Union, as opposed to the subjectively emotional and spiritual issues that are more at play in *Zalmen*. States Barnes, “Mr. Wiesel's play is set in the late 1950s in a small town in Russia. The post-Stalinist thaw has started, and a certain amount of religious observance, closely studied by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, is permitted.” The remainder of the play is critiqued through the context of recent historical Soviet oppression, rather than the religious natures of characters like the Rabbi, Zalmen, and the Doctor. Barnes, in fact, essentially labels the Doctor an agnostic, and outright calls him “a nonrebel with a cause.” While the latter interpretation is strongly indicated in the text, and David Margulies' performance in the version on “Theatre in America” certainly lends itself to such a label, there is no indication that the Doctor is an agnostic, either textually, dramaturgically, or in performance.

A key directorial choice, the showing of the foreign actors, affected the play when it moved from the Arena to Broadway. The author of the review “An Inadequate Zalmen,” from the *New York Times* March 28 edition, felt the removal of the foreign actors as physical presences onstage obliterated any potential meaning behind the Rabbi's climactic sermon.

When [director] Alan Schneider first staged the play at the Arena Theater in Washington, he brought the huddled, herded actors into brief, aborted view. They were whisked away

²⁸There were also five preview performances, which started March 11 of 1976.

by the authorities instantly, and we realized at once that even if they'd remained they'd have caught no meaningful spark from the vague, if lyrical, exhortation. Now that Mr. Schneider has mounted a new production for a limited engagement at the Lyceum, he has dispensed with that glimpse of the visitors... as though the alien performers might be among us. There is, alas, even less sense of contact, either potential or actual. Which means to me that author Wiesel has chosen an inadequate dramatic/symbolic device to precipitate his crisis. We *can't* believe that anything could possibly have come of so trivial a confrontation with what are essentially nonentities, and, thus robbed of our sense of significant event, we are left only with prolonged preparation and prolonged aftermath. For this reviewer, even the *potential* meaning of the Rabbi's traumatic past is gone in the revised staging; as a result, the Rabbi and his community have nothing to lose in the second act, and the perhaps surprising decision of the Inspector not to punish the Rabbi in any way loses its tragic meaning.

By comparing this directorial choice with the closest equivalent to the Arena production (the filmed version of the stage play for the "Theater in America" series), more becomes apparent about the effect of the staging change. In the filmed stage play, the Rabbi gives his climactic speech to a crowded but claustrophobic space, with little standing room remaining, in a synagogue occupied by the council, two Soviet officials who are constantly whispering to each other, various extras, and three of the foreign actors. Zalmen stands behind the Rabbi, watching his movements intently, giving the audience the sense that he is something of a puppet master during the sermon. As the Rabbi begins to shout the line "I say and I proclaim," the extras around the periphery of the playing space make a discreet exit, followed by the members of the synagogue council. Last to leave are the three foreign actors, ushered out by the two Soviet

officials. The oldest of them, transfixed by the Rabbi's words, leaves reluctantly. The last third of the sermon is given to an empty synagogue, with only Zalmen witnessing what is said. Powerful imagery was lost in the Broadway version if all of this silent business was removed. Even if the image of the synagogue council leaving was retained, much of that scene did indeed lose both potential and actual meaning without the appearance and exit of the foreign actors. The image of the oldest actor watching the Rabbi was enough to indicate that the Rabbi's traumatic message could have been heard and understood, underscoring that the fact that it was not deeply tragic. Without that image, the sense of the potential behind the Rabbi's message is indeed lost, and the Rabbi may as well have been delivering his sermon to an empty room or in the confines of his mind. The result of the removal of this silent business is threefold. First, the meaning (potential or otherwise) behind the Rabbi's sermon is lost. Second, the potential for collective traumatic expression is also lost, as there is no collective to receive, own, or express the traumatic past (a past that is only sparsely outlined in the first place). Finally, the meaning-systems that make up religious rituals are rendered ineffective, a fact which moves the audience's attention more to the historical fact of Soviet oppression and less to the emotive fact of the community's Jewish suffering.

Daniel Kimmel, reviewing the filmed stage play, asserts that "Each of the characters finds his own way of coping with the oppressive Soviet state. The Rabbi focuses on prayer and pretends to be oblivious to larger issues" ("Wiesel's Zalmen Still Provokes Decades Later"). Here is another review that foregrounds the historical fact of Soviet oppression over the traumatic reality of the Rabbi and his small community. However, given the lack of description of the limit event or events, this is perhaps surprising. The Arena production came closer to

emphasizing the traumatic reality of the characters, in the opinion of *Washington Post* reviewer Alan Kriegsman.

Elie Wiesel's stark drama is that rarest of theatrical entities – a topical play that transcends its own topicality. Ostensibly it is about the predicament of Soviet Jewry in the post-Stalin era... But the reverberations clearly extend to the victims of tyrannical oppression anywhere. The choices, the dilemmas the playwright has posed for his characters – to speak or be silent, to deny a heritage or to embrace it, to dare or not to dare – these are options faced today and every day by many people in many lands.

(“Arena's 'Madness'”)

While Kriegsman seems to have grasped the text in a more substantial way than Kimmel or the March 28 *New York Times* reviewer, the inclination to interpret the universality of oppression in a play set in a historical moment, based upon actual circumstances, speaks to the difficulty audience members must have had both in delineating why a presumably traumatic reaction was occurring in the Rabbi (why he eventually goes mad in order to speak the truth about the suffering of his people) and in relating to it on more than an intellectual and passive level. Wiesel seemed caught between portraying the trauma of his characters and portraying the traumatic silence. In short, in order to grasp the trauma of the Jews in this play, one would have to have read about their real life equivalents in *The Jews of Silence*.

Ultimately, *Zalmen* seems not to have conveyed traumatic memory or traumatic reactions in such a way that was accessible to its audiences, much in the same way that the Rabbi's seemingly traumatic response is not accessible to his synagogue council. This reflects the circumstances of the synagogue council, which was equally unable to apprehend the traumatic

memory and reaction of the Rabbi in a way that led to its dissemination into the collective realm in a useful way, or into the culture realm at all.

II.9 PERFORMANCE HISTORY AND CRITICISM OF *THE TRIAL OF GOD*

The Trial of God, though with a much sparser performance history, accomplished in many ways, both internally and externally, what *Zalmen* did not. The play's world premiere was at the Montasier Theater in Versailles, France, under the direction of Marie-Odile Grinwald. The date of this premiere is 1979 or one year before that. Other productions were launched in San Miniato, Italy, Germany, Scandinavia, and at various universities in the United States. Of particular interest is one of the most recent university productions, also directed by Guila Clara Kessous at Boston University Theatre on March 25 and 26, 2007.

As noted above, the movement of the private trauma of Hanna is disseminated into the collective realm with relative ease, though it does not make its way into the realm of culturally-recognized trauma. This seems not to be true of the second performance of the play, which opened in San Miniato, Italy, on August 29, 1983. The group which represses and eventually kills the Jews of Shamgorod is made up of Christians. The priest in the play cannot fully grasp the traumatic narrative of the Jews gathered at the Shamgorod inn on Purim. Ironically, a production was undertaken in a traditionally Christian setting – the Institute for Popular Drama. “In a break with tradition, a theater that calls itself a citadel of modern popular Christian drama has staged an accusatory play by Elie Wiesel” (Kamm, “A Drama About God Opens to Bravos in Italy”). The Artistic Director, Father Marco Bongioanni, was interviewed by Henry Kamm of the *New York Times* for the September 11, 1983 issue. The play was unanimously accepted for

production by the Institute's Festival Committee, and was well-received by the opening night audience. "The play won the enthusiastic endorsement of the first-night audience of about 700 people, who twice interrupted the performance with ovations after particularly passionate speeches. The audience stayed until 1 AM on the chilly square in front of San Miniato's 12th-century cathedral." Bongioanni noted in the interview, "I was aware that the play says strong things about Christians, but I thought they had a measure of reality. ...After all, Berish poses the same anguished question that was posed by a Jew who was crucified. And we cannot be Christians if we are not also in a certain sense Jews." The text of the play, however, is not particularly critical of either the Christian faith or the actions of Christians; the majority of religious criticism, in fact, is directed at the Jews and comes from the character of the priest, who says, "If you could hang all Christian patriots, that would really be a cause for celebration, right? ...Why play the innocent now? Don't you know that Jews killed all their opponents... You hate everybody – and then you wonder why you are hated" (30).

Reviewer Thomas Pyne of the *Los Angeles Times* (May 20, 199 issue) insists that the play is not truly a protest piece, but a serious exploration of the nature and necessity of evil. "Wiesel forbid us the brutalizing belief that evil is just a part of the script [of life], that our lives are a piece of religious theater designed sometimes to edify and sometimes to test us." Faulstick in his review asserts that, through this thorough exploration of the nature of evil and suffering, "Wiesel significantly thickens the theodicy discussion. The need to justify God, that is, the need to do theodicy... arises from the seeming imbalance of 1) God's goodness, 2) God's power, and 3) the reality of evil" (293). Shortly after, however, he claims, "*The Trial of God* is complex and contradictory; it provides no clear answers and raises nearly impossible questions, leaving readers with the responsibility of trying to answer those questions for themselves" (*ibid*). This

comment alone is perhaps not enough to reveal Faulstick's position as an essentialist Christian theologian²⁹, but it does much to reveal his Christian reception of the text and the text in performance.

As a consequence of all of the evil surrounding Sam, and ultimately his full revelation as Satan, readers recognize conclusively that *The Trial of God* does not intend Sam's defense of God to be an adequate theodicy in this context. Wiesel's presentation points to (at least) three conclusions: 1) the effectiveness and appropriateness of a theodicy depends on who offers it to whom and in what circumstances; 2) Sam's free-will theodicy is not viable for the play's characters, and by extension is not likely viable for Wiesel; and 3) readers must turn from Sam to another character, namely Berish, to find a satisfying theodicy in *The Trial of God*. Still, we can imagine aspects of Sam's theodicy, shared in a different context, being convincing. (296)

We have two types of Christian critiques of *The Trial of God*. The first two (Kamm's and Pyne's) seem sympathetic to the theological questions within the play, and appear to take to heart the legitimacy of those questions within the historical, dramatic, and cultural circumstances in which they take place. The last critique by Faulstick apprehends the tragic, traumatic, and theological circumstances through an essentialist Christian lens, thereby decentralizing the traumatic impetus of a tragic play written by a survivor of the Holocaust. By not engaging the misotheistic process through which Wiesel has turned subjective traumatic experience and personal traumatic memory into a collective Jewish experience, Faulstick has failed to recognize the play as a model *for* trauma, in which complete recovery may not be possible, but solidarity in collective suffering and the group interpretation of similar memories opens up the question of

²⁹Further evidence is in his citations. Literally all six of the major theologians he cites (Stephen Davis, John Hick, Alvin Plantinga, David Ray Griffin, Wendy Farley, and Jean-Luc Marion) are Christian theologians.

recovery on the cultural level, and on the terms of those who have suffered historically Jewish traumas.

III.0 CHAPTER THREE – CASE STUDY 2: TRAUMATIC NEXUS AND AESCHYLUS' *THE ORESTEIA*³⁰

III.1 – *THE ORESTEIA* AS A SITE OF MULTIPLE TRAUMAS

Traumatologist Dr. Jonathan Shay draws a strong analogy between Trojan and Vietnam War trauma in his book *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*. He details the ancient Greeks' sophisticated understanding of what we now call psychological trauma, as well as the social and artistic mechanisms within Athenian society that were meant to reintegrate traumatized soldiers into the everyday life of the *polis*.

The ancient Greeks had a distinctive therapy of purification, healing, and reintegration that was undertaken as a whole community. We know it as Athenian theater... The distinctive character of Athenian theater came from the requirements of a democratic polity made up entirely of present or former soldiers³¹ to provide communalization for combat veterans. The Athenians communally reintegrated their returning warriors in recurring participation in rituals of the theatre. (Shay 230)

³⁰For the sake of continuity, all English translations of the Greek are by Richmond Lattimore, including *The Oresteia*, *The Iliad*, and *The Odyssey*, except when I am citing the quotations of scholars who have provided their own translations. In cases where translation problems arise, I have submitted my own translations of the Greek when possible.

³¹This is not strictly true, at least in the case of Athenian tragedy. Foreign ambassadors, metics, and those who had not yet attained citizenship were also deeply involved. However, it is a reasonable assertion that citizens, the vast majority of whom were required to serve in the military, made up most of the participants and audience at the Great Dionysia.

It is from *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, as well as other epic and lyric war narratives, that the Greek dramatists drew narratives that became socially-responsive models *of* and *for* trauma and recovery. Of the most complete and detailed of these models is *The Oresteia*, first produced in 458 BC by the war veteran Aeschylus.

While previous studies of *The Oresteia* over the past 70 years, both on small and large scales, have focused on the cycle's relation to concepts of justice and legality, democracy, misogyny, and even criminology³², this chapter instead focuses on the traumatic in three realms of inquiry— theatrical, mythical, and historical – as they pertain to *The Oresteia* of Aeschylus. The ancient Athenian understanding of what is now conceptualized as war trauma, which plays through the extant work of Aeschylus – specifically, in *The Persians* (472 BCE) and *The Oresteia* (458 BCE) – was a highly sophisticated concept, but nonetheless one that was not codified under a currently recognizable set of unifying terms or within a specific, formal mode or discipline. The application of modern psychological and emergent “cultural trauma” theories, as well as some particular methodologies drawn from audience reception translation theory, and linguistic considerations, will be used as the primary analytic tools for interpolating the textual and historical sources and circumstances to analyze the individually and collectively traumatic in *The Oresteia*.

This chapter will also trace what will be called, throughout this and the following chapter the *historical-traumatic arc* of these plays, a nexus for the interconnectivity of individual and collective traumas. An understanding of the historical-traumatic arc of *The Oresteia* provides insights into Aeschylus as both private experiencer and public witness to war trauma, as private rememberer and public, cooperative commemorator. This understanding also helps to enrich the

³²Cf. E. Fraenkel (1950).

current, emergent definitions of collective and cultural traumas. Finally, this understanding helps to fill in the historical lacunae in ancient Greek theatre history, left in the wake of insubstantial physical evidence, by applying the principle of “historical specificity” to theatrical trauma “claims” that run parallel to social and historical circumstances contemporary to the 458 premiere of *The Oresteia* in Athens. The exploration of the historical-traumatic arc begins by reviewing *Agamemnon* through the lens of the private, individual trauma of Clytemnestra, the first of the cycle's fully elaborated trauma claims. Next, the interconnection of individual and collective traumas is explored in *The Libation Bearers*. This play is rife with traumas both individual (those of Orestes, Electra, and, as will be shown, Clytemnestra) and collective (the Chorus of Agamemnon's former slaves, the House of Atreus, and the *polis* of Argos). The play is also the nexus of these traumas (which are theatrical in nature), those that are mythic (embedded in the cultural narrative of the Athenians), and those that are historical (that is analogical or in other ways responsive to the contemporary lives of the ancient Athenians). Last is *The Eumenides*, Aeschylus' model *for* trauma and recovery, which branches into the aforementioned mythic, theatrical, and historical levels, and beyond – proposing not only a divine, ritualized *raison d'être* for Athens' survival and democratic process, but also the expansion of their way of life and the justification of empire. The study of *The Eumenides* focuses on the title characters and their transmutation, who provide the closest thing to models of trauma as it was understood and conceptualized by the ancient Athenians.

Of the seven extant plays by Aeschylus, each is distinguishable for traits that may or may not be distinct to the playwright's complete body of work. *The Persians* is uncharacteristic of the extant plays of Aeschylus and the other tragedians, because it is based on contemporary history, but with the established dramatic conventions of the time which allows for a degree of parsing

historical elements from fictive and dramatic ones. The strongest methodology for analyzing the historical influences upon *The Oresteia* is largely the same, and respects the same caveat set down by classicist Christopher Pelling about over-interpreting Greek literature:

The difficult task is to recover *these generic limits and expectations* [in tragedy], for we have to try and infer them from the text itself, with an inevitable danger of circularity... It is as if we had to try and disentangle the factual element in a war-film simply on internal evidence, and it is immediately clear how difficult that would be. One principle might be to operate a sliding scale of suspicion. We cannot be certain that any particular detail is true or false; but suspicion arises more readily when we find motifs or elements which serve particular literary purposes – the things which, artistically, fit too well. (Pelling 2)

Many of the concepts developed and already applied in this study help to close the gap between the historically factual and the theatrically invented, thus allowing an analysis that can better distinguish between the two. Lakoff and Johnson's concept of metaphor has the potential to trace, behaviorally, what is most likely meant to portray and represent the actually, historically traumatic on the Ancient Greek stage. The multi-directional analyses of individual and collective traumas clarify exactly how the traumas are transmitted and relate to each other. In order to sharpen the focus of these analyses, very particular tools from audience reception will now be employed, as they pertain to the historical and cognitive considerations of the original audience of *The Oresteia* in 458 BC. Finally, the notion of “historical specificity” is employed as a litmus test for these analyses of traumatic portrayals and parallels.

Of Aeschylus' seven extant plays, *The Seven Against Thebes* and *The Suppliants* are Homeric in tone, while *Prometheus Bound* draws primarily from the source material of Hesiod. The remaining three of Aeschylus' plays, *The Oresteia* (*Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, and

The Eumenides), display what is, at least in the hindsight of our current understanding, a paradoxical relationship between the mythic/legendary and the contemporary; it is a cycle of tragedies which provides a mythical story behind the founding of a particular, Athenian, contemporary democratic institution (the Areopagus court), during a time in which the original audience would have been able to see the iconography and historical fact of democracy all around them, from the temple of *Athenē parthenē* over one's right shoulder³³ to the east/west-oligarchic/democratic orientation of stage directions implicit in stage directions (Rehm 216), to the structural similarities between the Theatre of Dionysus and the Agora (Rehm 31), and the organization of people in the Aeropagus Court.

III.2 ANCIENT GREEK CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF TRAUMA: *TRAUMA, NOSOS,* *AND MINĒSIPĒMÔN PONOS*

Psychiatrist Bennett Simon delineates the difficulty of analyzing mental disease and disorder in ancient cultures.

...there are serious problems of definition and boundary. Every culture, to my knowledge, has some category that can be called "madness," but madness is not always easily distinguished from other categories of thought and behavior. Further problems occur in separating madness from states of disturbance that occur in connection with particular life events or stages of life: sickness, separation, death, adolescence, old age, and so on. Generally speaking, each culture has rough limits of expectable [sic] behavior in these situations, but when does profound grief become pathological mourning? ..At

³³The roof of the Parthenon, if not more, was visible at the time, and there is no doubt an Athenian citizen would have known what structure he was seeing from that vantage point..

what point do we draw the line between innovative and insane, between visionary and psychotic? (Simon 31)

The same can certainly be said about trauma, especially in the various ways it is currently understood, and in light of the ancient Greeks' understanding of it and concepts that come close to our modern theorizations. Much like its modern counterpart, the ancient Greek conceptualization of trauma revolved almost exclusively around the experience and aftereffects of war. War literature as early as *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* provides most of the framework that Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and other non-extant tragedians fashioned into tragic and sometimes traumatic narratives. However, that does not mean that there is a unified, codified concept of trauma to be found within ancient Greek thought, simply because the word trauma (τραῦμα) originated there.

A more than cursory exploration of the etymology of Greek τραῦμα³⁴ (trauma) and the intellectual genealogy of traumatic understandings in Greek thought reveal both disunity and elision that were manifest in the subjective states that would now be called psychological and collective trauma. “The ancient Greek emotional lexicon does not map neatly onto modern English concepts” (Konstan 1033). Conceptual disunity existed in part because the tragic playwrights and the Homeric literature that inspired the majority of their works did not see the “mind” or its experiences as unities, but as a series of phenomena without a single locus. “The terms for the inner agencies of mental life [among the Greeks] are not clearly and systematically distinguished. ...Homer makes no clear differentiation between organs of thinking and organs of feeling and emotion. To a large degree, all the terms of mental functioning³⁵ are amalgams of

³⁴The Ancient Greek is used where the ancient conceptual framework is meant.

³⁵Simon includes five major terms used throughout Homer and, by extension, the Greek tragedians. *Phrenē* (φρένη), lit. “head,” is “a term associated with intellectual activity, but not purely intellectual either” (58). *Kardia*

mind and heart or of thinking and emotionality. The agencies of mental life are rather concrete and overlap with physical organs” (Simon 59).

In addition to this disunity of terminology is the elision of what is now so often considered dichotomous – the physical and the psychological. Sophocles' 409 BC play, *Philoctetes*, for example, hinges upon the title character's τραῦμα, which in this case is a physical wound. This play, though nearly 50 years later than *The Oresteia*, is helpful in interpreting the intellectual genealogy at work in understanding that central concept. Even when the primary manifestation of τραῦμα is physical, there is the notable elision of the physical and psychological; Philoctetes' mental state and resultant actions are altered by the presence of the wound in more than a cause-and-effect manner. *Philoctetes* indicates a continuity in the ancient τραῦμα concept, the majority of which is lost to the modern scholar, that survived two major wars (the Persian and the Peloponnesian), in a way that is largely unchanged across other genres of Greek literature, be they the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides, the philosophical works of Plato, or the works of other tragic playwrights.

Perhaps more important, however, is another phenomenon which occurs in light of Philoctetes' τραῦμα, between the personal and the public. At the opening of the play, Odysseus conveys to the audience, “...I exposed long ago the native of Malis, Poeas' son [Philoctetes], on the express command of the two chieftains to do so, because his foot was all running with a gnawing disease. Neither libation nor burnt sacrifice could be attempted by us in peace, but with

(καρδία), lit. “heart” is “used in similar, though not necessarily identical, contexts” (*ibid*). “The most intellectual term in Homer for an organ or agency of mental activity is *noos* [νόος, lit. “mind, sense, or wit”], but even this cannot always be equated with ‘mind’...though this is probably free of any specific physical connotations” (58-59). There is *thumos* [θύμος, lit. “soul, spirit, feeling, or thought”], which “is an entity or organ that swells within the person yet can leave with death or fainting” (59). Finally, there is “*psuchē*” [ψυχή, lit. “life, ghost, shade, soul”], which “partakes of the physical, but seems to be less concretely physical than most of the other terms” (*ibid*). Simon concludes this discussion of the major terms with “there is no articulated concept of a psychic structure or function” (*ibid*).

his wild, ill-omened cries he filled the whole camp continually with shrieking, moaning” (4-12). The description of the wound in line 7, νόσῳ καταστάζοντα διαβόρω πόδα, is more closely translated as “a devouring disease of the dripping foot.” Yet, neither here nor elsewhere in the first half of the play is much attention paid to the suffering (physical or otherwise) of Philoctetes. The circumstances of Philoctetes' war wound are almost solely *public* in nature, centralizing the impact not upon the victim but upon the military collective. The “dripping disease,” derived from the word *nosos* (νόσος), results in a disruption of the necessary rituals of war, the communion of mortals and gods to ensure the success and safety of the collective. To eliminate the disruption of collective activity (the function of a meaning system) Philoctetes was forced into exile.

Lines 4-12 of *Philoctetes* introduce the possibility of an elision of the physical and psychological in the Greek understanding of war wounds, which, in modern trauma studies from 1850 to the present, has been a site of continued conceptual tension, resulting only within the last 40 years in a dichotomous understanding. The primary proof for this is in the fact that war wounds (no matter the words to use to describe them), were embedded in the Greek public consciousness, and a matter of concern that *continually decentralized the victim*. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* 866, Agamemnon's τραῦμα (the only use of this term in *Agamemnon*) appears to be more trying and limiting to the associates of the victim (namely, Clytemnestra and the Chorus) than to the victim himself.

In all of the instances where “wound” or “wounds” occur in Euripides (14 times), it is always physical, the result of combat, nearly always resulting in death. Neither the word nor any declension of it appears in extant Sophocles. In all of extant Greek classical literature, τραῦμα or some dialectical variant is used the most in Herodotus' *Histories* (a total of 17 times), and a

handful of these are the only instances when the term begins to take on other connotations, such as “defeat” (1.18 and 4.160) and the damaging of military equipment such as ships (6.16).

However, it is valuable to underscore once again that the trauma concept dealt with here is, in this dissertation, both ancient and modern, derived from theory and from subjective, theatricalized experience.

Why this paradox exists is not answered, but rather enriched by the consideration of the traumatic in *The Oresteia*, first expressed by the Chorus in lines 179-183 of *Agamemnon*:

στάζει δ' ἔνθ' ὕπνω πρὸ καρδίας

trickles/ and/ in the sleep on/ ← heart (acc.)
falls in even (acc.) (acc.) upon (w/ pro and acc. article)
drops

μνησιπήμων πόνος: καὶ παρ' ἄ-

reminding of misery suffering and
(nom. adj.) → (nom.)

κοντας ἤλθε σωφρονεῖν.

unwillingly it comes to bring to the senses
(aor.) (inf.)

δαιμόνων δέ που χάρις βίαιος

of the gods and doubt- grace forcible/
(gen. pl.) less forced/
violent

σέλμα σεμνὸν ἡμένων.

throne revered/ sitting (gen. pl.)
august/ w/ daimonon)
holy

Even in sleep, upon the heart

trickles suffering which remembers [other?] misery:

and doubtless, violent³⁶ grace comes unwillingly

from the revered throne of the ruling gods

to bring [man] to [his] senses.

³⁶Alt. “forced.”

The most famous translation, which is valuable in that it informs both modern war trauma and collective trauma, was rendered by Edith Hamilton³⁷: “And even in our sleep, pain that cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, and in our own despite, against our will, comes wisdom to us by the awful grace of God” (24). Here we see many aspects of a modern understanding of combat trauma, with two important additions worthy of discussion. First, the Chorus of *Agamemnon* delineates many of the same symptoms found in the diagnostic framework for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: continual re-experiencing of emotions rooted in the traumatic event (μνησιπήμων πόνος, “pain that cannot forget” or “suffering remembering misery”), nightmares (“even in sleep”), what could be viewed as an alternating, counter-resistant “numbing” of those emotions (“in our own despite, against our will” or “unwillingly”), all of which are persistent in that they “cannot forget”³⁸ (*DSM-IV-TR* 309.81). In addition, the emotive and mnemonic aspects of the trauma have taken on proverbial lives of their own, both grammatically and analogically; it is not the victim or victims who “remember misery,” but the suffering itself. These multiple instances of suffering (which may now be considered *traumas* in the most complete and modern sense of the word) are now mnemonically linked to one another. What remains in this quotation, a leitmotif that carries through *The Oresteia*, is the public nature of the traumatic suffering experienced, shown in the assumptive use of plural pronouns, and the presupposition of some form of recovery from the trauma: “wisdom” or “coming to one's senses” by the “awful” or unbidden grace of the gods. These aspects of the passage, which can be considered something of

³⁷This translation was famously misquoted by Robert F. Kennedy in his April 4, 1968 speech in Indianapolis, Indiana announcing the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. The most notable inconsistency is that he said “despair” instead of “despite” (Morrissey no page). This particular translation is of import because of its continual utility in the negotiation of a modern collective trauma.

³⁸This phrase also indicates decentralization of the victim; it is the *pain* that remembers, not the individual who feels it.

a coda for *Agamemnon*, and perhaps the whole trilogy, lead to a consideration of trauma in a more public, collective, and even cultural form.

The 458 audience of *The Oresteia*, so accustomed to the theatrical genre of tragedy, though less homogenous than the war veteran audience of *The Persians*, would have reflected upon similarities in imagistic patterns of suffering (traumatic or otherwise). Aeschylus himself would have mourned (and clearly not forgotten) his family members and comrades who had died in battle, and memories of these victims would have no doubt influenced the content of his theatrical works. For example, if the accounts³⁹ of the death of Aeschylus' brother, Cynegeirus, or the manner in which it took place at the Battle of Marathon, are to be believed, then they certainly fed into the tragic and traumatic imagery and narratives of Aeschylus' work. If neither of these are to be believed, then they should be considered part of the cultural memory that informed and was informed by the ancient understanding of what is now called trauma.

Also, the definitions of collective and cultural trauma help to enhance understanding of the “suffering which remembers misery” passage of *Agamemnon*, by bringing the agency behind meaning-systems into relief. It is the suffering itself which cannot forget, as opposed to the individual's or even collective's experiencing of pain. The “wisdom” or “coming to one's sense” that comes from the gods is not something sought, but rather, is inevitable and inherent to the reality of traumatic suffering. Indeed, it is tempting to rely solely on these four lines of Greek as a catch-all definition of and justification for collective or cultural trauma, at the expense of the reflexivity necessary for a deeper socio-cultural understanding of Greek tragedy in its original context, and at the expense of the reflexivity internal to the work of Aeschylus. However, avoiding this temptation also sheds some light upon the differences between ancient and modern

³⁹Particularly, Herodotus 6.114.

understandings of trauma. The word τραῦμα in line 866 of *Agamemnon*, spoken by Clytemnestra, is not seen again in the whole of *The Oresteia*. These τραύματα she speaks of are feared rather than seen.

Though expressed as physical, they also have an undeniably public aspect, both within the plays (where they are things that affect the collective) and among the audience, where they are experienced realities of individual victimhood and public negotiation. Aeschylus, himself a general and veteran of the Battles of Marathon and Plataea, was “writing for men who had fought in battle, as he himself had once done” and, at least in the case of *The Persians*, “it was impossible for [Aeschylus] to depart from the main outlines of known fact or even such minor details as a substantial part of his audience would have remembered” (Podlecki 8-9).

Accordingly, the trauma Aeschylus dealt with in *The Persians* and later works can be held to cultural trauma's modern rule of “historical specificity.”

Because Aeschylus was both the author and a principle performer (Arnott 139), the theatrical understanding of trauma in *The Oresteia* is rooted in lived experience. Aeschylus, as a leader in the Athenian military, artistic community, and general society, would have been in a much better position to tell the story of Athens in a way that was much more comprehensive and critical than most. As a result, there exists a cycle of plays that presumes the solution to individual war traumas are public responsibility, and are to be undertaken by social mechanisms (meaning-systems), including religious rituals, the theatre, and the law court. Trauma in Aeschylus is foremost a public concern, often to the exclusion of the victim. Trauma is intergenerational and cumulative, and traumas are deeply interconnected, whether they are historical or dramatic. What gives further credence to the Aeschylean understanding of what is now called trauma is a final historical consideration – that these repetitions of theme, image, and

narrative continue through the traumas of the Peloponnesian War, in the later work of Sophocles and Euripides.

III.3 ANCIENT GREEK AUDIENCE: *AGAMEMNON* AND RECEPTION THROUGH INTERPOLATION

Agamemnon, according to an abundance of critics from the French Renaissance, suffered from “extreme simplicity” (quoted in Matheson 6, 189), and is a “cold and atrocious piece” (La Harpe 1.84). Regarding the character Clytemnestra specifically, “she is neither in love, nor jealous, nor ambitious. She just wants to kill her husband and she does. That’s the play!” (*ibid*) While these critiques are as much informed by Renaissance misinterpretations of both Aeschylus and Aristotle, they are nonetheless viable, in that Clytemnestra's justification for the murder of Agamemnon, *internal* to the play, is scant at best. These critiques, in combination with the available production history (or in this case, lack thereof) of *Agamemnon* in the Classical and Hellenistic periods, indicates the play’s perceived unproduceability across cultures and over extended historical periods. It would seem that one of the primary problems (if not the central one) centers around the aforementioned impetus behind Clytemnestra’s murder of Agamemnon. At the very least, the actions of Clytemnestra present a dramaturgical problem that was felt by ancient theatre makers as it is by modern ones.

While little critical attention has been paid in the modern era to *The Libation Bearers*, as opposed to *Agamemnon* and *The Eumenides*, the inverse seems to be true of production histories and theatre criticism until the end of the 19th century. Based on the available evidence, it seems *Agamemnon* enjoyed very few productions of and on its own, even shortly after the death of

Aeschylus (c. 456 BC), and there is no record that *The Oresteia* was produced in its entirety after the classical period until the Alexander Dumas production of 1856 (Michelakis 2). While the reasons for this lack in the Classical and Hellenistic periods are not immediately clear, literary and theatre critics during the Renaissance and early Modern eras often justified it in the supposedly poor quality of the composition; an unbelievable Clytemnestra was one of the main assertions of their attacks. However, when viewed through the lens of audience reception proposed by classicist Pat Easterling, and the previously established understanding of individual trauma, a far different picture of Clytemnestra, and the beginning of the “historical-traumatic” arc of *The Oresteia*, become clear.

To contextualize: while *Agamemnon* traces personal trauma, and as will be shown, defines trauma itself, *The Libation Bearers* builds upon the trauma concept while creating a nexus of individual and collective traumas. What is more, *The Libation Bearers* begins the movement toward the resolution of these traumas (and the establishment of a model for traumatic recovery) through mythic and historical modes. By mirroring both traditional history and theatrical (production) history – that is, the ghosting⁴⁰ of other plays, usually also Aeschylean – *The Libation Bearers* blends traumatic memory as performance and reception. This avenue of exploration ultimately reveals that the traumatic, historical, and mythic (at least in the context of this cultural moment) run so parallel through the arc of *The Oresteia* as to be nearly indecipherable from each other.

The Eumenides completes the traumatic-historical arc of *The Oresteia*, moving the cycle from private and collective traumas to public solution. While the conflation of the mythically theatrical and immediately historio-political is noteworthy here (manifest in the dramatic

⁴⁰Cf. Marvin Carlson's *The Haunted Stage: Theatre as Memory Machine* (2001).

portrayal of the Athenian courts), it is the model *for* traumatic recovery in the play that is the primary focus here. It is here that reception of the original 458 BC production can be most readily apprehended, as it is so closely connected to tangible cultural operations and civil institutions that were established and in the process of ongoing change. A return to Easterling's methodology, modified for the analysis of theatricalized individual and collective traumatic memory, serves to complete the analysis of *The Oresteia*.

Pat Easterling acknowledges the supposed dramaturgical problems inherent in *Agamemnon*, but posits they are overcome by an understanding, through interpolation, of both the influence of the 458 BC premiere, and the later influence of that premiere on Greek culture, immediately after the death of Aeschylus and in drama after 458. "Luckily there has been an encouraging shift in recent years towards a fairly catholic view of reception history... It has been made easier for us to think of the whole phenomenon of reception in a more flexible way because of changes that have been going on in other disciplines, where a 'bottom-up' approach has been transforming the nature of research" (23). This more catholic, flexible approach has allowed Easterling to explore reception with a variety of tools, including artifacts from theatre history, archaeology, classical studies, and linguistic anthropology. She uses this evidence to interpolate, as closely as possible, the reception of the 458 audience of *Agamemnon*, starting with late antiquity.

The first category Easterling employs is "documentary and literary sources": inscriptions, papyri, and medieval transcripts, making reference – explicit or implicit – to performances, remarks by ancient writers, (scholars, historians, bibliographers) on the impact, significance, popularity or lack of it, of anything (including other performance media) that might be related to Aeschylus' play. What are most valuable in this category are the surviving scholia

(notes, often marginal ones, made by scholiasts copying manuscripts), which reveal specific plot points and conventions of *Agamemnon* and the rest of *The Oresteia* to be highly original; the offstage cries at lines 1343 and 1345 that portray the murder of Agamemnon are a first in Greek tragedy (Easterling 28). The cycle also marks the inaugural employment of the *skēnē* house as useable scenery (Lowe 173). The scholia, along with the survival of the text itself, reveal that *Agamemnon* along with the other six extant Aeschylean plays, were significant enough in public discourse to survive through the Byzantine era. Easterling points to a surviving *hypothesis* to the play, written centuries later, as a testament to a “theatrical importance” (25) largely lost in the early Modern era.

...Soon afterwards Talthybius arrives and gives an account of the voyage. Agamemnon arrives in a chariot, and a second chariot followed it, with the booty and Cassandra. Agamemnon enters the house with Clytemnestra, but before going into the palace, Cassandra prophesies her own and Agamemnon’s deaths and Orestes’ killing of his mother, and rushes in as one about to die, having thrown off her garlands. This part of the play is admired for its power to arouse *ekplēxis* (amazement/terror) and pity in full measure. Aeschylus in his own distinctive way... has Agamemnon murdered on stage⁴¹, but having passed over the death of Cassandra in silence, he showed her corpse, and he has created a scene in which Aegisthus and Clytemnestra each claim responsibility for the murder on a single count. (Easterling 25-26)

Within this *hypothesis*, which Easterling calls part of “a much more extensive history of the [ancient] discussion of the play” (25), four things which Easterling does not fully address are of

⁴¹While Easterling does not address this discrepancy with anything more than a parenthetical question mark, I suspect this is not an error in reading, but one based upon a 5th century change to the staging of the play, as explained below.

importance here. First is the arrival of the two chariots, which both Oliver Taplin (304-305) and Easterling (26) pass off as “a glimpse of a Hellenistic performance in which the display of Agamemnon’s spoils and retinue was more prominent than in the original” (*ibid*). However, it is worth considering that the addition of the chariots may be more than a matter of spectacle and increasing decadence in 4th century theatre. This addition could have also been a de-emphasizing of the subsequent plot elements leading up to the murder of Agamemnon – Clytemnestra’s “carpet scene” and the offstage murder of Agamemnon and Cassandra. It is likewise worth considering whether such a bias toward spectacle was in part a result of an inability to apprehend the forward motion of the plot, at least with regard to Clytemnestra. This is, of course, only speculation, but there is no reason to believe this would be less of a dramaturgical concern in the ancient world than it is on the modern stage⁴². One must note, on the one hand, that “the myth of Agamemnon, Aegisthus, Clytemnestra, and Orestes has survived in so stylized a dramatic form that its origins are almost obliterated” (Graves 384n). On the other hand, “Before 458 BC, ‘Agamemnon’ was not a dramatic text at all. It was the name of a mythological character, known not only for his unheroic death, but also for his deeds as leader of the Greek army in Troy” (Michelakis 4). Aeschylus was dealing with material that was already old in terms of oral tradition and literature, but new in terms of theatre.

The second point of interest from the *hypothesis* is the glossing over of the climactic “carpet scene” in favor of emphasizing Cassandra’s prophecy, the casting off of her garlands and other prophetic garb, and her entry into the palace. This could further indicate a post-Classical

⁴²In epic and lyric poetry, as well as other mythological narratives, many of which are no longer extant, Clytemnestra had ample motivation for the murder of Agamemnon. This is also true if one takes into account Euripidean and Sophoclean versions of the story. However, the focus here is on what is *internal to* and *makes sense within* the drama as an independent entity. It does not make sense that Aeschylus, in altering fundamental aspects of the House of Atreus narrative, would allow such gaps of logic.

decentralizing of the character of Clytemnestra, for various reasons; possible examples include a greater focus on the prophetic and mythic back story as justification for Clytemnestra's actions, and/or a greater focus on Cassandra as a more central tragic victim. Regardless, the *hypothesis* reflects more than a literary analysis of the play, but an obvious *performance tradition*, evidenced by the mention of particular staging choices (the chariots and the onstage murder of Agamemnon). Accordingly, it stands to reason that the glossing over of the carpet scene can be counted among those staging choices.

The third point is the moving of the murder of Agamemnon from offstage to onstage. Easterling and others indicate such changes were not necessarily typical of Hellenistic revisions of the play, but she pays it little attention otherwise. Easterling also asserts that revivals of tragedies during the Classical period were of single tragedies as opposed to cycles, and that they may not have been performed in "anything like the original form after the 5th century" (33n1). There is further indication that Euripides' works were far more popular as revival properties than those of Aeschylus or even Sophocles (*ibid*). Revivals of old plays were not allowed at the Dionysia until 386 BC, though lines from Aristophanes' *The Acharnians* (10-12) in 425 BC and *The Frogs*⁴³ (868-869) in 405 BC provide almost irrefutable proof that "the [ancient Athenian] audience can still see Aeschylus performed" (Marshall 62) during the time those productions were first staged in the late Classical era. These pieces of evidence help call into question whether the movement of Agamemnon's death to onstage was a result of something more than merely changing theatrical conventions, or an attempt to adjust once again to a perceived dramaturgical problem.

⁴³There is another point concerning *The Frogs* that is perhaps only circumstantial. When the character Aeschylus is asked to recite the opening lines of *The Oresteia* (*Frogs* 1124, 1128), he recites the opening of *The Libation Bearers*, not *Agamemnon*.

The final point worthy of consideration in this category connects the *hypothesis* to the central thesis of this study: the consideration of trauma. The word *ekplēxis*, which Easterling defines as “amazement” or “terror”, is a key part of the passage.⁴⁴

τοῦτο δὲ τὸ μέρος τοῦ δράματος θαυμάζεται ὡς ἔκπληξιν ἔχον
 This and the portion of the drama it is admired as consternation having
 (nom.) □(nom.) (gen.) □(gen.) (intransitive) (acc.)

καὶ οἶκτον ἱκανόν.
 and pity befitting
 (acc.) □(adj., acc.)

And this portion of the drama is admired as having an *ekplēxis* [lit. “consternation’] and a befitting pity.

The above interlinear translation, taken within the context of the rest of the quoted *hypothesis*, reveal no reason or precedent for the translation of *ekplēxis* as “terror” or “amazement,” outside of an Aristotelian bias. However, it is of note that, unlike the Aristotelian notion, *ekplēxis* in this period (as shown especially in the *hypothesis* of Sophocles’ *Ajax*) is a concept that is not an exclusively dramatically-internal⁴⁵. Could *ekplēxis* then mean something more than just fear, consternation, or even terror? This is where the question of modern trauma begins to become useful in an analysis of reception of the 458 production of *Agamemnon*.

Before moving to the analysis of trauma in *Agamemnon*, it is necessary to complete the tracing of Easterling’s methodology of interpolating reception, the next step of which is the exploration of “intertextual evidence.” Such evidence reveals what is hypothesized above, that

It is important to appreciate the challenge that the Clytemnestra of *Agamemnon* must have presented to ancient audiences. . . .it is likely that by the fourth century, at least, the

⁴⁴*Liddell-Scott* defines ἔκπληξις primarily as “consternation,” while *Middle Liddell* cites the Aescylean phrase ἔκπληξις κακῶν, meaning “terror caused by misfortunes,” which is more in keeping with this analysis.

⁴⁵For the assertion that pity, fear, and catharsis are internal to the drama in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, see Chapter One.

first play was often dropped from performances of *Libation Bearers* and *Eumenides*, whether separately or together, and, moreover, that it was ideologically virtually *impossible* to perform Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (or any other imitation with a similarly androgynous, autonomous, proactive, amoral, and politically triumphant queen) in isolation, without the other two plays of the trilogy. (Hall 60)

Easterling asserts that, despite the lack of evidence of reproductions of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* over the 800 years following its premiere, there is both linguistic and literary evidence for the play's influence on other dramatic works. While there are profound changes to the character of Clytemnestra in subsequent works⁴⁶, the influence of the language of *Agamemnon* upon the works of Sophocles, Euripides, Ion of Chios, and later Seneca (Easterling 30-32, Hall 57) is profound. However, and conversely, "If we really want to find a classic 'Agamemnon' which the Athenians thought worth performing on a regular basis in the fifth century, we need to forget the dramatist whose plays suffered so badly with the passage of time, and turn instead to Homer, a non-dramatic poet, whose work was immortalized in festival after festival" (Michelakis 7).

Finally, Easterling employs "visual evidence," an example of which will become key to the discussion of Clytemnestra in *Agamemnon*. "The famous Boston krater by the Dokimasia painter, showing Aegisthus killing Agamemnon⁴⁷, trapped in a net-like robe, and Clytemnestra rushing in with an axe, is thought by most experts to be earlier than 458, and nothing surviving from a later date looks really close to Aeschylus' version of events" (34). It is from the starting

⁴⁶Cf. Sophocles' *Electra*, Euripides's *Electra* and *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Seneca's *Agamemnon*, and plays all the way up to George Hauptmann's *Die Atriden*, John Barton's *The Greeks*, and Mnouchkine's *Les Atrides*.

⁴⁷There are countless pieces of scholarship arguing the specifics of Agamemnon's murder, and whether the primary executor was Aegisthus or Clytemnestra. Aeschylus' text is itself unclear on the matter, and details beyond the net or net-like cloth are far beyond the scope and relevance of this study.

point of visual evidence that the study can move on to the analysis of individual trauma in *Agamemnon*.

A.J.N.W. Prag notes the rapid “speed with which the axe, like the net, got into the tradition of Agamemnon's and Cassandra's death after Aeschylus” (Prag 82, quoted in Marshall 63). There is evidence to suggest that the net imagery in the mythic versions of the murder of Agamemnon was known, but not well known, until the premiere of *The Oresteia*. This particular imagery may be a key to what has historically been a dramaturgical problem – the plot-internal impetus behind Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon.

When confronted by the Chorus and faced with exile, Clytemnestra retorts that the murder of Agamemnon was revenge for the sacrifice of Iphigenia. This, on the mythic and literary levels, is plausible, though a strict reading of the text as a work of theatre suggests otherwise, as Clytemnestra fails to mention such a motive before that moment (1417). Much more, in fact, is made of the curse originating with Atreus and Thyestes, and the repeated nightmare-like wound/net imagery Clytemnestra claims to have experienced during Agamemnon's long absence. Upon hearing of Agamemnon's return, Clytemnestra addresses the Chorus of Argive men with the following imagery⁴⁸.

What I tell you now / I learned not from another; this is my own sad life / all the long
years this man was gone at Ilium. / It is evil and a thing of terror when a wife / sits in the
house forlorn with no man by, and hears / rumors that like a fever die to break again, /
and men come in with news of fear, and on their heels / another messenger, with worse
news to cry aloud / here in this house. Had Agamemnon taken all / the wounds the tale
whereof was carried home to me, / he had been cut full of gashes like a fishing net. / If he

⁴⁸Seaford asserts the murder-in-the-bath imagery is not new to mythology, and probably not to the Agamemnon myth, but that it is probably new to the stage (247).

had died each time that rumor told his death, / He must have been some triple-bodied
Geryon / Back from the dead with threefold cloak of earth upon / his body, and killed
once for every shape assumed. / Because such tales broke out forever on my rest, / many
a time they cut me down and freed my throat / from the noose overslung where I had
caught it fast. (858-877)

We can read in this monologue many of those same symptoms as those in Wiesel's description of the genesis of *The Trial of God* – “persistent re-experiencing” (“die and break again” and “on their heels another messenger”), helplessness, “acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring (includes a sense of reliving the experience),” “difficulty staying or falling asleep” and possibly hypervigilance and nightmares (“such tales broke out forever on my rest” could be real or imagined reports), exaggerated startle response, and possible depressive suicidality (“from the noose overslung where I had caught it fast”), all with symptoms “present for more than one month” (*DSM –IV-TR* 309.81); we can presume these images were persistent in her mind during the 10-year Trojan War. At the risk of overinterpreting the monologue, Clytemnestra describes what could be considered textbook Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder⁴⁹.

Aside from the pottery fragment of the Boston krater, the net imagery seems to be unique to Aeschylus. More importantly, it is repeated in the prophecy of Cassandra – “Is it some net of death?” (1115) and, in a somewhat similar vein, “caught in the folded web’s entanglement she pinions him” (1126-1127) – as well as Clytemnestra’s confession (1381). Employing an atypical convention in extant tragedy, Clytemnestra instead of a messenger conveys the details of the

⁴⁹If one were to take into account the multiple limit events-stressors of the House of Atreus, from the stories of Thyestes, the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the ten-year Trojan War, the possibility that the arrival of Aegisthus was more of a rape scenario than a seduction, and the socio-political stress brought to bear on Clytemnestra’s situation, Judith Herman would no doubt feel she is a candidate for C-PTSD, if she were in fact an actual person in a clinical setting. Because she is neither, though, neither diagnosis has anything but analytical value.

murder. “That he might not escape nor beat aside his death, / as fishermen cast their huge circling nets, I spread / deadly abundance of rich robes, and caught him fast. / I struck him twice. In two great cries of agony / he buckled at the knees and fell. When he was down / I struck him the third blow” (1381-1386). The relevant question becomes the connection between Clytemnestra’s confession and her monologue at line 858. This repetition must have some meaning aside from the simple convention of repetition for emphasis. It is reasonable to see the net imagery both as *ekplēxis* to be dreaded (by both Clytemnestra and Cassandra) and *something to be acted out* in traumatic repetition.

III.4 THE LIBATION BEARERS AND THE NEXUS OF INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE TRAUMAS

It can be gleaned from both the ancient and modern understandings of what are now called psychological and cultural/collective traumas that the former is generally a disorder rooted in remembering, while the latter is rooted in the meaning-systems that support and help to make sense of such remembering among groups. Each extant tragedy, all set in a “remoteness of the immediate here-and-now” (Lattimore “Introduction” 19) – with the exception of *The Persians*, set only in a remoteness of location – when dealing with potentially traumatic events, links them to others. Specifically, in *The Oresteia*, there is a genealogy of traumas developed, of one trauma giving rise to another. The trial and acquittal of Orestes (the public, democratic negotiation of and solution to private and familial trauma) in *The Eudmenides* can be traced directly back to the curse Thyestes placed on the House of Atreus, after his brother Atreus fed him his children (before *The Oresteia* began). This act was in turn a revenge for an affair between the Thyestes

and Atreus' wife. Trauma in this regard is interconnected and intergenerational. Perhaps most relevant to the point, it remembers other traumas.

The Libation Bearers is a site not only of traumatic, but also theatrical remembering. The central *stasimon* of the play, the prayer to Agamemnon, remembers the raising of the ghost of Darius in *The Persians*. This appears to be merely a repetition of a theatrical convention that may have simply worked well in an earlier production, until one takes into consideration the audiences attending these plays. There were made up of war veterans, citizens, those preparing for war, nearly all regular theatregoers who would have been an integral if not central part of the theatre history of ancient Athens. *The Oresteia* connects potentially traumatic events in a historical framework, thereby setting up the repetition of war images and themes. The Trojan War is “yoked” to the Persian Wars, through the repetition of images and dramatic structure, much in the same way that the Peloponnesian War was linked to the Persian Wars in Euripides. Just as *The Oresteia* (and, indeed, the trilogy-plus-satyr play arrangement of tragedies possibly invented by Aeschylus) is a progression, so too is the Athenian understanding of itself as a democratic entity, the perpetuation of which was made possible by victories over the Persians at the Battles of Marathon in 490, Salamis in 480, and Plataea in 479. If one cannot assume, one must at least entertain the possibility of a collective, cognitive connection between tragedies by the same playwright.

Supporting a connection between plays by the same author are the connections and repetition of theatrical conventions. As stated above, mourning events, potentially traumatic, remember similar theatrical events. Such a link is more than merely historical – it is thematic, imagistic, and narrative. The strongest example is the “ghosting”⁵⁰ of funereal rituals in the

⁵⁰This term, innovated by Marvin Carlson, is used here in the most liberal sense.

prayer to Agamemnon in *The Libation Bearers* (line 246-509) and the raising of Darius in *The Persians* (line 598-842). Here are two rites of potential resurrection – both about the same length, involving cooperative prayers between individual and Chorus, directed at the dead. The former is attended only by Atossa and the Chorus, the latter by the Chorus, Orestes, and Electra. Both are expressions of a wish: to raise the beloved, mourned dead, but only in *The Persians* does the prayer succeed in a literal sense. What is raised in *The Libation Bearers* is less corporeal; it is used by Orestes and Electra “to encite [sic] themselves and arm themselves with anger that will make them do what they must do” (Lattimore “Introduction” 25).

Resting on the comparison of two similar rituals embedded in separate plays, the argument for connectivity or yoking of traumatic mourning would not be enough. However, there are larger, historical understandings which give it credence. Consider the amount of time between the end of the Persian Wars (a potentially traumatic event for Aeschylus himself) and each of these plays – for *The Persians* (a traumatic understanding of the Persians loss at Salamis), a mere 7 or 8 years (18 from Marathon), and for *The Libation Bearers* a total of 21 years. While the number of war veterans who were watching *The Oresteia* would have been smaller, it is very reasonable to assume that many audience members saw both *The Persians* and *The Libation Bearers*; after all, Aeschylus, a veteran of those same wars, composed and performed in both. It is perhaps more important to look on the history of Athens and the therapeutic purpose of Greek tragedy (purported above by Shay) as processual. Democracy gained the chance to thrive because of the events detailed in *The Persians*; in *The Oresteia*, the religious and legal ramifications of that very same democracy are reconsidered, reified, and expanded to include international and imperial agendas. In other words, the opportunity for one

play to “remember” another, in the same manner that language and plots of Sophocles and Euripides remember those of Aeschylus, are evident.

Not only do traumas in *The Libation Bearers* intersect through recollection and comparison; their individual and collective forms reveal connection *through* intersection. In *The Oresteia*, the nexus of such intersection is *The Libation Bearers*. In what is now understood as a typical decentering of the victim in tragedy, the collective is first considered. “For with a hair-raising shriek, Terror, the diviner of dreams for our house, breathing wrath out of sleep, uttered a cry of terror in the dead of night from the heart of the palace, a cry that fell heavily on the women's quarter” (*The Libation Bearers* 32-36). Another aspect of individual trauma (terror) is spoken of, but it does not originate in the victim, Clytemnestra, whose terror is the result of dream-visions given to her by Apollo. One does not learn the nightmares “breathing wrath out of sleep” are Clytemnestra’s until line 511, after the prayer to Agamemnon and halfway through the play.

In terms of psychological trauma, all of the earmarks found in *Agamemnon* are also in *The Libation Bearers*, with several key additions. Added to *The Libation Bearers* are tacit nightmares (Clytemnestra’s prophetic snake dreams), terror (in the form of Phoebus, arising as a result of the nightmares), depression and fixation upon the object of grief (Electra’s vigil), anger (felt by Electra and Orestes, exacerbated by the ritual mourning of Agamemnon), and the continuation of symptoms over more than one month (years have passed since the murder).

In terms of collective and cultural trauma, many permutations are specific to *The Libation Bearers*. Affect is extreme and negative, but is also built upon by ritualized collective expression. The traumatic event does not merely inform the meaning-system used to express it; it is, for all intents and purposes, the very reason the meaning-system exists. The agency of the

meaning-system have shifted also; the women of the Chorus, once slaves of Agamemnon, now make up the majority of those who grieve for him. The stichomythic interchange of character and Chorus is no longer just a convention of the tragedy. It is also an oscillation between individual and collective recollecting.

Electra: Then whom else should I add to our company?

Chorus: Remember Orestes, though he is still away from home.

Electra: Well said! You have indeed admonished me thoughtfully.

Chorus: For the guilty murderers now, mindful of—

Electra: What should I say? Instruct my inexperience, prescribe the form.

Chorus: Pray that some divinity or some mortal may come to them—

Electra: As judge or as avenger, do you mean?

Chorus: Say in plain speech, “One who will take life for life.”

Electra: And is it right for me to ask this of the gods?

Chorus: How could it not be right to repay an enemy with ills? (114-123)

Further proof of shifted agency, and therefore a disruption in meaning-systems, is in the fact that the dispossessed slaves of Agamemnon take on both mourning and instructive (in some places, even corrective) roles in the ritual. The call for vengeance is just as much theirs as it is Electra’s or Orestes’. Until the re-entry of Orestes, in fact, the Chorus provides the sole focus for the mourning prayer, which Electra cannot find on her own. On her own, she is not clear enough in her speaking to enact the mourning prayer and call for vengeance (line 121). Further convolution of meaning-systems gives credence to *The Libation Bearers* as a site of collective trauma. The funeral ritual becomes a failed resurrection, mirroring something that is ultimately foreign to Athenian life (as evidenced by the fact that the Persians undertook and succeeded with a similar

resurrection). Herein are the primary symptoms of cultural trauma as described by Smelser and expounded upon earlier: memory laden with extreme, negative affect, indelibility in the form of persistent mourning, the threat of cultural destruction, and the violation of cultural assumptions (rooted in the quandary that it is against the laws of the gods both to murder one's mother and not to avenge one's father). All of these symptoms are shown in the disruption of meaning-systems expressed in a shifting of the agency of mourning. Both individual and collective traumas find their solution in the institution and sanctification of the democratic law court in the climactic scene of *The Eumenides*, where they also find the witnessing audiences⁵¹ necessary to become cultural traumas. The broken meaning-system of god-given law is thrown out for the law of the *polis*, sanctified by Athena, the goddess who therefore exists at the center of ancient Athenian cultural identity.

Zeitlin posited *The Oresteia* "gives voice and form to the social and political ideology of the period at the same time as it actively shapes the collective fantasies of its audience with its own authoritative vision" (*Playing the Other* 149). There is a palpable reversal of power, moving from chthonic to Olympian (*ibid*), from female to male agency in the form of murder (152) and the occupation by the male of the once-female (157), in a re-mythicization of the contemporary, historical reality of Athenian democracy and legality, both of which are in states of expansion and reform. According to classicist David Grene:

For all that, the theatrical audience is seeing before it a court and a courtroom procedure which is part of ordinary Athenian life. The creation of the court of the Areopagus is exhibited as one aspect of the settlement of the huge issue of purification and responsibility that goes back to the struggle of the Old Gods and the New, and through

⁵¹"Witnessing audience" is used to distinguish between the audience in speech act theory and the theatrical audience, which is simply called "audience."

them to the primacy of male or female in the society-the Old Gods are female, the New Gods male. The myth in Aeschylus may be looked at as a funnel growing narrower and clearer as the historical event and the known historical entity impose their single reality on the potential multiplicity of the myth. (Grene 10-11)

Just as there is connectedness between the traumas that give rise to the events of and run through *The Oresteia*, so the historical traumas witnessed by Aeschylus share a similar connection, which plays through both Aeschylus' writing and the progression of Athenian society during a time of continual war. Myth and history share a connection no less substantial.

The end of the *Libation Bearers*, as Orestes succumbs to what has arguably been considered madness by many scholars⁵², is a return to individual trauma. This rephrasing of traumatic experience within the individual sets up *The Eumenides* as a model for ritualized, centralized, and eventually universalized recovery within the collective framework of changing Athenian meaning-systems. After the Chorus leader's attempt to comfort and reify Orestes' act, Orestes first sees the Furies, manifest as members of his mother's house. His first word is an interruption of the Chorus leader's last verse line. "No! / Women who serve this house, they come like Gorgons, they / wear robes of black, and they are wreathed in a tangle / of snakes. I can no longer stay... These are no fancies of affliction. They are clear, / and real, and here; the bloodhounds of my mother's hate" (1048-1050, 1053-1054).

The corporeality of the Furies at the end of *The Libation Bearers* has been the basis for the modern discourse concerning the madness of Orestes – whether he was mad, what form this madness took, and when it first ensued in the plays. If the Furies at the end of *The Libation Bearers* are not manifest physically, but are only a product of Orestes' consciousness, it lends

⁵²Cf. general studies of the subject Theodorou (1993) from a classics perspective, and Zori (2008) from a psychology perspective.

support to the idea that madness is an accurate interpretation, but that is too simple. For most scholars who believe Orestes goes mad⁵³, the proof is threefold: the “prediction” of madness at 1021-1027, the Chorus leader at 1044-1047 becoming “a foil to Orestes' changing moods” (Brown 18), the moment when Orestes first sees the Furies (1048), which Brown calls “the moment when he is no longer ἔμφορον [literally “in the head”]... he can see the Furies because he is mad, and his vision of them is the symptom of madness” (19). There is also the matter of the two chariot imagery, often compared to Plato's *Phaedrus*, which lends credence if not to madness then at least to a profound affective imbalance brought about by fear:

I would have you know, I see not how this thing will end / I am a charioteer whose course
is wrenched outside / the track, for I am beaten, my rebellious senses / bolt with me
headlong and the fear against my heart / is ready for the singing and dance of wrath. But
while / I hold some grip still on my wits [φέρουσι γὰρ νικώμενον φρένες δύσαρκτοι], I
say publicly / to my friends: I killed my mother not without some right. (*The Libation
Bearers* 1021-1027)

Whether or not the Furies are corporeal is less relevant to this study than the fact that there are numerous arguments for and against the idea. The relative newness of the argument (after 1850) indicates the corporeality/in-corporeality of the Furies is an outgrowth of a dichotomous understanding that did not exist among the ancient Athenians. States classicist A.R. Brown:

...Aeschylus has no word for a guilty conscience or a psychological trauma: instead his Chorus talks confidently of madness arising from blood-pollution [*miasma*], and this cannot be dissociated from those supernatural forces whose existence has been clear enough earlier in the trilogy. But if Aeschylus also interprets the events of his play in

⁵³This is certainly a plausible, though inexact, argument, and perhaps tainted by Euripides' *Orestes*. Cf. Brown 20.

religious terms this is not because these events are divorced from reality, but because he would have interpreted reality itself in religious terms... But what we must remember is that such an explanation is a *diagnosis of something actually observed in human behavior*, and not a piece of mumbo-jumbo independent of observed phenomena. The last scene of [*The Libation Bearers*]... is a particularly good illustration of that principle. (23, emphasis retained)

III.5 THE ERINYES AS EMBODIMENTS OF TRAUMA IN *THE LIBATION BEARERS* AND *THE EUMENIDES*

The Libation Bearers ends with Orestes' first sight of the Furies, the Chorus' inability to see them, Orestes' self-exile from Argos, and the Chorus' reiteration of the interconnection of traumatic events.

Here on this house of the kings the third / storm has broken, with wind / from the inward
race, and gone its course. / The children were eaten: there was the first / affliction, the
curse of Thyestes. / Next came the royal death, when a man / and lord of Achaean went
down / killed in the bath. Third / is for the savior. He came. Shall I call / it that, or
death? Where / is the end? Where shall the fury of fate / be stilled to sleep, be done
with? (1065-1076)

In the above passage, the repeated traumas of the House of Atreus, whether individual or collective, are shown to be (as mentioned before) connected, but also part of a progression. First is the curse of Thyestes upon his brother Atreus (resulting in the latter's consumption of his own children). Next is the murder of Agamemnon, bringing about the collapse of the house, at the

hands of Clytemnestra and the foreigner Aegisthus. Finally is the trauma befalling Orestes in the form of the three Furies, brought about by the μῑασμα (stain) of Clytemnestra's murder, as dictated by the Apolline Oracle. This last manifestation is also a return to individual trauma, though with a difference; it will be negotiated and ameliorated through collective meaning-systems.

“Most of the work done on tracing persistent themes and images in *The Oresteia* has failed to take account of the associations of the theme or image for the original audience” (Seaford 247). This is especially true in the cases of appearances of and allusions to the characters of the three Furies (Ἐρινύες) throughout the cycle. Without a grasp of the reception of the original audience, it is nearly impossible to apprehend the metaphorical power of the Furies, or to analyze properly the fragmentary and anachronistic pieces of evidence that have been passed down about that audience. Of particular note is the unanimously dismissed passage from *Vita Aeschyli* 9: “Some say that at the performance of *The Eumenides* by bringing on the chorus [of Furies] one by one, as he did, he terrified the audience so that children swooned and fetuses were aborted.”⁵⁴ Numerous anecdotes such as this, though unprovable and probably fabrications, are still indications about the legacy of plays such as *The Eumenides* in a theatre tradition that continued far beyond the Classical era. Though these stories may be of little historical value, they can have substantial worth in dramaturgical and traumatic analyses, as interpretations of earlier, *possible* theatrical receptions. The claim above assigns importance to two dramaturgical points important to this study: the frightening nature of the Furies' entrance, and the point at which the Furies are first seen by the audience, early in *The Eumenides*.

⁵⁴Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff significantly referred to this as an instant of *ekplēxis* (249).

Several other points, occurring late in *The Libation Bearers*, are important to the considerations of trauma and recovery in *The Eumenides*, and will therefore be discussed. First is the question of what the punishment of the Furies actually entailed. Ironically, Apollo's oracle threatens Orestes' with the punishment of the Furies, if he does not carry out the murder of Clytemnestra (*Libation Bearers* 278). This punishment includes “physical diseases, madness, nightmares and rejection by society and its gods. These are all torments which a man could suffer in real life and which, in Greek belief, a cursed and polluted man would be expected to suffer” (Brown 14). This once again underscores the unity of the physical and psychological in τραῦμα (the ancient Greek understanding of trauma), as well as the inseparability of the individual from the collective (and *vice versa*) when it came to trauma in the literal, but ancient, sense.

Next is how and whether the Furies are embodied on the Aeschylean stage. Again, if the anecdote from *Vita Aeschyli* 9 is to be taken seriously as a start from which dramaturgical points may be interpolated, the embodiment of the Furies in the beginning of *The Eumenides* is highly likely. There is voluminous scholarship over mainly textual points, arguing that actors playing the Furies either did or did not physically appear onstage at the end of *The Libation Bearers*. The existence of these arguments, along with their content, reveals vital aspects of the Furies as possible *embodiments of trauma*. It is argued in an anonymous dissertation prior to 1853, for example, that

The Erinnyes [sic] are... really present there, where Orestes first beholds them, as they are when they are pursuing him to Delphi and Athens: and it would have been nothing less than willfully annihilating all truth of the poetic picture, had the Poet begun by treating

those very beings, whom he meant to produce in the sequel as corporeal and actually present... in light of a mere fancy, the phantom of a diseased brain.” (ed. Müller 7).

The famed classicist of the 19th century, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, “believed strongly in the subjectivity of Orestes' visions in [*The Libation Bearers*], [and] was prepared on occasion to carry this over into [*The Eumenides*]” (Brown 13). Other scholars have supported Wilamowitz's assertions, citing various combinations of psychological and religious frameworks.

What is not disputed among these scholars is that the Furies are clearly (and must be) corporeal from line 85 of *The Eumenides*. It is almost definite that they are present onstage, in fact, from line 64, from a standpoint of practicality, and from the evidence of a very early dramaturgical scholion.

The first scholion (1a/b) on *Eumenides* sets the scene at the opening of the play, the oracular shrine with the Pythian prophetess coming forward to make prayers: “But unexpectedly seeing the Furies sleeping in a circle around Orestes, she reports everything to the spectators, not because she is describing things inside the stage building – for this would be 'modern' and Euripidean – but because of *ekplēxis* (ὕπὸ τῆς ἐκπλήξεως) giving an account, very artistically... of what frightened her.” Here the *ekplēxis* belongs to the stage figure, but its effect is presumably conveyed to the spectators. (Easterling 26)

Here again is an example of *ekplēxis* in a context broader than the traditional definition “fear.” It is, according to Easterling, something both internal and external to the plot, worthy of description and consideration beyond the mere taking in of spectacle (*ibid*). Indeed, the Furies becoming corporeal at this point in the cycle would make it necessary for them to be apprehended *cognitively* by the other characters in the play. The Furies are further given credence and weight by Apollo, who through acknowledgment of the rituals to dispel them, and

the almost prayer-like invocation of his sister Athena, ushers them into the public, collective consciousness. “Never fail / until you come at last to Pallas' citadel. / Kneel there, and clasp the ancient idol in your arms, / and there we shall find those who will judge this case ... / Thus you will be rid of your afflictions, once for all” (78-83). The Furies' corporeality not only marks their movement from private to public in terms of traumatic metaphor, but also their movement through the religious and judicial meaning systems that will eventually reconcile the traumatic network of *The Oresteia*. *The Eumenides* reveals a process wherein this network of trauma becomes manageable through the collective, and apprehensible through audience reception. This process also suggests that the physical manifestation of the Erinyes in *The Eumenides*, who were in *The Libation Bearers* presumably only as mental manifestations, are a severe and nonetheless very real outgrowth of Orestes' subjective experience – what a modern understanding could easily circumscribe as the somatic manifestation of psychological trauma.

Clytemnestra's ghost also manifests physically, in the way that Agamemnon does not (and could not) in *The Libation Bearers*. She rises to accuse Orestes, and underscore the Furies' disconnection from the current divine order. “I suffered too, horribly, and from those most dear, / yet none among the powers is angered for my sake / that I was slaughtered, and by matricidal hands” (100-102). By line 94, the god Loxias Apollo, the ghost of Clytemnestra, the three Furies have all appeared onstage, and it is promised that Athena will appear soon. The internal logic of the first two plays is that such supernatural figures simply do *not* appear. What rules have changed in the logic and progression of the cycle that necessitate these appearances? The Furies place the blame squarely on Apollo, who in the previous play insisted Orestes act on the murder of Agamemnon. “He made man's way cross the place of the ways of god and blighted age-old distributions of power” (171-172). And though they are cthonic deities, linked inherently to the

earth, they are disconnected from nature, and disinherited from their former authority by Zeus, Hera, Aphrodite, and Athena.

Apollo: An office? You? Sound forth your glorious privilege.

Chorus: This: to drive matricides out of their houses.

Apollo: Then what if it be the woman and she kills her man?

Chorus: Such murder would not be the shedding of kindred blood.

Apollo: You have made into a thing of no account, no place, the sworn faith of Zeus and of Hera, lady of consummation, and Cypris by such argument is thrown away, outlawed, and yet the sweetest things in man's life come from her, for married love between man and woman is bigger than oaths, guarded by right of nature. If when such kill each other you relent so as not to take vengeance nor eye them in wrath, then I deny your manhunt of Orestes go with right.

...Pallas divine shall review the pleadings of this case. (209-224)

It seems the only thing that remains undisputed about the Furies throughout *The Eumenides* is their mnemonic role. At line 382-383 they call themselves “holy rememberers of evil” (κακῶν τε μνήμονες σεμναί). They reflect, imagery for imagery, the snake dreams of Clytemnestra and the blood spilled by Orestes. In sum, they serve as constant reminders of the stains (μιασμάτα) of those wrongdoings that within their domain (namely, the murder of blood relatives).

III.6 THE AREOPAGUS COURT AND THE HISTORICAL ARC OF *THE EUMENIDES*

The trial sequence that makes up the second half of the play moves the setting from the shrine of Loxias Apollo to the Court site of the Areopagus, or “Stone of Ares,”⁵⁵ at Athens. While this site, in the mythic time and space of the play, is as yet unoccupied by the historic court, many of the conventions of that court – such as the painted rope used to gather jurors (566) – are already established. The elision of certain transitions from the old to the new order are made in favor of highlighting others, particularly the legal arguments themselves. Lakoff and Johnson's definition of metaphor, in which one mode of action or type of experience is utilized to represent another (9), once again becomes useful in understanding the overlaying of judicial conventions upon theatrical ones. This overlay begins with the audience. “The theatre audience is assimilated to the vital, but silent, role of the jurors – who are, after all, the characters in the play whose status and points of view most closely resemble theirs” (Griffith 77-78).

The theatre-lawcourt metaphor extends far beyond this singular but important convention of *The Eumenides*. According to classicist Edith Hall:

Dramatic contests shared with legal trials not only such formal aspects as performance before an audience and judgment by a democratically selected jury, but subject matter as well. ...It is nothing new to discuss the influence of the legal practices of the Athenians on their drama. It has long been remarked that examples of set-piece trial scenes survive from some of the very earliest extant tragedies. ...Scholars have long recognized the impact on drama made by the development, under democracy, of legal language, concepts, and procedure... But the relationship between the dramatic and the legal

⁵⁵Classicists Wachsmuth (428n2) and Gilbert (425n4) have posited the name *Areopagus* comes not from *Areios + pagos* (“stone of Ares”), but from *ara + pagos* (“stone of cursing”). A cognate of *ara* is *Arai*, another name for the Erinyes. If they are correct, the hill was actually associated to the Furies.

practices of the Athenians was of course dialectical, and the development of drama had an impact on the direction taken by forensic oratory. (Hall 354-355)

In other words, Hall is positing above that the functional language of both the theatre and the lawcourts overlap and influence one another, therefore, the two can, at times, serve as metaphors for each other. The behaviors involved in one practice influences the other. The lawcourt influenced theatre because theatre re-enacts and interpreted events in the lawcourt. The lawcourt was influenced by the theatre through this act of interpretation, as well as the stylistic virtuosity of accomplished theatrical performers.

This metaphorical relationship is important to this study for a number of reasons. Understanding what is now called the traumatic, and its negotiation through public ritual, is revealed to have been more than a theatrical endeavor; it extends to networks of meaning systems outside of the theatre and the Great Dionysia. As such, what is now called trauma was embedded in the consciousness of the public and various activities that allowed democracy in Athens to function. The negotiation of trauma in two networks of meaning systems, the theatre and the court, lends weight to its importance as a social and political problem of the time. It is a problem not just of the individual, the family, or any other small collective. It is a problem of the *polis*. The substantial link between the theatre and the court, particularly the Areopagus court, also served to link the play to contemporary events and people, bringing them into the cognitive realm of the plot. Ephialtes, his actions, and particularly his reforms of the Areopagus court (discussed in more detail later), would have been the strongest frame of reference.

In *The Eumenides*, Athena comes to represent a combination of the *polis*, the Olympian pantheon, and the emerging social order contemporary to the audience. “The appearance must have been quite a spectacle – Athena standing on stage in her panoply with the burnt-out

Acropolis⁵⁶ behind her, the Athenian audience co-opted into the performance as a jury casting votes at a trial, like citizens carrying out their civic duty... Athena represents the city of Athens and its institutions on stage in *Eumenides*” (Kennedy 19). However, these representations are only superficially understood without the enhanced understanding of metaphor as behavioral and functional. There is more to the overlay of court and theatre than simple imagistic considerations; the manner in which the audience filed in, the similarity of seating structure, audience organization and interaction (between audience members and performers), the aforementioned audience's field of vision – all of these factor into the metaphorical relationship between the Theatre of Dionysus, the mythic Stone of Ares, and the Areopagus court so close in proximity to the theatre. Stories of audience reaction, such as the aforementioned miscarriages in *Vita Aeschyli 9*, though in and of themselves fanciful, are nonetheless strong indications of such metaphorical power. An Athenian audience would have seen, simply by turning their heads, evidence of their past traumas, in the temples destroyed by the Persians, as well as evidence of their triumphs, in the construction projects and the reformed Areopagus court, instituted three years earlier by Ephialtes.

The above connections, from the physical presence of the Furies and Olympian gods onstage, to the metaphorical connection between lawcourt and theatre, bring the trauma of Orestes into the realm of the collective, specifically, the Athenians of that time and place. While the initial trauma is Argive – perpetrated by Thyestes in the House of Atreus – the trauma is brought to Athens, and the solution is uniquely (and arbitrarily) Athenian. The arguments follow the established judicial process, and the tied vote seems predictable. Athena's tie-breaking

⁵⁶The Persians has sacked Athens and burned the buildings of the Acropolis in 480. In 458, Pericles' massive rebuilding project on the hill would have been in its infancy.

decision establishes a form of justice that is institutional and democratic, rather than “retributive and familial” (Kennedy 35). It wipes out not only the trauma of Orestes (it will be stated later how), seen in the presences of the Furies, in the images of and fixation upon familial blood (producing the traumatic μίᾱσμα), but also the possibility of similar traumas moving between individual and collective.

This [old] cycle of justice would have continued with Orestes' death (by his own hand, perhaps) if Athena had not stepped in to stop it. She does, however, and so in *Eumenides*, justice is expressed by the nonviolent verdict of the Athenian jury – a verdict that is decisive and unambiguously fair. Athena's reprieve is indeed justified if we understand Orestes, as the audience may indeed have understood him, as a tyrannicide” (*ibid*).

Though Orestes' trauma has presumably come to an end, the possibility of both individual and collective trauma at the hands of the old order still threatens. Athena must choose either to persuade the Erinyes to join the new order, or to suppress or expel them from Athenian culture. She chooses the former, and the cult of the Semnai, deeply entrenched in the mystery rituals of Athenian neighborhoods such as Colonus, is born. “Thus a resolution to this conflict with the Erinyes is crucial to the successful founding of the institutionalized form of justice the Areopagus court represents. Athena's options, however, are limited. If she violently expels the Erinyes from Athens, as Apollo expels them from Delphi, she will undermine the very principles of the system of justice she champions” (Rynearson 2). Athena thus transforms them from *erinyes* (literally “following ones” or “pursuing ones”) to passive beings, established in one place under the earth (restored to their cthonic and natural origins), giving them the name *eumenides* (literally “well-minded ones”). The transmutation of Erinyes into Eumenides, then, cannot be

seen solely as a theatrical event, but as a cultural one, just as Athena's founding of the Areopagus court cannot be seen simply as myth. What the Erinyes lose in *The Eumenides* in terms of metaphysical and divine power is enhanced in the realm of institutional, human power.

Finally, it is necessary to consider whether the Furies are all or part of a metaphorical operation (as this study has developed the idea) for the ancient understanding of τραῦμα. Walter Burkert suggested the Furies were "an embodiment of the act of self-cursing" derived from a Homeric oath (198). This again indicates the manifestation of the Furies is in some way reactive, that is, originating in the self but in response to events outside the self. Ultimately, through this metaphorical framework, one may see the Furies as embodiments of trauma. Once the historical and cultural aspects (namely, dramatically internal and external rituals) of *The Oresteia* have been sufficiently explored, the Furies-trauma metaphor will be thrown into sharper relief.

III.7 HISTORICAL PARALLELS TO *THE ORESTEIA*

Simon Goldhill notes *The Oresteia* was produced "in the crisis-ridden moment after the Persian wars between the Areopagus reforms and Pericles' citizenship law" (47). There are a series of historical circumstances, dating back from the Persian Wars and to the year 458 that are likely candidates for collective and cultural limit events, if not outright foundations for multiple traumas. While the tragedies of *The Oresteia* were set either outside of Athens, in the remote past, or both, their emotional content would have resonated with contemporary Athenians.

According to classicist Rachel Hall Sternberg:

...most of the plays written by the great tragedians were very much concerned with suffering. Destruction and loss are prominent elements in tragic plots, and tragic

characters often give voice to anguish. These artfully crafted scenes spring from the imagination of the playwrights and are usually set in the heroic [mythic] past, but they bring to life real human conflicts and real pain. Despite the line between tragedy and the world... Athenian tragedy was and is about trauma and pain that real people recognize. ...Surely this is why the genre may lay claim to an enduring interest that, in the fullness of history, has so often cut across temporal, geographical, and cultural boundaries. The word “tragedy” ...can supply a powerful and appropriate metaphor for certain terrible situations in everyday life. (11)

Without the relatability of situations and emotions, the tragedies would have been of little interest or relevance to its spectators. Terry Eagleton writes, “The discrepancy between tragedy as art and tragedy as life is an ironic one. For most pieces of tragic art behave exactly as though tragedy were indeed a matter of actual experience, rather than some purely aesthetic phenomenon” (17) Based upon Eagleton's and Sternberg's understandings of tragedy, it is possible to suppose certain types of tragedy (or certain tragedies) as portrayals of trauma, and therefore metaphors for trauma. “The traumatic imagination is prefigured in certain artistic forms of the past... especially in that of Greek Tragedy” (Levin 18). While these notions are only a few steps removed from the “uncritical analogizing” Smelser warns of (32), they are also the beginning of a serious inquiry concerning the tragic genre and how it functions *emotively and metaphorically in a society*. Other variables can now be applied to this inquiry, namely, the specific society/culture and the historical moment that make up Eagleton's “actual experience” and Levin's “traumatic imagination” that prefigures particular tragedies. Additionally, understandings of trauma, both ancient and modern, applied to the theatrical milieu of *The*

Oresteia, help to glean possible historical circumstances not readily available through the extant evidence.

This process must be undertaken carefully, to avoid both “uncritical analogizing” and the overlaying of current political tensions on ancient and incompletely understood historical circumstances. A consequence of this overlay may be found in the trend, over the last century in classical scholarship, of attempting to assign one or another political affiliation to Aeschylus and plays, and of trying to lift from the plays a cogent and readily understandable ideological stance. While these arguments have no doubt enhanced the modern understanding of *The Oresteia*, they have been proven to be limited. According to classicist Simon Goldhill:

The tradition of reading [*The Oresteia*] is the search to locate a specific and narrowly conceived political message in the *Oresteia* which is usually defined as Aeschylus' political position. This is usually focused on the Areopagus reforms, but also finds sustenance in the Argive alliance, Pericles' political standing, and even that old favourite, the zeugite admission to the archonship. ...There are still some attempts to produce such narrowly defined politics within the *Oresteia*. (84)

The hitherto devised and largely discredited arguments concerning Aeschylus' personal politics and a unilateral ideology (democratic, imperialist, or otherwise) emerging from *The Oresteia* have overshadowed the emotive, traumatic, and ritual realities the cycle in fact displays. A number of analytical standpoints suggest that *The Oresteia* in particular, and Greek tragedy in general, instead portray tensions among contemporary politics, ideologies, and social life. These tensions make up many of the collective limit events from which traumatic realities emerged. An understanding of the traumatic in *The Oresteia* has the advantage of revealing otherwise

uncharted territory, which lies in the interchange between the individual and the collective and social.

What qualifiable (if not quantifiable) link is there between historically specific traumatic realities and traumatic circumstances portrayed in a theatre event of *The Oresteia*? A return to Smelser provides a partial answer: affect.

...Affects constitute a kind of universal language, the *symbolic representations of which operate as effective means of communicating among individuals*. Unlike other language structures, however, the language of affect involves fewer difficulties of translation from one language to another, because it is a product of universal experience. ...Affects, once experienced, can generalize and endow meaning to events and situations that need not necessarily have occurred or existed. ...The language of affect thus provides a notable link and continuity between the cultural and psychological levels. (39-40, emphasis added)

Theatre's province is the symbolic representation of affect. Substantial evidence has been provided above to reveal the traumatic reactions, affects, and memories of characters and communities in *The Oresteia*. Also mentioned above in reference to Steinberg and Shay, tragedy, in dealing with human suffering, must have been relatable in order to be successful. While the historical record is incomplete, *The Oresteia* clearly reflected upon traumatic realities of the recent past, the persistent and ongoing traumas of warfare, and the individual and social anxieties of Athens, many of which were realized at the height of the Peloponnesian War 27 years later.

As stated earlier, "The ancient Greek emotional lexicon does not map neatly onto modern English concepts" (Konstan 1033). Theatrical metaphors are instrumental in making sense of

those emotions and cognitive concepts that do not “map neatly.” Trauma is the prime example of such concepts. While strikingly similar symptomatologies emerge when comparing ancient experiences of extraordinary suffering and modern accounts of post-traumatic stress, they are expressed through vastly different interpretive systems. The similarity of symptomatologies between ancient figures such as Clytemnestra, Electra, Cassandra, and Orestes (and elsewhere Achilles, Hecuba, and Phaedra) and modern, real individuals, speaks to the depth of understanding a playwright like Aeschylus had of traumatic experience. There is an important (albeit rhetorical) question that allows us to look at these events and their potential traumatic implications with a healthy amount of reflexivity: if none of these historical events or circumstances are traumatic, why did Aeschylus portray certain events of *The Oresteia* allegorically and theatrically *as traumas*?

The next step of the analysis is the tracing of possible historical parallels to events, to circumstances (such as references to and reenactments of social and religious rituals), and to rituals inherent to the total theatrical event (the Great Dionysia of the year 458). This step allows for an enhanced understanding of how the audience received the plays, and (to test Shay's claim) what proto-therapeutic efficacy the plays may have had on a traumatized audience. Classicist Christopher Pelling presents another way in which the reception of the 458 BC audience of *The Oresteia* may be studied: by exploring the historical parallels found between the plays and events and socio-political issues⁵⁷ contemporary to the historical moment of the 458 premiere. “The

⁵⁷It is important to note that the “historical parallels” to be explored are not merely anecdotes or stand-alone “moments,” nor are they exclusively the individual acts of supposedly significant people. If these were all that made up the parallels, there would be very little to discuss traumatically. The more historiographic investigation of these parallels is undertaken through close attention to the social tensions and anxieties which were prominent at the time, and can be linked to physical evidence (e.g., a site of commemoration). Also, social and religious rituals, which make up the Great Dionysia, as well as *The Oresteia* as a complete theatre event, are treated as yet another type of historical parallel. This section will therefore include events, often generated by the decisions of those in

Oresteia is unusually direct in its political allusiveness. *Eumenides* draws the audience's attention to two items of recent controversy, the reform of the Areopagus and the question of an Argive alliance... The audience of *Eumenides* could hardly ignore these recent struggles, particularly as they hear Athena's charter speech for the Areopagus court" (168). Though it may at first seem uncritical, a cataloging of historical events and social tensions will be developed below, before the theoretical matrix of collective trauma is brought to bear on the items in that catalog.

Ephialtes' reform of the Areopagus Court, the highest court in the city-state, occurred in 462 after the ostracization of Cimon. The reforms stripped many of the powers the court had accrued over time, but solidified and maintained the duties that were purportedly more traditional to the court's history. One of its primary duties, before and after the reforms, was to try homicides, especially familial ones. Aeschylus has Athena speak about the establishment of the court, in heroic time, as the first murder court, the institutional savior of Athens, and the precedent for laws in Athens that would be greater than those of Sparta and her allies.

No anarchy, no rule of a single master. Thus / I advise my citizens to govern and to
grace, / and not to cast fear utterly from your city. What / man who fears nothing at all is
ever righteous? Such / be your just terrors, and you may deserve and have / salvation for
your citadel, your land's defense, such as is nowhere else found among men, neither /
among the Scythians, nor the land that Pelops held. (*The Eumenides* 696-703)

In establishing the court, Athena makes martial references ("citadel" and "land's defense"), linking the court to the ideas of city defense and protection of individual property. She also compares the laws the court will establish to those of the Scythians (a kingdom and people north

power, the social tensions that make up reactions to those events and anticipated ones, and the ritual framing of *The Oresteia* (that is also included and commented upon in the cycle's plot) where it is both reified and contested.

of Persia), and more importantly, the rival Spartans, with whom Athens had been fighting, most recently since 560. The court is also closely linked conceptually to the Argive alliance. This alliance, between Athens and Argos, a city-state previously loyal to Sparta, was probably established in 462 (and therefore in the recent memory of *The Oresteia's* audience), and was among the rarer forms of Athenian alliances – a *summachia*. Literally meaning “fighting with,” this type of alliance meant the city-state allied with Athens would have the benefit of Athenian troops for her defense. The allied city-state was also somewhat removed from Athens' imperial agenda; there was “no necessary presumption of hierarchy” (Low 10). “Both the alliance and the court are to stand 'for all time' ...and both are to be 'saviours.' The alliance is to save Athens in war; the court is to save her from bloodshed and its consequences for the community. In short, they guarantee what every city needs: internal harmony and security against others” (MacLeod 129). From the beginning of *The Eumenides*, a substantial link between individual and social intervention has been established.

The above references can be seen in a series of ways, both onstage and off. Placing the founding of the Areopagus Court in mythic/heroic time allows for its precedent to overlap in the realms of the affective, spiritual, and historical. As will be shown, Athena's founding of the Areopagus Court is the resolution of the intergenerational corruption of sacrificial rituals, which run parallel to the presence of the Furies-as-trauma. It also helps to transmute a potentially traumatic past in individual (Orestes) and collective forms (Erinyes). Regardless of how these connections were interpreted, however, they could not have been lost on an ancient audience. “The interplay between collective and individual, mirrored in the relation of chorus and hero on stage, is a central dynamic of democratic power in action” (Goldhill “Politics” 45).

Some scholars have also interpreted phrases and small passages in the end of *The Eumenides* as an expression of apprehension over possible intra-city conflict arising from the murder of Ephialtes. “Contemporary references are also sometimes detected at the end of the play. Thus Dodds (51-2) finds in lines 858-866 an allusion to a danger of civil war after the assassination of Ephialtes, just as Wilamowitz did in 976-983” (McLeod 129).

A series of military campaigns collectively called the “First Peloponnesian War” probably began with the Battle of Oinoe (c. 560 BC). The date of the battle is disputed, because the only record of the event comes from the historian and geographer Pausanias in the second century AD (Jeffrey 41). The lack of any extant record otherwise indicates that the battle was not a limit event, and that it regardless cannot be an object of study. Nonetheless, it is important in understanding the overall context of the Athens-Sparta conflict. This phase of the ongoing military conflict between Sparta's Peloponnesian alliance and Athens' so-called “Delian League” (Powell 4) lasted until 446 or 445, with the establishment of the “Thirty Years Peace.” Also during this early period, Pericles initiated the construction of the protective Long Walls, surrounding Athens and stretching to and surrounding the port at Piraeus, during or before 462 (Conwell 4). The building project lasted several years beyond 458, and was met even from the proposal stage with ongoing, vehement opposition by many members of the Athenian aristocracy. “Some rich Athenians in the early 450s reacted to the new building project, which threatened their estates (outlying Athens), by trying to betray the city to the Spartans” (Powell 66)⁵⁸. While the Long Walls were important for strategic reasons, they were also a site of Athenian anxieties. Providing a safe connection from Athens to the sea, the walls made the *polis*, for all strategic intents and purposes, an island city-state. At the time of construction, a rift

⁵⁸Cf Thucydides I.107.4

in Athenian society, between the proponents of democracy and those of an oligarchy led by the aristocracy, was coming to a head. There was also widespread concern about a land invasion of Attica by Sparta and her allies, as well as a resurgence of Persian aggression⁵⁹. Accordingly, the Long Walls would have been a palpable symbol of Athenian anxieties over invasion and isolation, as well as a reminder of internal social conflict, and a return to the collective traumatic memory of the Persian destruction of Athens.

Much is made, especially in *The Eumenides*, of the breadth of Athena's, and therefore Athens', influence. In 292-297, Orestes prays to her, referencing her presence in Lybia and Egypt, where Athens was engaged against the Persians at the time of the play's premiere (MacLeod 125, Dodds 47). There is also mention in that passage of her being in the Phlegraean fields in Chalcidice, the farthest northern reaches of the nascent Athenian empire (*ibid*). Line 398 places her at the River Scamander, thus linking her, Athens, and the immediate historical moment to the ancient conquest of Troy. 762-774 mythologizes (and, perhaps, historicizes) the Argos-Athens *summachia* alliance of 462 BC, “which reversed the pro-Spartan policies of Cimon, the leading 'conservative' at Athens at the time, and ushered in a 'radical' democracy” (MacLeod 126). Orestes states that “never man who holds the helm of my state shall come against your country... though I lie in my grave, I still shall wreak helpless bad luck and misadventures upon all who stride across the oath that I have sworn”⁶⁰ (765-769). Athena's eventual agreement with the Erinyes/Eumenides is also framed in terms of *συμμαχία* (alliance,

⁵⁹This anxiety over the Persians is also reflected in the Delian League's excursions into Egypt, documented in Thucydides I.104. It was a justified anxiety; the supposed Peace of Callias would not be signed until 449 BC.

⁶⁰The blessing bestowed by the resting place of a hero was a familiar idea to the Greeks. Cf, for example, *Oedipus at Colonus* and the myths that preceded it.

literally “fighting with”), linking political, military, judicial, and sacred interests within the plays, and through implication, in the Athens that watched the plays.

What can be drawn from these historical parallels that pertains directly to trauma? In the search for historical specificity, the above circumstances can only be qualified as potential limit events, though they have gone through either direct or indirect interpretations of trauma in *The Oresteia*. As stated above, the Battle of Oinoe has scant evidence surrounding it, but important suppositions may be made about the battle's place in the Athenian cognitive milieu. In the time of Pausanias, the Battle of Oinoe was represented in one of four paintings on the Stoa Poikile (“Painted Colonnade”) on the north side of the Agora. The other three paintings⁶¹ depicted the Theseus' conquest over the Amazons, the Sack of Troy, and the Battle of Marathon (Jeffrey 43). Since Oinoe is placed with a historic Athenian victory as well as two heroic/mythological ones, the battle was obviously of significant importance to the Athenians. War veterans from Oinoe were almost certainly in the audience for the premiere of *The Oresteia* two years later. It was linked by proximity to the heroic and mythological understanding of the ancient past and the contemporary understanding of the recent past, just as contemporary circumstances were linked to those pasts in *The Oresteia*. There is also a substantial link between the Battle of Oinoe and the Argive alliance. “Pausanias is clear... that the place was the *Argive* [controlled] Oinoe, not (for example) the better-known Oinoe on the Attic-Boeotian border⁶²” (Jeffrey 47, emphasis retained). If 560 is the correct date for the battle, it should be seen in the context of the Argive alliance, “which was either newly made or in the making” at that time (Jeffrey 51). Whether this

⁶¹The description of the four paintings are found in Pausanias' *Description of Greece* I.15. The scholarly consensus is that the structure and the paintings were unchanged from the fifth century BC, though there may have been more paintings than Pausanias mentioned.

⁶²This would make the distance between Athens and Argive Oinoe just under sixty mile, and over mountainous terrain.

event can be a candidate for a potential collective trauma cannot be determined, but it is certainly a candidate as a site for individual war traumas, as well as an event of importance in the collective mind of the people.

Ephialtes' reforms of the Areopagus court were a source of social tension, especially between the court members, the Boule (Council of 500), the Ekklesia (Sovereign Council), and the Dikasteria (people's lower courts). Much of the power of the Areopagus was supposedly distributed between the latter three, though historical records from the time are notoriously “fuzzy” (Rihill 87). Several accounts corroborate the fact of Ephialtes' murder, and though sources cannot agree on the assailant, they generally agree that the act was prompted by the reforms to the Areopagus (*ibid*). It is important to glean from these circumstances that the reforms of the court, and the reactions to them, represent a period of upheaval in Athenian society that was felt across all strata of the citizenry. This places the reforms and reactions to them in the collective realm. In supposing for a moment that the purpose of the Areopagus court under Ephialtes was to try homicides (a fact which most contemporary and near-contemporary sources agree upon), it becomes the site of individual and collective limit events, in the quasi-theatrical⁶³ exploration of violent and untimely death.

International tensions were no doubt exacerbated by the fact that many city-states were switching changing loyalties at the time; Argos is the most obvious example in the period relevant to *The Oresteia*, though other strategically important *poleis* were establishing ties with Athens on or around 458, the most substantial of those being Megara, probably in 460 (Powell 112). A counterpoint to Athens' growing power in the north was her growing isolation due to the

⁶³Goldhill, who is quoted copiously in this chapter, asserts there is an inherently theatrical nature to the locality and process of the courts, especially the Areopagus (45).

Long Walls project. The strategic advantages brought about by the walls were complemented by what must have been anxieties, anxieties that were realized later in the war.

[With the Long Walls] the Athenians could look to their overseas allies and trading partners for supplies, and would have no compelling need to challenge an invading Peloponnesian army in the field. The likelihood thus grew that the Peloponnesians would be left free to ravage the [nobles'] estates of Attikē. Precisely this strategy was later adopted... when Sparta and her allies [later] made almost annual invasions of Attikē. (Powell 65).

Again, the Long Walls were the sight of many more anxieties, not just from the nobility who owned the farming estates surrounding Athens, that would have been cut off from the city due to the Walls. As the conflict escalated, refugees began flooding into Athens and behind the Walls, which contributed to immediate overcrowding and eventually to the plague of 427 (Powell 159). Though these events could not have been foreseen⁶⁴, the tension that arose between the nobility, the more liberal faction of the government, and the lower classes occurred during the plan's development and immediately after its approval. While it is impossible to judge the severity of these tensions or indisputably qualify them as “limit events,” they are at least worthy of mention as part of Athens' troubled history during this period.

⁶⁴It is highly tempting to interpolate such anxieties from the obviously traumatic narrative of Thucydides II.48, II.52, and II.53, which describe the displacement of the homeless, the symptoms of the plague, and the widespread panic and despair that ensued during its two-year course in the city. It is important to keep in mind that nearly thirty years lapsed between the beginning of the project and the plague. However, if any such anxieties existed when the Long Walls project was initiated, it could certainly be a candidate for a collective limit event. Since the historical record is unclear, though, the exploration of this set of social circumstances can really go no further.

III.8 RITUAL PARALLELS IN *THE ORESTEIA*, EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL

Ritual practices preceding, referenced in, utilized by, and altered within the plot of *The Oresteia* further elucidate the troubled (if not traumatic) nature of meaning-systems for the original audience. The analysis of rituals concerning the Great Dionysia as a whole takes into account *The Oresteia* as a total theatre event, and as a network of meaning-systems on both the collective and cultural levels. “The pre-play rituals, the funding and administration of the festival, the establishment and even seating of the audience, are fully representative of the ideals and practice of democracy, and constitute the theatre as an *analogous institution* to the law-court and assembly—the three great institutions for the display of *logoi* in the city of words” (Goldhill “Politics” 35, emphasis added).

The chronological aspects having been addressed, this study now moves to the social and historical aspects of the Great Dionysia itself, thus taking into account *The Oresteia* as a complete theatre event. Of particular relevance to this study are several of the extra-theatrical rituals that took place during the Dionysia, and how they could have contributed to the socially distributed cognition and memory of the audience. These rituals also bring into relief certain aspects of Athenian social interaction and history that functioned as means of interpreting and systematizing various types of individual and collective traumas. Once again, it is necessary to tread carefully, acknowledging the “problem in cultural analysis of the gaps and tensions between participants in and observers of an event, and between explicit intentions and social process in such events [as Athenian tragedy]” (Goldhill “Politics” 39). However, to deny that social processes simply did not, at the very least, respond to individual and collective traumas (if not deal with them in a somewhat efficacious way, as Shay suggests) would be just as irresponsible a course for this study.

Classicist Simon Goldhill warns about the recent academic trend of dichotomizing and polarizing tragic pleasure and social didacticism.

...the opposition between tragic pleasure and social didacticism, conceived as an exclusive or even strongly marked polarity, has had a distorting effect on what is a more complex dynamic integral to tragedy. The democratic *paideusis* [“process”] of the fifth-century genre may function because of-and not despite-its “vivid and piercingly pleasurable enactments of suffering.” Paideusis need not exclude powerful emotional response; emotion need not exclude paideusis. Indeed, paideusis can be of and through emotions; emotions can be seen as a threat to or as a part of paideusis.

(Goldhill “Politics” 40, quoting Griffin 60)

The whole thrust of Goldhill's argument, seen in part above, is that the theatre events of Ancient Greece cannot be considered solely a product of a hegemonic agenda; they are discourse, making them at once transgressive, emotive, didactic, and yes, hegemonic. Reading only authorial or authoritarian intent into the plays favor one of these aspects of the theatrical discourse over the others, distorting the interpretation of the event.

This is not to say that military and imperial projects were not part of this discourse. “Plutarch⁶⁵ tells how in 468, ten years before the *Oresteia*, the rivalry among the citizen spectators was so intense that the presiding archon made the generals act as judges for the competition” (Goldhill “Politics” 44). These generals, if Plutarch's anecdote is to be believed⁶⁶, were representatives from each of the ten *demes*. Another pre-performance ritual in the Dyonisia was the “parade of tribute” presented by foreign dignitaries present in the audience (Goldhill 44).

⁶⁵*Life of Cimon* (8.7-9).

⁶⁶Goldhill believes it is worthy of belief, based upon other sources (4n50).

This ritual may have been introduced just after 458 BC, though the exact date is inconclusive. Either way, when viewing tragedy in general, and *The Oresteia* in particular as having been influenced and influencing the ritual dimensions of the Dionysia, it is clear that both military presence and the overlaying of military rituals played an integral role in the complete theatre event. The parade of the *ephebes*⁶⁷, if indeed such a maneuver took place in the theatre⁶⁸, yet again underscores the overlaying of military and theatrical rituals. An almost irresistibly strong images emerges in the instances of *The Persians* and *The Oresteia*, of *ephebes*, many of whom were possibly war orphans, on stage and face-to-face with audience members who were war veterans. The *ephebes*, who could have numbered up to 500 per year (Mikaelson 41) were also granted a center *kerkis* (wedge of seating) in the theatre (Goldhill “Greek Drama” 62), so they were not just the object of spectators, but were also spectators themselves. This is not to say that aged war veterans and *ephebes* were the only military represented in the audience of *The Oresteia*. There can be little doubt that veterans of Oinoe, Lybia, Egypt, and other military campaigns immediately prior to 458 were also present. Since the selection of generals as judges had become a tradition by then, the military, and those who had suffered combat-based trauma, would have been a strong presence in the theatre audience.

⁶⁷The term by the time of Aeschylus had come to mean 18-20 year-old male citizens in the second year of required military service (Winkler 27). At some undetermined point in time, the majority of *ephebes* were probably war orphans.

⁶⁸John Dillery, in his 2002 article “Ephebes in the Stadium (not the Theatre)” argues such military maneuvers as the forming of columns and the phalanx could not have taken place in the *orchestra* of the Theatre of Dionysus, due to its probable size. However, both the size and shape of the orchestra has been a matter of continual dispute over centuries, as has the exact nature of the *ephebes*’ maneuvers. They could have been “theatricalized,” for example, in order to accommodate a smaller orchestra. They could have, as Dillery claims, been performed in the stadium. What is important here is that this ritual, whether in the physical theatre or not, was closely linked to the Dionysia and the presentation of plays, so much so that *ephebe*-style training was used in blocking the tragic Chorus. Cf Xenophon *Oeconomicos* 8.3-7 and *Memorabilia* 3.5.18 and 3.5.21.

Last among the relevant pre-theatrical rituals is the presentation of crowns. “The ritual of presenting the crown in the theatre to distinguished citizens not only embodies the tensions within democratic power dynamics, but also is reappropriated to – replayed on – the stage of the lawcourt” (Goldhill 45). The names of the recipients in 458 are lost, but these awards for extraordinary citizenship returned audience attention to the social and democratic nature of the Great Dionysia. This ritual also underscored the competitive nature of the festival.

Rituals within the plots of these plays represented meaning systems that were fragmented and then reassembled into new meanings systems. Of particular relevance are those involving sacrifice and mourning. Froma Zeitlin's linear critique of sacrifice motifs in *The Oresteia* trace a “corruption” or twisting of meaning. “Violent deeds of bloodshed are portrayed not as murder but as murder in sacramental dress, that is, ritual slaughter” (Zeitlin “Motif of Corrupted Sacrifice” 464). Zeitlin outlines the corruption of rituals in *The Oresteia*, particularly *Agamemnon*, which juxtaposes sacrificial vocabulary with instances of parricide⁶⁹ (63-38, 245, 730, and 1035-1038). Most notable among these alteration of meaning systems are the derivations of the verb σφάγῃν – “slaughter,” but elsewhere nearly always attributed to an animal sacrifice – twisted to describe the murders of Cassandra and Agamemnon, especially during Cassandra's prophecy at 1090-1092⁷⁰ (“Motif” 468).

At the horrifying climax of the play, the most horrifying parody of ritual is advanced.

Clytemnestra stands triumphant over the body of her husband and describes how she slew him (*Agamemnon* 1384-1387)... Here, the corrupted ritual is given different emphasis [than “slaughter”]. Agamemnon's blood is a libation, and with the three strokes she gave

⁶⁹There is also, of course, the death of Iphigenia (referenced in *Agamemnon* 224-227) – both a literal sacrifice and a parricide.

⁷⁰Also at 1096-1097, referring to the slaughter of Thyestes children.

him, each one drenching her in blood, she makes precise allusion to the customary rite of pouring three libations after the feast – one to the Olympians, one to the Chthonians, and one to Zeus the Savior. The inversion is twofold in implication. Not only is the libation Agamemnon's blood rather than wine, but Zeus the Savior... who crowns the feast with blessings, is distorted here into Zeus of Hades, the Savior (keeper) of the dead. (“Motif” 472-473)

To Clytemnestra, the libations, a ritual expressing grief over the dead, have been “suitably and justly altered to joyous ceremony” (*ibid*). What follows is a response from the Chorus that is difficult to translate (1425-1430), due to a series of words that are unique only to the extant Aeschylus. “Great your design, your speech is a clamor of pride. Swung to the red act drives the fury within your brain signed clear in the splash over your eyes. Yet to come is stroke given for stroke vengeless [sic], forlorn of friends.”⁷¹ In this passage, the acts of murdering Agamemnon and Cassandra have taken on not only the metaphorical language of ritual, but also of madness (ἐπιμαίνεσθαι). Couching this verb are derivations of the word *phrenē* (περίφρονα denoting a feeling or disposition, and φρήν – *phrēn* – denoting the mixed notion of “head/face/mind”).

The Erinyes were also present in the past traumas of the house; they are, along with the images of grieving eagles crying for vengeance, metaphors for the slaughtered children of Atreus⁷² (Zeitlin “Motif” 482). If the family is viewed as a collective, Clytemnestra's corruption of traditional rituals, as well as the presence of the Erinyes, can be seen as a framework for

⁷¹Herbert Weir Smyth's 1926 translation of (1426-1428) is perhaps more exact, though it is hard to tell. “Even as your mind is maddened by your deed of blood, upon your face a stain of blood shows full plain to behold.”

⁷²This is not the only instance where the Erinyes are metaphorically linked to animals. Throughout the first half of *The Eumenides* they are linked to hounds tracking the scent of blood on Orestes' hands – yet another instance in which what we would now all traumatic understanding is linked to the somatic.

trauma, in the modern sense of the word. The Erinyes are models *of* collective, familial, and intergenerational traumas.

Further evidence that the corruption of ritual represents a fragmentation of meaning systems is found in the absence of those same ritual implications in Orestes' vengeance killings of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. These revenge killings were explicitly ordered by Apollo. “The *Choephoroi* is the drama in which we would expect to find the slaying of the monstrous Clytemnestra and her paramour in terms of ritual sacrifice. Orestes is the only one directly guided by the hand of a god to accomplish his mission” (484). However, no such ritual framework exists. The beginning of *The Eumenides* reveals that, after the killings, he has purified himself through all of the appropriate uncorrupted rites; but the Furies, because they are representative of a corrupted sacrificial ritual, part of the old order, and a metaphorical expression for what is now called trauma, still seek vengeance. “They want to suck the blood from his living marrow (Eu. 264-65) even though he has been purified of blood guilt with the appropriate ceremonies and sacrifices, and technically is innocent” (Zeitlin “Motif” 486).

Later in *The Eumenides* (448-452), Orestes reflects on the nature of Agamemnon's death, noting how Clytemnestra co-opted the language of legitimate religious sacrifice, and tricked the ghost of Iphigenia into believing in the legitimacy of the blood spilled. “She has slaughtered Agamemnon and given his blood quite specifically to the Erinys, the ghost of vengeance of her child, the Erinys to whom she swore vengeance... In the light of this explanation, Clytemnestra's emphasis on the blood that pours from Agamemnon's wound is more readily understood. So too is the phrase *haimatos sphagen* (1389) as we have rendered it, 'the sacrificial offering of his blood'” (Zeitlin “Motif” 478-479). This, along with the above points, indicate that blood is more than a motif; it is a metaphor for the link between physical and psychological trauma. Since the

Furies literally spring from this blood, they are the functional aspect of a complex trauma metaphor.

Perhaps the most obvious theatrically-internal alteration⁷³ of ritual is in the Areopagus Court. In this motif, the elision of mythic and historical is most pronounced. Also, references that were theatrical in nature were at their most prominent during the trial sequence of *The Eumenides*.

Drama and trials shared a context: both were enacted in public spaces in the civic heart of the city; actors performed in the open air, just like litigants in murder cases, who were required to plead their cases under the open sky. Legal speeches, like tragedies and comedies set in the city, refer to civic and religious sites in the immediate proximity – the prison (Demosthenes 2.4.131), or the propylaea (2.4.184) (Hall *Theatrical Cast* 359). Physical proximity was not the sole cognitive link between the theatre and the law court. There has been substantial evidence (presented since the Renaissance) about theatre's contribution to legal language, and *vice versa*. “Scholars have long recognized the impact on drama made by the development, under the democracy, of legal language, concepts, and procedure, and especially by the advent of the teachers of rhetoric” (Hall 355). The theatrical court is also the best candidate for the negotiation of and recovery from the multiple traumas presented in the cycle, primarily because it provides the closest link to contemporary events and political tensions.

Once the audience were primed [by the court sequence] to think back to 462/1, other parallels might spring to mind. Ephialtes himself had had a hint of the theatrical, just as the theatre now has a hint of Ephialtes. His agitation had begun with his sitting in

⁷³At this point we move beyond Zeitlin's study of the corrupt ritual and into rituals that are altered in other ways during the conclusion of *The Oresteia*.

supplication at an altar (*Ath. Pol.* 25.3). It ended with his being assassinated; his murderers were never found. A sequence which begins with a supplication, goes on to shape the Areopagus court, and ends with the threat of violence: *Eumenides* is of course not a precise parallel, but it juggles elements of that political story into a new pattern. But the play ends in reconciliation rather than slaughter, and the threat of bloodshed has receded—at least for the moment. (Pelling 170)

The tension between Athena/Athens and the Furies is not so easily dispersed as the Orestes' individual trauma. In fact, the second half of *The Eumenides* (line 778 onward) is preoccupied with this tension, with ensuring the trauma of the individual (Orestes) and his family (the House of Atreus) does not spread to a larger collective or even cultural level. While one may be uncertain of Orestes' true, long-term mental state after his acquittal, the second half of the play can more easily be inscribed as collective recovery from and future prevention of trauma. The trauma of Orestes has ended – his speech at lines 754-777 is stripped of negative affect, he announces he is able to go home, and (perhaps most importantly) his memories of the limit events (the murder of Agamemnon and Orestes' revenge killing of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus) are now integrated into the larger nexus of his memories, which are protected by Athena, Apollo, and Zeus. “A man of Argos lives again in the estates / of his father, all by the grace of Pallas Athene, and / Apollo, and with them the all-ordaining god the / Savior [Zeus sôtēr] – who remembers my father's death, who looked / upon my mother's advocates, and rescues me” (757-761).

It is through the court proceedings that Athena's agreement with the Furies is framed. It is also the process whereby the meaning systems of the Areopagus court attain a new norm. However, there is resistance to the establishment of this new norm, in the form of potential

collective limit events and traumas that would originate should the Furies not agree to Athena's terms. These include famine and flood (801-802), a poisoning of the earth (812-813), and diseases (815-817), a lust for war among the citizens (862), civil war (866), ill luck among the military (889-890). Unexpectedly, it is not the Furies who make these threats, but Athena who lists them apprehensively as the Furies bemoan the loss of their dominion. The Furies only re-list these limit events later, and in the form of blessings upon Athens and the land, and in promises that such things will *not* happen. The chthonic Erinyes, now Eumenides, are once again linked to the earth. What is different this time is that they are linked to a specific location under Athens and the surrounding lands – notably, areas both within and just outside the boundaries of the Long Walls. They will now occupy the lands that are protected by the Walls, and those lands just outside (a site of anxiety for landholders).

The Eumenides' power is also broadened as it is reestablished within the earth. No longer attentive to death and murder, and the blood metonymy that represents those events, they now accept a different offering poured into the earth: libations at wedding ceremonies, upon the birth of children, and that they shall have the “first fruits” of any offering connected to these events (834-835). By proxy, the Eumenides are now linked to the homes of Athenian citizens, their families, and the matters of their everyday lives. “No household shall be prosperous without your will... In all good will / toward these [Athenian] citizens I establish in power / spirits who are large, difficult to soften. / To them is given the handling of entire men's lives” (895, 927-931). At first metaphors for trauma, the Eumenides are now essential meaning systems in the lives of the Athenian citizenry. Without them, a citizen of Athens has no frame of reference for the events of his life. Athena states, in what appears to be a direct address of the audience, “That

man who has not felt the weight of their [the Eumenides'] hands / takes the strokes of life, knows not whence, not why..." (931-933).

In the closing moments of the play, the Eumenides pronounce a blessing on Athens, meant to counteract not only the potential traumas listed by Athena, but also to alleviate what could have been contemporary Athenian fears of civil war and political divisiveness. They reference one more time the idea established in the first half of the play, of blood-as-trauma. "This is my prayer: Civil War / fattening on men's ruin shall / not thunder in our city. Let / not the dry dust that drinks / the black blood of citizens / through passion for revenge / and bloodshed for bloodshed / be given our state to prey upon. / Let them render grace for grace. / Let love be their common will; let them hate with a single heart" (976-986). Once again, the individual and collective are closely linked, nearly inseparable in their experience of trauma and recovery. Before assenting to this prayer, Athena makes one last remark relevant to this study – that the fearful visage of the Eumenides remains the same as when they were Erinyes, indicating that while trauma has been ameliorated, the potential for trauma is still present. Because of this, future action (i.e., not defying the Eumenides) is established as a model *for*. "In the terror upon the faces of these / I see great good for our citizens" (990-991).

At the very end, there is yet another ritual (that may have been both virtual and actual) not mentioned by Zeitlin, but treated by classicist David Kawalko Roselli – the final procession out of the theatre, which concludes *The Eumenides*.

Tragedy could at times reveal more extensive attempts to combine the celebration within the world of the play with a celebration (and perhaps victory) within the world of the festival. The final tragedy of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*... ends in Athens' acquittal of Orestes (through Athena's assistance) and the defeat of the Furies. While *Eumenides* concludes a

complex web of intrigue and murder spanning three tragedies, it also stages a final torchlight procession out the theater. Athena herself bids everyone to join in rejoicing the Furies' decision to protect the city so that it may be victorious (1009); the Furies are notably described as metics (1011, 1018) wearing purple robes (1028). As many commentators have noted the procession bears some resemblance to those at the Dionysia and the Panathenaia, where metics walk in the procession wearing purple robes.

(Roselli 37-38)

There are many layers of meaning to this final procession. As with Orestes' theatrical trial in Athens, there is a close link between the rituals and traditions of Athens and the presence of the metics. Orestes and the Furies, all metics, become foundational aspects of the Areopagus court rituals. Because of the similarity to the processions during the Dionysia (once a year) and Panathenaia (once every four years), the theatrical ritual, which may have included the exit of the audience for a brief time, bled into the reality of actual ritual. This final perhaps drove home the importance of what had occurred on stage as something more than purely theatrical.

III.9 THE AUDIENCE OF 458 BC AND ILLOCUTIONARY SUCCESS

Edith Hall asserts that “When the members of an ancient audience left the theatre after the performance of a play, with all its costumes, special effects, music, and variegated poetry, what features left durable marks on their memories? According to a character in a fourth-century comedy by Timocrates, it was the afflictions suffered by the leading characters” (16). Through personal experience as members of Athenian society, and through collective experience through involvement in the state, the audience was well-positioned to be the witnessing audience for the

individual, collective, and cultural traumas portrayed in *The Oresteia*. This collective involvement in Athenian politics (literally “matters of the *polis*”) solidifies “the durability and reliability of the extended cognitive system that results from the functional integration [of multiple sites of individual cognition]” (Barnier, et al. 37).

These cognitive systems do not pertain solely to memories of actual events and situations; they also affect stories transmitted across genres and generations. “The stories of the shared past, of the events that we remember, are continually renegotiated as we improvise and riff around them with more or less control, and thus they come to have their own autonomy and integrity and internal tensions and lacunae” (*ibid*) This renegotiation is precisely what theatrical retellings of earlier myths accomplished.

Assuming that *The Oresteia* was successful in conveying traumatic memory to the audience (to be witness and accepted tacitly *as* traumatic) many of whom did not have the frame of reference similar to the characters (e.g., war veterans, widows, bereaved loved ones, people sworn to vengeance, parricides), a general question concerning that mode of memory must be raised. Does the successful communication of collective traumatic memory involve the movement from social distributed to collective memory? This is a question rooted not only in communication theory (specifically, speech act theory), but also a specific moment of reception.

Now that the traumatic and ritual (both internal and external) frameworks have been delineated, and the socio-historical parallels have been explored, this chapter will now progress to a deeper analysis of the 458 audience of the theatre event known as *The Oresteia*. States Goldhill:

...the theatre seating constructed a political map of the city... By marking in such striking spacial terms the age-classes and socio-political categories of the *polis*, the theatre thus

puts the city on display. The audience as collective articulates the sociopolitical organization of the *polis*. It constitutes – performs – what can be called 'the civic gaze' – the sense of collective, political viewing and judging which forms the public space for citizens' action. (Goldhill "Greek Drama" 63)

Even more important than the collective audience that performs the civic gaze (which would fall under the designation of *culture* in this study) are those smaller collectives that experience potentially traumatic realities, filtered through theatrical interpretations. Through the experiences of limit events and traumatic reactions, the trauma portrayed onstage interprets and is associated (through the overarching metaphor of theatrical plot) with real-life traumas and traumatic memories.

Of special importance in this regard is the military faction of the audience, divided into three collectives: the military leadership (in the form of the generals/judges of the Dionysia), the *ephebes* preparing for military service (who make up both the performers of the ephebes' march ritual, and a central portion of the audience), and military veterans. This first group, by their very presence, underscored the competitive nature of the Dionysia, if Plutarch's account (referenced above in Goldhill) is to be taken at face value. It can only be speculated upon whether the assignment of generals to judges' positions only occurred during wartime. Regardless, their presence in the privileged seats of the judges reflected the close link between theatrical and military institutions, and therefore another substantial link between theatrical expression and the reality of combat trauma.

The *ephebes*, soon to become *hoplites*⁷⁴, enjoyed a greater level of participation (and consciousness thereof) in the Great Dionysia. Classicist John J. Winkler went so far as to hypothesize that the *ephebes* publicly performed an origin-of-tragedy myth, in the form of the Xanthos-Melanthos fight story (26). If so, the *ephebes* and their rituals enjoyed a deep connection to the foundations of tragedy. At the very least, “they are introduced into the theatre by the herald, probably singly, in order for their names and patronyms to be read out, and then they are ushered to their seats of honour” (Dillery 468). As a result, there is little convincing argument against the idea that they were both spectators and participants in the total theatre event of *The Oresteia*. Also, if the curved seating of the Theatre of Dionysus was present in the 5th century (as it was in the 4th), the *ephebes*, in their “seats of honour,” along with the judges and military veterans, would have been within the rest of the audience’s constant field of vision during the performance of *The Oresteia*.

It is easy to hypothesize a cognitive link, on the part of the audience as a whole, between the young *ephebes* and their older counterparts, the veteran *hoplites* – a link most *ephebes* no doubt would have been highly conscious of as well. These military veterans are perhaps the most likely candidates for traumatized audience members and as a collective, witnessing audience, especially as psychological trauma was understood in the matrix of Greek thinking. One strong example comes from classicist Rachel Hall Sternberg’s landmark study of wounded *hoplites*. She connects the wartime narratives of the Greeks with the social reality of the transportation and homecoming of wounded soldiers. References to the subject from Thucydides, Xenophon, and Herodotus are numerous and often coupled with retreat narratives

⁷⁴Classicist J.K Anderson attests that “They gave a display of drill to the people in the theatre and received from the city shield and spear – the essential equipment of the *hoplite*” (28).

(Sternberg 118). A particular passage of Thucydides is analyzed by Sternberg, revealing what could have been a traumatic understanding of *hoplites* seeing their wounded brethren.

First, the departing soldiers see their fallen comrades. With rare emotional detail, Thucydides refines the notion of sight, showing how vision affects thought.: “There were painful things for each man to perceive with his eye and his mind.” Any man who saw the unburied corpse of a friend was brought to a state of distress mixed with fear. I have translated *lupē* as “distress” instead of “pain” because it is clearly psychological as opposed to physical⁷⁵. This interpretation is in keeping with the usage of *lupē* at its three other occurrences in Thucydides... In all of these passages, *lupē* refers to some kind of psychological distress, a form of suffering that Thucydides ranks of first importance in his Book 2 account of the plague. (Sternberg 120, 121)

Through the literary world and earlier theatrical events, the individually traumatized soldier was already a familiar reality to the ancient Athenians. This familiarity, Shay claims, is key to communalization, the first step in his theory of recovery from trauma. *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* are early expressions of the ravages of trauma on the individual soldier (in the case of *The Iliad*, primarily a model of trauma), and the soldier's return to the civilian world in which he struggles to tell his story of trauma, in a way that is heard by increasingly larger collectives (in the case of *The Odyssey*, a model both of and for trauma).

These two epics are only part of a broader understanding the ancient Greeks possessed about what is now called trauma. A widespread understanding led to inclusion of the military in

⁷⁵Sternberg also notes, “The phrase *lupē meta phobou* vaguely anticipates Aristotle's tragic pity and terror, emotions aroused by a terrible spectacle” (201n54). *Lupe* (λύπη) appears three times in *The Oresteia*, each time in the context of what Sternberd calls psychology (with no physical cause or manifestation). The Chorus of *Agamemnon* uses the term at line 103 (coupled with *phrene*) and 791 (where Lattimore translates it either as “sorrow” or “grief”). The Chorus, speaking to the Nurse, uses it in *The Libation Bearers* 733, where Lattimore also translates it as “sorrow.”

civic events (especially theatre and the Great Dionysia) and helped to develop witnessing audiences, through which carrier groups could express traumas and traumatic memories, especially as they pertained to the near-perpetual reality of armed conflict, and the wounding and returning of individual soldiers. The places of honor accorded the generals/judges, the *ephebes*, and the war veterans indicate a high level of agency in the construction and interpretation of tragic and traumatic narratives, and a strong foundation for the integration of these potentially traumatized collectives with the larger collective of the Athenian audience. Shay delineates the process of communalization and recovery, when they were successful, in the contexts of both ancient Greek and modern social systems.

...The trauma survivor must be permitted and empowered to voice his or her experience; the listener(s) must be allowed to listen, believe, and remember; the listener(s) must be allowed to repeat what they have heard to others. When trauma survivors hear that enough of the truth of their experience has been understood, remembered, and retold with enough fidelity to carry some of this truth— no one who did not experience their trauma can ever grasp all of the truth— then the circle of communalization is complete. The arts can and usually do play vital roles at each one of these steps. Often the artist is the trauma survivor himself or herself—but this is not essential. The Muses can implant the truth of experience in the imagination of artists who have never “ been there,” so long as the artist is able to listen to trauma survivors. Professional artists are not required for this. It is impossible to overstate the importance of the arts in creating the supportive social movements that permit trauma to have voice and the voice to be heard, believed, remembered, and respoken. (*Odysseus in America* 233).

Ultimately, *The Oresteia* contributed to a larger cultural narrative, that allowed and recognized traumatic suffering (both in terms of symptomatology and traumatic memory) in the ancient contexts of war, family, state, foreignness, and foundational myth. Analyzing the success of *The Oresteia* as model of/for trauma begins with revisiting what is best called the theatre event's *illocutionary success*, and by exploring how this theatre event specifically modeled the inclusiveness and agency of illocutionary acts that pertained to trauma.

In a culture such as Classical Athens, that did not have a unified or fully codified conceptualization of consciousness or cognition, or a dichotomous understanding of biological and psychological causes of trauma, metaphors (especially functional, behavioral metaphors onstage) became the primary modes of conceptualization, interpretation, memorialization, narrativization, and resolution of trauma. As stated in Chapter One, the negotiation between performer and audience has metaphorical (as well as theoretical) power in the negotiation between victim and culture. The key to this point, cited in Chapter One, lies in sociologist Jeffrey Alexander's explanation of the "speech act" as a "double act" – one which expresses a truth claim to an audience, while remaining subject to "illocutionary" success or failure (12). Particular communicative patterns and trends within the Great Dionysia, the institution of tragedy, and the inclusion of military life as both theatrical and social reality within the context of the festival, at least in the instance of *The Oresteia*, opened the door for the illocutionary act to be successful. Traumatic experiences were heard by the ever-larger witnessing audiences, from the attendants of the 458 BC production of *The Oresteia*, to collectives within the Athenian culture that had the greatest possible agency over the construction of master narratives and collective memories.

Assessing the illocutionary success of a trauma-oriented theatre event accomplishes several things. First, it helps to determine how the traumatic truth claim changes over time, as it moves from individual to carrier group to increasingly larger theatrical and witnessing audiences. This serves as a starting point for analyzing the cohesion of the carrier group, and undercuts the presumption that a certain amount or consistency of collective cohesion is necessary in the recall and interpretation of collective traumatic memory. This inquiry leads immediately to the questions of inclusion (who can/is meant to witness and respond to the traumatic truth claim?) and agency (who may make the trauma claim and interpret it as it moves into larger and larger collectives?).

Illocutionary success, in the case of *The Oresteia*, also means that meaning systems and other social mechanisms were in place that permitted the witnessing and interpretation of traumatic memory, within communicative spaces that allowed for some degree of variation within the dominant cultural narrative presented by the Great Dionysia.

...one of the great advances produced by thinking more broadly about the Great Dionysia as an event is that the standard strategy of defending one's own interpretation by an appeal to an author's political intentions has become less acceptable, as critics have tried to come to terms with the complexity of the public exchange that is the production of meaning in theatre. Here, the recognition of the engagement of the audience in the interpretive procedure and the recuperative, framing power of ideological formation... work to make the simple claim of authorial expression and control of meaning seem rather too naive for the theatrical experience. (Goldhill "Politics" 47)

When viewing Aeschylus' work in a capacity broader than the assumption of a single political affiliation, the understanding of *The Oresteia* as a site of multiple traumas is enhanced. While it

is difficult to deny the implicit imperialism of the cycle's narrative, there are many more aspects that need to be considered. *The Oresteia* allowed for understandings and civic responses to both combat trauma (in the characters of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra in the former's homecoming), as well as familial trauma (in the repercussions this homecoming and Agamemnon's subsequent murder have on his children and the House of Atreus). In the form of Cassandra (in Argos) and later Orestes (in Athens), the cycle also allows the interpretation of metic and foreign experiences of trauma. In all, the cycle proposes a reconstruction of narrative realities around war veterans, through plot constructions and ritual frameworks, increasing both the democratic agency and the public responsibility to respond to traumas.

The Oresteia is a site of multiple traumas as well as the memory of these traumas. However, far from being a static monument to past traumas, the plays, through strong civic and audience participation, they were also a site of continual commemoration and reinterpretation of past traumas and potentially traumatic futures (many of which were realized in the social and cultural upheavals of the Athenian plague and the second Peloponnesian War. A strong indication of *The Oresteia's* illocutionary success also lies in its intellectual and education staying power; evidenced by several historical circumstances. The first is that it is the only complete cycle extant⁷⁶, indicating not just that the plays as separate entities had a perceived intrinsic value across time and cultures, but also that *The Oresteia's* plot was deemed valuable as a cohesive whole.

The strongest piece of *prima facie* evidence for the status of the play is of course the survival of *Agamemnon* along with *Libations* [sic] *Bearers* and *Eumenides* in the manuscript tradition. Less important than the answer (or answers) to the question of *why*

⁷⁶The satyr play, *Proteus*, which concluded the cycle, does not survive. However, this does not change the fact that the tragic and traumatic arc of *The Oresteia* is extant in complete form.

it survived to be one of the seven Aeschylean plays transmitted from late antiquity into the Byzantine world and beyond is the mere fact that it did survive, that it never disappeared from the continuous tradition. ...The very fact of survival implies some degree of multifunctionality: along with the rest of the trilogy, *Agamemnon* was clearly *used*. What sort of use was it put to? (Easterling 24-25, emphasis retained)

A partial answer to this lies in the exploration of the illocutionary success of *The Oresteia* as a whole. In the collaborative process of theatre making, specifically, the construction of *The Oresteia* as a theatre event within the larger collective, civic, and cultural contexts of the Great Dionysia, one begins to see the movement from socially distributed memory among relatively small collectives, to the cultural phenomenon of collective memory.

The brief Conclusion section of this dissertation will deal in more general terms with the models *of* and *for* traumatic memory that the works of Wiesel and Aeschylus create. It will also address the movement from socially distributed to collective memory with regard to traumatic portrayals. It is within this last point that the difference between collective and cultural trauma will be further delineated.

IV.0 CONCLUSION

IV.1 REVIEW OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The most robust definition of individual, psychological trauma has been derived from the albeit sporadic analyses and theorizations of the past 150 years, which arose primarily from the effects of wartime and the already established, longstanding concept of hysteria. Etiological considerations throughout the history of trauma studies have included both the biological and psychological, and have been almost solely the province of therapeutic and clinical research. Cultural trauma, on the other hand, emerged in the 1990s, and has been viewed as a social and cultural construction related to but theoretically distinct from psychological trauma. This latter theoretical matrix originated in the disciplines of sociology and anthropology.

From the dialectical nature of the interchange between individual and cultural trauma, the theatre event has been used as a site to trace that dialectic, delineating a theory of collective trauma, which takes into account emergent understandings of memory as both an in- and out-of-the-head phenomenon (in the form of transactive, socially distributed, and collective memory theories). The primary reason for the distinction between the concepts of collective and cultural trauma lies in socially distributed memory's more expansive parameters for group cohesion. These parameters strongly indicate that the intensity of cohesion in a collective does not necessarily affect (in fact, rarely affects) the reliability, veracity, or psychological utility of that collective's continual recollection of an event. (Barnier, et al. "Social Distribution" 40) Because

of these parameters, collective trauma has the advantage of considering groups of all possible sizes, a quality neither psychological nor cultural trauma theory possesses.

The main focus of this dissertation has been if and how the plays in the case studies construct models *of* and *for* collective trauma and collective traumatic memory. It has revealed that collective trauma and its attendant memory are inseparable from each other, because trauma, on both the individual and collective levels, is primarily a disorder of memory. Even the most cursory definition of memory (normative or otherwise) is “an invitation to participation in a *common set of meanings, values and actions*” (Frunzã 94). Collective trauma, as a disorder of memory, at theatrical sites, is communicated primarily through behavioral, functional metaphors, employed as part of the process of reassembling traumatically fragmented meaning systems from collective and cultural frameworks. These metaphors “which... highlight and make coherent certain aspects of our experience” are able to “create realities for us, especially social realities” and, like models *for*, can “thus be a guide for future action” (Lakoff and Johnson 156). This process of reassembling fragmented meaning systems, when successful, is the beginning of the narrativization of collective traumatic memory, allowing the traumatic speech act to be communicated, first by the traumatized individual to the traumatized collective, then to the witnessing audiences of progressively larger collectives. Illocutionary success of the traumatic speech act is not solely internal to the plot of the play, as the concept of the “theatre event” reveals. Understanding “event” as both literally embodied and necessarily metaphorical, and as “not just reflections of a mind-independent reality.... [but as a] fundamentally human concept” (Lakoff and Johnson *Philosophy* 171) allows for the understanding of the theatre event as something that *constructs* reality through metaphorical power. The theatre event is more than the ephemera of a play performed in a vacuum; it is that play, the reception of the audience, and

the total experience of the performance, including expectations prior and recollection and interpretation after.

The existence and communication of collective traumatic memory is made possible through the phenomenon of socially distributed memory, which is “*hybrid* in character;” it “spans not only the embodied brain and central nervous system, but also the environment with its social or technological resources” (Barnier, et al. “Framework” 33). This more inclusive understanding of memory allows the totality of the theatre event to be analyzed with special attention paid to traumatic memories, which are in turn subject to continual recollection, comparison, and interpretation among victim groups of varying cohesion, in the ongoing attempt to make sense of these memories. Finally, the concept of “historical specificity” helps to root the theatrical event being analyzed solely in actual traumatic experience and its metaphorical expressions.

IV.2 MODELS OF AND MODELS FOR TRAUMATIC MEMORY

It has been established that Wiesel's *Zalmen* fails to construct a theatrical model of individual trauma, and is (most likely) an intentional model of failed collective trauma. These claims are made stronger by Chapter Two's close reading of the play, and further is solidified by the mostly negative performance reviews from the 1976 Broadway production, found near the end of that chapter. Conversely, *The Trial of God* was a much more successful model of both individual and collective trauma, as well as a reasonably successful model of cultural trauma (as discussed below). This is evidenced by the critical reaction in both Roman and New York

newspapers, and in the success of the traumatic speech act both within the plot and outside of it, as seen in the 1983 Italian audience of San Miniato.

It can be reasonably concluded, based on the two case studies of this dissertation, that certain theatre events that portray limit situations have the potential, through the illocutionary success of a traumatic speech act, to function as models *of* and *for* trauma and traumatic memory. As models *of*, these events can reify, expand upon, and deepen previously established concepts of trauma. As models *for*, these events accomplish what the models *of* do, while adding to the understanding of both collective and cultural traumas. Through illocutionary success, these theatre events also hold the potential to contribute to the processes of commemoration and recovery on the collective and cultural levels. In the specific cases of *The Trial of God* and *The Oresteia*, these theatre events are not merely models *of* and *for* individual collective traumatic memory, but are also part of the actual illocutionary process that communicates traumas to increasingly larger witnessing audiences. The traumatic carrier groups, in the cases of *The Trial of God* and *The Oresteia*, are both virtual and actual, existing within the plot of the plays and in the overall theatre event, in which real traumatic experience is in the process of being communicated, negotiated, commemorated, and interpreted.

The Trial of God employs the metaphorical distance of the Chmielnicki pogroms of 1648–1657, which serves to link the social, ritual, and behavioral metaphor of the metatheatrical *beit din* trial to the actual trauma of Wiesel's Auschwitz experience, specifically his witnessing of the “mock” rabbinical trial in 1943. Based on the above conclusions, it is also logical to assume that *The Trial of God* is Wiesel's use of the metaphorical power of the theatre event to portray fictive collective trauma (that of the characters in the play), as well as actual collective trauma (his and that of his people during the Holocaust) to increasingly larger audiences – both

theatrical audiences and those witnessing audiences outside of the theatre. All of this is keeping with Wiesel's impetus for writing, found in his essay "Why I Write," republished by the *New York Times* on the eve of his receipt of the Congressional Gold Medal:

I say words, write words, reluctantly. There are easier occupations, far more pleasant ones. But for the survivor, writing is not a profession, but an occupation, a duty.

...Camus calls it "an honor." As he puts it, "I entered literature through worship." Other writers have said they did so through anger, through love. Speaking for myself, I would say – through silence. It was by seeking, by probing silence that I began to discover the perils and power of the word. ...The only role I sought was that of witness. I believed that, having survived by chance, I was duty-bound to give meaning to my survival, to justify each moment of my life. I knew the story had to be told. Not to transmit my experience is to betray it. (13, emphases added)

As it was with the trial episode in Auschwitz, Wiesel describes being compelled to tell something that is monumentally difficult to tell. What he calls silence could be the result of the latency inherent in the traumatic response, or the incomprehensibility of the limit events, or the inefficiency of language to communicate his experiences, or any combination of these.

Wiesel goes on in this essay to elucidate the difficulty of writing about and because of trauma and traumatic memory.

The word has deserted the meaning it was intended to convey – impossible to make them coincide. The displacement, the shift, is irrevocable. This was never more true than right after the upheaval⁷⁷. We all knew that we could never, never say what had to be said, that we could never express in words, coherent, intelligible words, our experience of madness

⁷⁷"Upheaval" is one of the words Wiesel uses in place of the terms "Holocaust" and "Shoah."

on an absolute scale. I thought that I would never be able to speak of them [my experiences]. All words seemed inadequate, worn, foolish, lifeless, whereas I wanted them to be searing. (*ibid*)

Wiesel is describing, in addition to the incomprehensibility and voicelessness associated with trauma, the destruction and possible fragmentation of the meaning systems that would otherwise allow for traumatic expression. The above passage of Wiesel's essay is also reminiscent of the Rabbi's words in *Zalmen*: "Sentences tear apart inside me. Words are drained of meaning, they fly away, disperse and fall on me like enemies. They strangle me...the words. Those I speak and those I omit" (96-97). Throughout both *Zalmen* and *The Trial of God*, those characters share with Wiesel the experience of the tension between the need to speak of traumatic events, and the inability to form the words or narrative structure concerning their traumas.

For Wiesel and for many of his characters, particularly in *The Trial of God*, the continued call to speak the unspeakable trauma lies in the victims' dedication to memory.

If I say that the writer in me wants to remain loyal, it is because it is true. This sentiment moves all survivors; they owe nothing to anyone, but everything to the dead. I owe them my roots and my memory. I am duty-bound to serve as their emissary, transmitting the history of their disappearance, even if it disturbs, even if it brings pain. ...I have not forgotten the dead. The presence of the dead... beckons in such tangible ways that it affects even the most removed characters. ("Why I Write" 13)

Wiesel has located traumatic expressions in memory, the past, and in commemoration of the dead. Once again, *The Trial of God* provides a strong example for this. Berish names the dead, who hold the complete memory of the collective trauma of Shamgorod, and the most important aspect of his case against God. "The witnesses for the prosecution are the dead. All of them... I

implore the court to consider their absence as the weightiest of proofs, as the heaviest of accusations... Let their testimony enter your conscience and your memory!" (129-130)

From the study in Chapter Two and the above review and reflection upon *The Trial of God*, the models of and for individual and collective traumas can be outlined. First, it is important to note that individual and collective traumas in *The Trial of God* are inextricably linked. Without the individual traumatic experience, and the witnessing of the limit events suffered by the individual, collective trauma is impossible. It is not Hanna's madness that voices trauma (not even her own), but those who witnessed it – Berish and Maria – in concert with her mad voicings, who voice the trauma. Both the central victim (Hanna) and the initial witnesses (Berish and Maria) make up the original carrier group that communicates the trauma to the others – the Purim minstrels. The communication of Hanna's trauma, as well as those of Berish and Maria, invite the telling of other traumatic memories (those of the minstrels), and their comparison with the traumas that were previously communicated. These comparisons of traumas are inseparable from the initial speech act, as they are extensions of it. It is only through the sharing and comparison of traumatic memories that the individual traumas can be made sense of.

While the recovery process in *The Trial of God* is by no means completed (it is stopped by the second pogrom, during which we may presume all of the main characters are killed), a key part of recovery, narrativization, begins to occur near the end of the play. For recovery from individual trauma, the traumatic event must become part of the life-story narrative, thereby becoming accessible through normative (as opposed to traumatic, fragmentary) memory (Herman 211). When the process of narrativizing individual traumas is cooperative between traumatized individuals, as it clearly is in *The Trial of God*, it will often depend upon the

reconstructed meaning systems used in the communication of collective trauma. This phenomenon links the beginning phases of recovery from individual trauma to the success or failure of the collective traumatic speech act.

The Trial of God also constructs a model *for* collective traumatic memory. One of the aspects of this model *for* is that the past is inextricably linked to the future, in the sense that the meaning of past traumas are essential to secure the future for subsequent generations, and for the understanding of future suffering (and future trauma). The minstrel Mendel, in the final moments of the play, speaks of this connection of past and future suffering and trauma. “So – it is going to start all over again. Jews and their enemies will face each other once more. And then? Purim will be over. Who will continue the thread of our tale? The last page will not be written. But the one before? It is up to us to prepare testimony for future generations. Thus I am asking you for the last time: What about the trial? The verdict?” (156) Even as the final limit event is enacted (the new pogrom that presumably kills the main characters at the end of the play), the framework of reorganized, and restructured meaning systems remains intact. The trial of God will continue in “future generations” with the “prepared testimony” of the characters. In this way, the metatheatrical trial is a model *for* collective trauma and collective traumatic memory.

Unfortunately, no such narrative exists to reveal Aeschylus' impetus for composing *The Oresteia*. As a result, slightly different tools had to be added to the analysis of the traumatic in the theatre event of *The Oresteia* in 458 BC. One of these tools was the consideration of historical limit events within contemporary Athenian society. These events were matched with their possible metaphorical counterparts within *The Oresteia*. Also, such tools as physical

evidence, linguistic influences, and the analysis of ritual both within and surrounding the plays and the Great Dionysia of 458, were employed to trace the traumatic-historical arc of the event.

In the simplest terms, *The Oresteia* is a model *of* and *for* individual and collective traumas, as well as the mode for their recovery in the collective and cultural realms. The plays are also models *of* the interconnectivity of individual and collective traumas. Through these models, trauma in Ancient Athenian society is revealed to have had both psychological and physical etiologies. Even “trauma” in the purely physical sense (wounding) was more the province of the collective than the individual victim. Accordingly, trauma, whether primarily physical or psychological, was the concern and responsibility of the collective of the *polis*. Traumas were intergenerational and inherently linked to one another, as evidenced by the overarching “curse” upon the House of Atreus. In the characters of Clytemnestra and Cassandra, trauma is forward-looking in an additional sense: the traumatic visions and fixations of the two characters convey later traumatic realities.

Beginning with the traumatic fixations of Clytemnestra (her anxieties about Agamemnon's wounds and the fishing net metaphor), which are eventually acted out in the murder of Agamemnon, a nexus of individual and collective traumas is formed which destroy the collectives of the House of Atreus and the city of Argos, as seen in *The Libation Bearers*. The subsequent revenge killing of Clytemnestra by Orestes gives rise to the embodied model *of* individual trauma – the Furies. While the Furies are a metaphorical expression of individual trauma, they are also linked to the trauma of two collectives – Orestes family and his *polis* – and are almost immediately ushered into the collective realm to be understood through a newly-assembled meaning system, the Areopagus court founded by Athena.

The proceedings of the Areopagus court provide the model *for* individual and collective traumas, merging private experience with public solution. With Orestes' acquittal, his trauma seems to be dissipated, and he can return to his place in his own collective (the *polis* of Argos). However, the second half of *The Eumenides* involves the threat of collective and cultural trauma, in the form of the Furies, to Athens. In order to prevent this trauma, Athena negotiates the revision of the meaning system of the Furies, transmuting them into Eumenides, the Well-Judging. While the possibility of future trauma is by no means eliminated (as the Eumenides and their punishment must still be feared), such future traumas have a strong narrative framework through which they can be understood – in other words, a model *for*.

These models *of* and *for* were then set against a series of limit events contemporary to the premiere of *The Oresteia*, namely, the First Peloponnesian War, and the physical, historical, and military anxieties present in ancient Athenian life. Also employed was the understanding of corrupted and otherwise altered rituals, which often blur the line between the virtual and actual. Many of the anxieties no doubt present in Athenian life were part of the “civic gaze” (Goldhill “Greek Drama” 63) – the response of a self-conscious audience that were not merely spectators, but themselves performers. Further study of this audience reveals many loci for these anxieties and possible historical traumas in the theatre: the ephebes, military veterans, metics, and the military judges. In this way, the traumatic arc of *The Oresteia* is linked to the historical arc of Athenian society's experiences, and the metaphorical power of the plays are brought into relief.

IV.3 COLLECTIVE MEMORY AS A TEST OF TRAUMATIC AGENCY

It should be remembered that collective memories “are retained and passed on either as part of an ongoing process of what might be called public commemoration, in which officially sanctioned rituals are engaged to establish a shared past, or through discourses more specific to a particular group or collective. This socially constructed, historically rooted collective memory functions to create social solidarity in the present” (Eyerman 65). As trauma moves from collective to cultural manifestations, it traumatic memory enters the realm of collective memory and cultural-level narrative. Collective memory helps to reveal both agency at the moment of traumatic expression as well as agency over time, as the trauma is communicated to larger and larger witnessing audiences. It also helps to identify the point when collective trauma becomes cultural trauma.

Once again, illocutionary success can be measured in the retention of agency as the traumatic narrative moves into the cultural realm. How the trauma and traumatic memories of a collective are integrated into the master narrative of a culture (and even those that exist between cultures) provides the final step in this analysis of traumas communication through progressively larger witnessing audiences in this study. From the analysis of the case studies, it can be determined that *The Trial of God* and *The Oresteia* enjoyed varying degrees of illocutionary success as their traumatic narratives were integrated on the cultural level. For *The Trial of God*, illocutionary success occurred not just within the Jewish cultural milieu, but also within the Catholic theatrical community of Italy. This assertion is backed up by the success of the play produced for its San Miniato audience in 1983. For *The Oresteia*, the traumatic-historical arc was almost immediately integrated into a cultural narrative which, according to Jonathan Shay,

was constructed through “officially sanctioned rituals...engaged to establish a shared past, or through discourses more specific to a particular group or collective. This socially constructed, historically rooted collective memory functions to create social solidarity in the present” (Shay 230). One of the means of generating that collective memory of trauma was (and is) clearly the theatrical event.

While there is the danger of losing agency as collective traumatic memory moves into the realm of collective memory, simultaneously “the cognitive metaphors [of collective memory] crystallize agency... Thus, the cognitive metaphor makes more vivid the competing claims that groups make, the ways in which groups can be both causally and morally responsible for certain actions, and the justifications given for treating groups in certain ways” (Wilson 234). It is with the movement to collective member that agency is once again endangered, but is also able to contribute the most to the cultural milieu and the culture-wide understanding of trauma. These collective, especially those that are traumatized, are “causally and morally responsible for certain actions, and the justifications given for treating groups in certain ways” (as noted by Wilson, directly above).

We return at last to the moral reason behind this dissertation: the exploration of trauma in such a way that centralizes not just agency (as seen above), but also, in Alexander's words, “illuminates an emerging domain of social responsibility and political action” (1). It is through a multidisciplinary approach to the concepts of trauma (of any kind), solidarity between disciplines and schools of thought, that will usher in new understandings of trauma and modes of recovery. This consideration brings to a close this exploration of the distinctions and similarities between individual, collective, and cultural trauma and traumatic memory.

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