Tragic Troy and Athens: heroic space in Attic drama
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Introduction

In 1997, Walt Disney released the movie Hercules, which brought the world of the Greek heroes to the big screen. This movie won many prizes, but none for historical accuracy – and probably, rightly so. Although it contains a number of elements from ancient Greece, such as temples and papyrus rolls, it largely resembles the late twentieth century. One only has to look at the city of Thebes, where Hercules lives. It has, for instance, a Walk of Fame, containing the footprints of Hercules and his winged horse Pegasus, as well as a 'Hercules Store', where citizens buy animation puppets and pay with credit cards called 'Grecian Express'. People drink energy drinks called 'Herculade' and walk on 'Herc Air' sandals, for which big billboards hang in the city. The omnipresence of modern elements primarily aims at making the ancient Greek world understandable for little children, the target audience of the movie, although it may also have a comic side effect, particularly for adults.

The ancient Greeks themselves also brought the heroic world to life, for example in literature, painting, and sculpture. This book deals with the 'tragic world', the heroic world presented in Attic tragedy of the fifth century BC. Whereas previous studies have primarily focussed on the social and political aspects of this world, such as its relation to contemporary civic ideology, this book treats the largely neglected aspect of space, namely the physical features of the tragic world: the landscape, buildings, and objects. It analyses what the heroic world in tragedy 'looks like'; in other words, what physical elements 'build up' the heroic world.

It is striking that the topic of heroic space has received so little attention in studies of tragedy, while in Homeric scholarship it has been a subject of discussion for more than a century. A vexed question in this field is the historicity of the Homeric world, the relation between the represented world and the 'real' world. Scholars disagree whether the Homeric world is a real, historical world – either the Greek Bronze Age (1600-1200), the Dark Age (1200-750), or the Early Archaic Age (750-650) – or whether it has never existed as such. They try to date the Homeric world by identifying historical equivalents for buildings and objects de-
scribed by Homer. Although this debate is far from settled, I have chosen to focus on the historicity of the tragic world, since this topic has been largely neglected.

Chapter 1 will demonstrate that scholars conflate the heroic world in tragedy with that in Homer to such an extent that the former is often called a 'Homeric world'. Although this may at first seem a reasonable view, it is not based on thorough research, but on the notion of Homer's dominant position in classical Greek society. This book will evaluate the supposed 'Homeric character' of the tragic world by making a more refined analysis of its historicity and by comparing tragedy to Homer. The analysis will be based on the theoretical model of Memory Studies, which will be set out in chapter 2. Chapters 3 and 4 will be devoted to the application of the model to the heroic world.

Since it would be a far too extensive task to analyse the whole of the heroic world in all tragedies, the analysis will be restricted to the presentation of the cities of Troy and Athens. These cities are useful case studies, since they appear in many tragedies and, more importantly, they are each other's opposites in Homeric epic: Troy is of paramount importance as the setting of the Trojan War, while Athens plays a marginal role and is only mentioned in passing. Thus, an analysis of these cities in tragedy will make clear how the tragedians present a 'Homeric' city on the one hand and a 'non-Homeric' city on the other. A comparison between Troy and Athens will be made in the conclusion (chapter 5).

This book aims to provide a clearer understanding of how the classical Greeks presented their 'distant past', the so-called epoch to which the heroic world belongs (see 1.1). The focus on the presentation of two cities in many tragedies rather than on the complete heroic world of a single tragedy makes it possible to discern general tendencies in the tragic genre as a whole.

The Greeks texts are mentioned in the list of editions. All translations are my own, but they are based on existing translations, such as those of the Loeb Classical Library. All dates are before Christ, unless stated otherwise.

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