4. Athens

This chapter examines the presentation of Athens in tragedy. Since Athens plays only a marginal role in Homer – only the temple of Athena (Il. 2.549), Cape Sounion (Od. 3.278), and the palace of Erechtheus (Od. 7.81) are mentioned – the tragedians probably made use of other local traditions to depict the city. This chapter aims to identify these traditions and determine how they influenced the image of tragic Athens. Since some local traditions were connected to the real, actual landscape by *lieux de mémoire*, it also analyses how the layout of tragic Athens relates to that of real, classical Athens.

4.1 Acropolis

This first section analyses the layout of the Athenian acropolis in tragedy. It determines what elements are found in the tragic acropolis and their relationship to the real, actual acropolis. Are they invented by the tragedians or do they derive from the actual, fifth-century acropolis? By way of introduction, I first survey the image of the acropolis in comedy, which is a reflection of the fifth-century hill.

Comedy

The comedies of Aristophanes are littered with references to the actual Athenian acropolis. Here I list a representative selection of them. In the *Lysistrata* the women of Athens arrange a sex strike and withdraw to the acropolis, where they barricade the Propylaea (265 τὰ προπύλαια), the entrance gate, to keep their husbands from the hill. One of Lysistrata’s women who wants to give up the strike feigns a pregnancy by hiding the helmet of the Bronze Athena (751 τὴν ἱερὰν κυνῆν, cf. 749 χαλκίον), a colossal statue by Phidias, under her dress. In the *Wealth* the Athenians install a statue of the personified god of affluence on the acropolis as the guardian of the *opisthodomos* (1193 τὸν ὀπισθόδομον), the treasure chamber of Athens.1 The chorus leader in the *Wasps* states that the Odeum of Pericles (1109 ᾠδείῳ), located on the south slope, belongs to the natural habitat of the Athenian jury members. Lastly, the sausage seller in the *Knights* boasts of the size of his spoon breads (bread that was pressed into scoops for eating thick soup)2 by claiming that they were pressed by the hand of the gold and ivory statue of Athen-

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1 The *opisthodomos* was either the western part of the Parthenon or a portion of the archaic temple of Athena Polias (the so-called *archaios neos*), which was rebuilt after the Persian Wars (Hurwit 1999, 38).
2 Sommerstein 1981, 204.
The buildings and objects listed here are all adopted from the late fifth-century acropolis. This presentation relates to the nature of the genre. Comic events are generally located in a contemporary setting, such as the Athenian Pnyx or the Thesmophoria, which emphasises their current social and political relevance.

Let us now turn to the acropolis in tragedy, first to its natural (4.1.1) and then to its artificial elements (4.1.2). Since tragic events take place in the heroic past, the image of the acropolis in tragedy differs from that in comedy.

4.1.1 Nature

Olive tree
The tragic acropolis contains an olive tree, which is also found on the real, actual acropolis. It is so characteristic of the citadel that the whole acropolis is called ‘hill of the olive’. For example, in Euripides’ Hercules, Amphitryon addresses Theseus as ‘lord of the olive-bearing hill’ (1178 ὦ τὸν ἐλαιοφόρον ὄχθον ἄναξ). Similarly, in the Ion, Creusa calls Athena the goddess who sits upon the ‘olive-producing hill’ (1480 τὸν ἐλαιοφυῆ πᾶγον).

A canonical story about the olive tree is the aetiological myth about its origin. The story goes that when Athena and Poseidon competed for control over Attica, Athena produced an olive tree and Poseidon a salt spring (Hdt. 8.55) or, in some versions, an oar (S. OC 716). While fifth-century sources do not expand on the character of the contest, later sources present two variants. In one, the control of Attica is ascribed to the god who wins a race from the Olympus to the acropolis and brings forth his token on arrival (e.g. Apollod. 3.14.1). In the other, the reign comes to the god whose token is considered best by the Athenian king Cecrops (e.g. X. Mem. 3.5.10). In either case, Athena wins the contest and becomes prime goddess of the country. Since the olive tree and salt spring were present on

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4 The story of the contest first appears in the fifth century. In literature, it is first attested in Herodotus’ Histories (8.55); in the visual arts, it first appears on the west pediment of the Parthenon. The story may have been invented in the classical period to offer a mythological explanation for the increase of Athens’ power on sea. As a result of their new power, the Athenians may have considered Poseidon benevolent to them. The story showed that Poseidon was well disposed to Athens, although Athena had become the city goddess. On the other hand, the story can also have originated in the archaic period. It belongs to an older pattern, in which two gods compete for the control over a country. Several cities in Greece told such stories, in which Poseidon is often the loser. In Argos, for example, he loses to Hera (e.g. Paus. 2.15.5). The Greeks regularly worshipped Poseidon as the second god of the city, probably to propitiate the violent features of his character, since he was held responsible for floods and earthquakes (Parker 1987, 199-200).
the classical acropolis (Hdt. 8.55), they may have supported the memory of the story of the contest. In other words, they were probably lieux de mémoire for this story.

The tree and spring on the actual acropolis were considered symbols of divine favour. The notion that Athens was favoured by the gods was part of civic ideology in the archaic-classical period (e.g. Sol. fr. 41-4 West; Isoc. 4.29). The olive tree and spring on the actual acropolis may have reminded the Athenians of this ideological notion. The belief in divine favour may have given them, for instance, courage in war (e.g. D. 18.153).

The olive tree is mentioned in the second stasimon of Euripides’ Trojan Women, in which the chorus lament the indifference of the gods to the fall of Troy. They contrast their city with Athens, which did receive the gods’ favour. They evoke Athens by metonymy:

... ὄχθοις ἱεροῖς, ἵν’ ἐλαίας
πρώτον ἔδειξε κλάδον γλαυκᾶς Ἀθάνα, (E. Tr. 799-803)

The olive tree has a symbolic function in the ode. It is expressive of the divine favour of the city. The presentation of the olive as a ‘heavenly garland’ enhances the praise of Athens and alludes Athena’s victory in the contest against Poseidon. The contrast between Athens and Troy makes the fall of the latter seem more miserable. Athens is ‘shining’ and is crowned with a garland, while Troy is captured and reduced to ashes (814-9).

The olive tree also appears in Sophocles’ Oedipus at Colonus. When Oedipus arrives in Colonus, he promises the Athenians protection after his death (621-3). The chorus then sing a song of praise about the region to inform Oedipus about his new residence (668-9). The chorus focus on the region’s divine favour, of which the gifts of Athena and Poseidon are physical proof. The olive tree that Athena gave is described as indestructible (702-3) and a ‘terror to spears of enemies’ (699 ἐγχέων φόβημα δαίμον). These features represent the perpetuity and power of the city of Athens. Poseidon, for his part, gave Attica the bridle (714 χαλινόν), which represents the taming of horses, and the ‘well-rowing oar’ (715-6 εὐήρετμος ... πλάτα), which symbolises control of the sea. Since the gifts are de-

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5 Cf. Grethlein 2003, 130.
7 According to Edmunds (1996, 92), that Sophocles presents the bridle as well as the oar as gifts of Poseidon bears on the contemporary situation. By staging the OC Sophocles attempts to reconcile the Athenian oligarchic and democratic factions, which were opposed to each other.
scribed as beneficial to Athens, Sophocles underscores the ideological notion of divine favour in this ode.\(^8\) He does not mention the contest between the gods, but presents them as working together for the well being of Athens.

The gifts of the gods have a thematic function in the *OC*. The divine favour that Athens receives is an important theme in the play. The drama focuses on the last hours of Oedipus, who promises that he, too, will favour Athens after his death. Like Athena and Poseidon, he will secure the continuity of Athens, by keeping enemies from the country (621-3).\(^9\)

**Long Rocks**

A second fifth-century element that is referred to in tragedy is the Long Rocks (Μακραί), steep cliffs at the north side of the acropolis. Several members of the Athenian royal house commit suicide here.

1. In Euripides' *Ion*, the cliffs are the place where the daughters of king Cecrops hurl themselves to death (274). The story goes that when they opened a basket that Athena had given them, they went mad and leapt from the acropolis (269-73). The basket contained the infant Erichthonius and two guardian snakes. Although Athena had instructed them to keep it closed, they were disobedient. The leap of the daughters from the cliffs was a canonical event in the tradition of early Athens.\(^10\) Euripides adopted not only the event itself from tradition, but also its location. These were inherently connected to each other.

2. In Euripides' *Erechtheus*, the cliffs are probably the place where the daughters of king Erechtheus commit suicide. When the Thracian king Eumolpus attacks ...

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\(^8\) Mills 1997, 184-5. Grethlein (2003, 302-13) adds that the image of a perpetual and divinely favoured Athens is also questioned in the play through references to the nightingale (672-3), which is often a symbol of death, and general remarks in the *OC* about the transience of life (e.g. 607-14). These elements suggest that Athens need not always remain the divinely favoured city, but that prosperity can come to an end.

\(^9\) Markantonatos (2003, 36-9; 91-3) argues that the theme of divine favour in the ode relates to the contemporary context. When Sophocles composed the *OC* (409-6), Athens was at war with Sparta. Sophocles may have intended the ode as an encouragement of the Athenians in war and as a political assurance of the Athenian empire by reminding them of the divine favour of their city. Nonetheless, the *OC* was only performed in 401, when Athens had lost the Peloponnesian War and was in deep financial crisis. At the time of the performance, the audience may have understood the ode as a promise of a brighter future for Athens: the idea that the gods were behind their city could raise their hopes of renewed prosperity. *Contra* Grethlein (see note 8).

Athens, Erechtheus and Praxithea sacrifice one of their daughters for the common good. An oracle revealed that a human sacrifice would guarantee them victory in this war (Lycurg., Leocr. 99). The royal daughters, nonetheless, have secretly agreed to die together (fr. 65,69-70 Austin). Although the text of the play is fragmentary, ἐπίπτετε (27) suggests that they hurled themselves to death. Since the setting of the play is the acropolis, the Long Rocks are a likely location for this act. The suicide of Erechtheus’ daughters may be an invention of Euripides, since it is not attested before. If it was set at the Long Rocks, Euripides may have modelled it after the leap of Cecrops’ daughters.

What is the function of the suicide in the play? It contributes to the misery of queen Praxithea, who is the only survivor of the royal house after the war. Not only did her husband die in battle, but also her daughters committed suicide in loyalty to their sacrificed sister. This causes her much grief, since she could not have foreseen that her loyalty to the polis would cause the ruin of her whole family.

Chasm of Erechtheus

The Long Rocks of the actual, fifth-century acropolis contain a chasm, a deep fissure in the soil. This spot is perhaps referred to in Euripides’ Ion as the place

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11 Eumolpus’ Thracian origin may be an invention of Euripides. In the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, Eumolpus is the leader of an Eleusinian army. As priest of the Mysteries he battles against the Athenians who claim control over the sanctuary (473-6). In the Erechtheus Euripides substitutes this battle for a conflict with Thrace, which he portrays as a battle between Greeks and barbarians (fr. 366 Nauck). This may relate to the political circumstances of 422, which was the probable performance date of the play. At this time Athens waged war with Sparta, during which it was supported by Eleusis. If Euripides had staged a war between Athens and Eleusis, he may have weakened the cohesion between the allies (Treu 1971, 116; Collard, Cropp and Lee 1995, 152-3).

12 Collard, Cropp, and Lee 1995, 151: 188.

13 Collard, Cropp, and Lee (1995, 152-5) have drawn attention to the relation between the Erechtheus and contemporary civic ideology.

1 On the one hand, the play underscores civic ideology. Several patriotic notions are unambiguously proclaimed in the play. Praxithea, for example, repeatedly emphasises the superiority of the polis above the oikos (fr. 360 Nauck). She states that dying on the battlefield is glorious and that women should not bring up cowards. Moreover, Erechtheus and Praxithea themselves are presented as performing a patriotic deed by sacrificing one of their daughters for the common good. They are rewarded for their patriotism at the end of the play, when Athena gives them prestigious gifts (cult and priesthood) (fr. 65 Austin).

2 On the other hand, the play also questions civic ideology. By living up to ideological standards, Praxithea is overcome by grief, since her loyalty to the polis results in the ruin of her oikos. Her husband dies on the battlefield and her daughters commit suicide in loyalty to their sacrificed sister. Thus, the Erechtheus probably highlights the ambivalence of Athenian civic ideology: although it is beneficial to the polis, it has negative effects on individual oikoi.
where king Erechtheus died. Ion inquires about Erechtheus’ death in a dialogue with Creusa on the origins of the Athenian royal house:

[Ιων] πατέρα δ’ ἀληθῶς χάσμα σὸν κρύπτει χθονός;
[Κρέουσα] πληγαὶ τριαίνης ποντίου σφ’ ἀπώλεσαν.
[Ιων] Μακραὶ δὲ χῶρός ἐστ’ ἐκεῖ κεκλημένος;
(E. Ion 281-3)

[Ion] Does a chasm of the earth really hide your father?
[Creusa] The blows of the sea-god’s trident killed him.
[Ion] Is that place called the Long Rocks?

Creusa does not answer Ion’s question but utters a complaint (284). The mention of the Long Rocks reminds her of the place where she was raped by Apollo. Ion’s question, however, bears on the layout of the classical acropolis, since a real chasm existed in the soil at the Long Rocks. Its connection with Erechtheus’ death is first attested here. It is possible that Euripides made the connection himself. Yet it is also possible that the connection was traditional in Euripides’ time, and that earlier attestations were not passed down to us. In any case, that archaeologists discovered classical finds on the spot demonstrates that the fifth-century Athenians were acquainted with the chasm.

The chasm has a characterising function in the play. It highlights the autochthonous nature of the king. As he was born from the soil, at least in some versions (e.g. Il. 2.548), so he is received in the earth again after his death. The notion that Erechtheus was born from the earth played an important role in Athenian civic ideology of the classical period (e.g. Isocr. 12.125). The Athenian citizens regarded themselves as descendants of the king and thus also as ‘children’ of the earth. This notion had important socio-political implications. The Athenians used it to legitimate their rule over the land of Attica; by tracing their origins to the Attic soil,

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14 Hurwit 1999, 78 (with a cross section of the cleft).
15 The archaeologist Jeppesen argues that the so-called House of the Arrephoroi, which was constructed in the second half of the fifth century, must be identified as the temple of Erechtheus because the building was built on top of the cleft and gave access to it. In line with this, he claims that the sanctuary usually called the ‘Erechtheum’ was dedicated to other gods and heroes, such as Athena Polias and Butes (Jeppesen 1987, 13-6).
16 Broner 1939, 371-433; 1948, 111-4. The cleft was already known to inhabitants of the acropolis during the Bronze Age. They discovered it in the second half of the thirteenth century and constructed a staircase within it to the fountain at the bottom. This staircase was used for a very short time, however, since the whole construction collapsed in the first half of the twelfth century, probably due to rot or an earthquake (Hurwit 1999, 78).
17 Disappearing in the earth is not solely reserved for autochthonous humans. The seer AmphiarAus, for example, is swallowed up by the earth when he attacks the city of Thebes (e.g. Pl. O. 6.13-4).
they could claim the right to rule the country. Moreover, the notion enhanced the Athenian feeling of superiority over other Greek communities. The Athenians considered their autochthony unique and regarded other Greeks as mere immigrants, who had obtained their lands only by conquest (e.g. Lys. 2.17, D. 60.4)\(^\text{18}\).

The chasm on the actual acropolis may have supported the memory of the story of Erechtheus’ death. At the same time, it may have reminded the Athenians of their autochthonous origins, since this notion was inherent in the story. The chasm, in other words, was probably a *lieu de mémoire* for the myth of Erechtheus and its ideological connotations.

The chasm in which Erechtheus dies is also mentioned in Euripides’ *Erechtheus*. However, it is not located on the acropolis but on the battlefield outside the city, as indicated by Erechtheus’ death being reported by a messenger who comes from the battlefield (fr. 65.11-22 Austin). He says that the king was struck by Poseidon and disappeared into the earth (58-9 κατὰ χθονὸς κρύψας Ἐρεχθέα). If the chasm on the actual acropolis was identified as the king’s place of death at the time of the *Erechtheus*, which was performed ten years before the *Ion*,\(^\text{19}\) then Euripides is taking liberties with the geography of Athens by placing it on the battlefield.

Why does Euripides situate Erechtheus’ death outside Athens in the *Erechtheus*? This relates to the needs of the plot. The play deals with the common Euripidean theme of the misery caused by war. The death of the king on the battlefield contributes to this theme. Although queen Praxithea first praises dying on the battlefield (fr. 360 Nauck), she later grieves when it happens to her husband. Similarly, whereas Praxithea first supports the sacrifice of one daughter, which would guarantee victory in war, she is later overcome by misery when it entails the death of her other daughters.

The deviant location of the chasm in the *Erechtheus* can be compared to that of Achilles’ tomb in Euripides’ *Hecuba*. Although this tomb was physically present in the classical Troad, Euripides locates it in Thrace in his play. This location is dictated by the needs of the plot; the *Hecuba* combines the story of Polyxena’s sacrifice with that of Polydorus’ murder. Since the latter takes place in Thrace, Euripides also locates the tomb of Achilles there. The demands of the plot thus prevail over geographical accuracy (3.2.2).

**Caves**

The Long Rocks of the actual acropolis are full of caves. These are referred to in Euripides’ *Ion* (494 μυχώδεσι Μακραῖς). Moreover, one of the caves is presented as

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\(^{18}\) Parker 1987, 194-5; Zacharia 2003, 56-65. The heroic Athenian king Cecrops was also regarded as having been born from the earth (e.g. Apollod. 3.277).

\(^{19}\) The *Erechtheus* was probably performed in 422, the *Ion* in 412 (Calder 1969, 147-56).
the place where Apollo rapes the Athenian princess Creusa (10). Due to this rape Creusa becomes pregnant with a son, who later receives the name Ion. After having borne him, Creusa abandons him out of shame and fear (336, 1497) in the cave where he was begotten (18).

The rape and exposure probably occur in the cave because they are part of the earth. Ion is a descendant of Creusa, who belongs to the autochthonous royal house of Athens. Ion is thus begotten and abandoned in a place that reflects his earth-born origins. The cave, then, has a characterising function.20

Euripides probably invented the rape and abandonment. In other variants Ion is the son of Creusa and the Euboean prince Xuthus (e.g. Hdt. 7.94).21 In these versions the autochthonous royal line of Athens is ‘defiled’ by Xuthus’ foreign blood. In Euripides’ Ion Creusa is also married to Xuthus, but it is Apollo who begets Ion. Hence, Ion receives pure Athenian blood with a dash of ichor (the golden ‘blood’ of the gods and immortals).22 Ion’s divine parentage adds to the glory of the classical Athenians, who considered themselves descendants of Ion (Hdt. 8.44). Euripides thus presents the Athenians not only as having autochthonous origins, but also as possessing divine roots.23

Since the cave in which Euripides situates Ion’s conception and exposure was present in classical Athens, it may have supported the memory of his story. At the same time, it may have reminded the Athenians of their autochthonous and divine origins. In other words, the cave was probably a lieu de mémoire for the myth of Ion and its ideological connotations. If the rape was Euripides’ invention,

20 Zacharia 2003, 39 n32. Ion’s autochthony is also reflected by the objects with which he is exposed. Ion receives a woven fabric with pictures of a Gorgon and snakes (1421–3) as well as an amulet of a golden snake (25 ὄφεσιν ἐν χρυσηλάτοις). Like the cave itself, these objects have chthonic associations. Snakes are chthonic creatures par excellence, since they are regarded as children of the Earth. For example, in Hesiod’s Theogony, Earth is presented as giving birth to the monster Typhoeus, who has a hundred snake heads (820–8). Furthermore, the first Athenian king Cecrops, who is born from the earth, is half-man half-snake (E. Ion 1163–4). Thus, although exposing him, Creusa invests her son with the symbols of the autochthonous royal family of Athens so as to legitimise his status as true heir of the Athenian throne (Huys 1995, 221–3; Mueller 2010, 365–402).

21 Cf. Hes. fr. 10a.20–4 (Merkelbach-West) (although this passage is partly restored). Ion’s parentage in Sophocles’ lost Creusa cannot be determined.


23 Lee 1997, 34. Euripides presents Ion as forefather of both Athenians and Ionians (1573–94). The presentation of this common ancestry bears on the contemporary situation. Ion was performed in 412, when the Athenians had suffered great losses in the Peloponnesian War. The Syracusans had defeated the Athenian fleet and the treasury of Athens had become empty. The Athenians feared that their allies, such as the Ionians, would desert. By highlighting their common ancestry in the Ion, Euripides may have enhanced their group cohesion. At the same time, he may have presented the Athenians as ‘natural’ leaders of the Ionians (Parker 1987, 206–7; Zacharia 2003, 1–3).
he himself made the cave a place of memory. The cave probably remained associated with Ion after the classical period, since the Roman emperor August set up a cult of Apollo in it.  

In the first stasimon the chorus state that the rape and abandonment took place in the cave of Pan (492 ἔν ἄντροις). Since Creusa did not specify the cave, the women themselves must have made this association. One of the caves in the Long Rocks was dedicated to Pan in the fifth century. The Athenians claimed that Pan had supported them during the battle of Marathon (490), so they established a cult in the cave to express their gratitude (Hdt. 6.105). Thus, the association of the cave with Pan in the *Ion* is a projection of the contemporary acropolis.

The cave of Pan has a thematic function in the ode. The god Pan, who has the body of a goat and man, is often associated with violent sexuality as well as wild nature. For example, in Euripides’ *Helen* one of the protagonist’s complaints is compared to that of a nymph who cries out that she is being raped by Pan (187-90). Furthermore, in the *Homeric Hymn to Pan* the god is said to roam the fields, hills, and mountains and to drive wild beasts through rocky glens (2-14). The attribution of the cave to Pan in the *Ion* relates to both the rape that took place there and the wildness of the site. The chorus present it as a residence of birds and wild beasts to which the miserable infant is exposed. The presence of these beasts is important, since the chorus think that they killed the infant (505-6).

**Flowers**

The acropolis in the *Ion* contains flowers. Creusa states that Apollo dragged her into the cave when she was culling flowers:

> ἔλθες μοι χρυσῷ χαίταν
> μαρμαίρων, εὖτ' ἐς κόλπους
> κρόκεα πέταλα φάρεσιν ἔδρεπον
> †ἀνθίζειν† χρυσανταυγῆ.
> (E. Ion 886-90)

You came to me, your hair flashing with gold, when I was gathering in the folds of my gown leaves of saffron, that reflected the golden light †to adorn with flowers†.

It is possible that this passage bears on the layout of the real, classical acropolis, since flowers may have grown around the caves. This is for example suggested by the fact that one of the caves was dedicated to ‘Aphrodite in the Gardens’ (Paus. 1.27.3), who was probably a fertility goddess. Nonetheless, Euripides may also

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44 Nulton (2003, 15-30) suggests that it was Euripides’ *Ion* that inspired August to locate the cult of Apollo in the cave.
45 Hurwit 1999, 130.
47 Hurwit 1999, 41-3.
have invented the flowers because they are a prototypical element of mythical rape stories; girls are often culling flowers when they are abducted by gods. The most famous example is the story of Persephone, who is abducted by Hades while gathering flowers in the plain of Nysa (h.Cer. 6-28).28

Conclusion
The classical acropolis contains natural places that support the memory of the past (*lieux de mémoire*). Traditions that were connected to these places are adopted by the tragedians, such as the leap of the Cecropids from the Long Rocks. Moreover, the tragedians themselves connect invented stories to some places, such as the cave where Ion was abandoned. Why are the heroic stories connected to the natural landmarks of the acropolis? This is probably due to the antiquity of these places. Natural landmarks had existed since time immemorial and were therefore probably regarded as fit for connection with the heroic past.

4.1.2 Buildings and objects

*Palace of Erechtheus*

Euripides’ *Erechtheus* takes place in front of the palace of the Athenian king, which is represented by the set in the theatre (fr. 350.1 Nauck). This is the place where queen Praxithea awaits the outcome of the war with Eumolpus. The palace has a characterising function, as it reminds the audience of Praxithea’s royal status.

The classical acropolis did not accommodate a royal palace. It was primarily a sanctuary and not a regal residence. Nevertheless, the fifth-century Athenians knew of a tradition that a palace had once stood on the citadel. In the *Odyssey*, for example, Athena goes to Athens where she enters the ‘strong house of Erechtheus’ (*7.81 Ἐρεχθῆος πυκινὸν δόμον*). This tradition may have a historical origin. It was in the thirteenth century (late Helladic IIIB) that the inhabitants of Athens built a palace on the citadel. It was probably the residence of a lord who had control over Athens and the surrounding villages, and it was built on a cluster of five terraces of varying sizes and heights that were supported by stone walls of rough Cyclopean masonry. These walls were still visible in the archaic and classical period and remained a physical reminder of the distant past. When new buildings were constructed on the acropolis, the terrace walls were preserved.29 It is likely that they supported the memory of the palace on the citadel. If so, they were a *lieu*

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29 Hurwit 1999, 72-6.
de mémoire for it. The palace itself was destroyed around 1200, perhaps as a result of the Dorian invasions or internal conflicts caused by economic decline.30 Euripides may have located a palace on the heroic acropolis in the Erechtheus to account for the ruins of the Bronze Age palace on the actual acropolis. In any case, the palace in tragedy is an archaisation, since it has no equivalent on the contemporary citadel.

Temple of Athena

The acropolis contains a temple of Athena in the Erechtheus. The chorus of old men sing a song in which they express their hopes for a quick victory in the war with Thrace (fr. 369 Nauck). They wish that Thracian shields will be hung in the temple of Athena, which is ‘surrounded by columns’ (4-5 Ἀθάνας περικίοσιν ... θαλάμος). Collard and Cropp claim that this temple has to be the Parthenon.31 In my view, this need not be the case. The chorus do not mention a characteristic (unique) element of the Parthenon, such as, for example, its Panathenaic frieze. Conversely, the temple of Athena in the play contains only generic temple features: (1) the peripteros was a common temple type in Greece, and (2) the hanging of armour occurred in many Greek (and Athenian) temples.

(1) Peripteral temples appeared in Greece in the eighth and seventh century, but they were exceptional in this period. The only attested peripteroi of this period are the Artemisium in Ephese, the Heraeum in Argos, and the temple of Artemis in Ano Mazaraki (cf. 3.1.2). Most temples of the early archaic period consisted of a cela and porch, the entrance of which could be marked by columns. An example of this temple type is the eighth-century Heraeum in Perachora, of which clay models survive.32 The peripteral temple became common only in the sixth century.33

(2) Dedicating armour in a temple was a common practice in Greece from the archaic period. The Iliad refers to this custom; when Hector arrives on the battlefield, he boasts that he will hang the weapons of his enemy in the temple of Apollo in Troy (7.82-3).

Thus, since the temple of Athena in the Erechtheus is described by only common, generic temple features, it cannot be stated with certainty that it is the Parthenon or another specific temple in Athens. To compare: when the chorus in the Ion state that Athens has ‘fair-columned halls’ (ι85-6 εὐκίονες ... αὐλαῖ), they need not

30 Hurwit 1999, 81-4.
33 Barletta 2001, 32-9. Barletta gives a list of eighth- and seventh-century temples that were formerly believed to contain a surrounding colonnade but have been proven to lack it (such as the eighth-century Heraeum on Samos).
refer to specific temples because columns are a generic element of temple architecture.

Since the temple in the Erechtheus is a peripteros, it has a rather modern design. In paragraph 3.1.2 I demonstrated that temples in Troy (and other cities) are envisaged as those of the classical age. The same process of projection seems to be at play in the Erechtheus.

The presence of Athena’s temple on the tragic acropolis is motivated by tradition. The temple features, for example, in the Iliad; the goddess herself is said to have nurtured the infant Erechtheus ‘in her rich temple’ (2.549 ἐν πίον νηῷ). This tradition probably has a historical origin. The citadel was a sanctuary of Athena at least from the archaic period. The first temple of Athena of which traces have been found dates from the first half of the seventh century. Traces of this early Athena worship were still visible on the classical acropolis, such as the foundations of the archaios neos, one of the archaic temples of Athena. These structures were a physical reminder of the long-established worship of Athena on the acropolis.

Thus, the temple of Athena is presented in the Erechtheus because it is a characteristic element of the acropolis. At the same time, it has a function in the plot. The old men, who long for a quick victory in the war with Thrace, wish that Thracian shields will be hung in Athena’s temple (fr. 369.4-5 Nauck). This wish underscores the theme of victory, since the Greeks were accustomed to dedicating weapons of defeated enemies in temples. The temple thus has a thematic function.

Statues of Athena

In addition to a temple of Athena, the tragic acropolis also contains statues of the goddess. A first statue appears in Aeschylus’ Eumenides. When Orestes is pursued by the Erinyes, Apollo instructs him to flee to Athens and to embrace the ‘ancient statue’ of Athena (80 παλαιὸν βρέτας).

Aeschylus may refer here to the olive wood statue of Athena Polias on the actual acropolis. This statue was called the ‘ancient statue’ by the classical Athenians.

34 Cf. e.g. LIMC IV.1 935 (no.41).
35 Hurwit 1999, 89-95. It is possible that worship of Athena began even earlier, perhaps in the second half of the eighth century. This is suggested by the discovery of objects (e.g. vases, tripods, and figurines) that were dedicated on the citadel at that time.
36 Podlecki 1989, 135; Sommerstein 2008a, 365 n27. In the archaic period this statue stood in the archaios neos. During the Persian sack of Athens it was probably evacuated, after which it was placed either in a temporary naikos, constructed on the north side of the citadel, or in the opisthodomos of the archaios neos, which might have been rebuilt after the sack. It was transferred to the newly built ‘Erechtheum’ at the end of the fifth century. The classical Athenians...
nians (e.g. IG I' 474.1 ἄρχατον δύσλιμα), like that in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*. Moreover, it was the only statue on the acropolis that was regarded as an antiquity. Post-classical authors describe it as a relic of the heroic age. Apollodorus, for example, states that it had been erected by Erichthonius when he founded the Panathenaea (3.14.6). It is likely that the statue was regarded as 'heroic' already in the classical age because it was called 'ancient' by then (IG I' 474.1). This may be the reason why Aeschylus adopts it in his evocation of the heroic age.

It is telling that the statue is called 'ancient' even in the heroic age, as evoked in the *Eumenides*. This is a reflection of its antiquity in the classical age. In other words, Aeschylus projected the antiquity of the statue (in his own time) into the past.

The story of Orestes' supplication is also referred to in Euripides' *Electra*. Here it is Castor who urges Orestes to flee to Athens. Castor advises the hero to 'embrace the holy statue of Athena' (σεμν ὸν βρ έτας πρ όσπτυξον) so that its Gorgon shield can cover his head from above (γοργ ῶφ' ὑπερτείνουσα σῷ κάρᾳ κύκλον) and thus protect him from the attack of the Erinyes. Cropp suggests that this called this temple 'the temple in which the ancient image is' (IG I' 474.1). Cf. Hurwit 1999, 109-10; 143-5; 200-3.

37 The statue was made of wood (Athenagoras, *Legatio* 17.3), adorned with gold trappings (IG II' 1424a, 365-6), and dressed in a peplos, which was renewed every year at the Panathenaea. Tertullianus says that the statue was aniconic (Ad Nationes 1.12.3). This is possible, since many Greek statues that were (regarded as) ancient were aniconic. For example, according to Plutarch (quoting Callimachus), the 'ancient' statue of Athena in Lindos was a 'plain image' (λιτόν ἕδος) and that of Hera on Samos an 'unwrought board' (ἄξοος σάνις) (fr. 158 Sandbach; cf. Call. fr. 100 Pfeiffer). On the other hand, it also possible that the image was originally iconic and had become amorphous by the time of Tertullianus (Hurwit 1999, 20-1).

38 E.g. Plut. fr. 158 (Sandbach); Philostr. VA 3.14. The Polias statue may have been a 'real' object from the distant past, for example from the Bronze Age, or a more modern statue, for instance from the archaic age, that was purported to stem from the heroic age (Kroll 1982, 65-76; Hurwit 1999, 20-1). Boardman has shown that the archaic and classical Greeks readily associated old as well as modern objects with the time of heroes (2.1).

39 We might compare Meriones' boar tusk helmet in the *Iliad* (10.260-71). Such helmets were used by Greek warriors before 1400. Hence, they were regarded as antiquities in the archaic age, when Homer lived. Since Homer presents Meriones' helmet as ancient even in the heroic age, he projects its antiquity (in his own time) into the past. He gives it a long provenance with many owners and voyages over long distances (Grethlein 2006, 176).

40 Emblems of monsters were set on shields to terrify one's opponent (Van Wees 2004, 53-4). For example, the gorgoneion on Agamemnon’s shield in the *Iliad* is presented as ‘grim of aspect’ (ἰλιαίδικος) and as ‘glaring terribly’ (δεινὸν δερκομένην). Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether Athena’s blazon in the *Electra* terrifies the Erinyes, since they themselves look like Gorgons (e.g. A. *Eum*. 46-59). Here, the blazon might have been used only as a symbol of Athena. In some versions, the slaying of the Gorgon was presented as one of her martial achievements (e.g. E. *Ion* 989-91).
statue (like that in Aeschylus' Eumenides) refers to the ancient, olive wood statue of Athena Polias. In my view, this is unlikely. The statue in the Electra carries a shield, whereas the statue of Athena Polias held a golden bowl and owl in its hands.

Two more features of Athena’s statue can be deduced from Castor’s words:

1. It is of the Palladion- or Promachos-type. Both types represented Athena in a combative pose, with a spear in one hand and a shield in the other. The Palladion-type presented the goddess in a standing position, with her feet together (or with one foot slightly advanced); the Promachos-type showed her in a striding pose, with one foot moving forward. The Palladion-type appeared in the visual arts at the start of the seventh century, the Promachos-type in the first half of the sixth century.

2. The statue seems to be life-size or over life-size, as Orestes can take refuge under its shield.

Since both features (combative pose and large size) belong to the common representation of the goddess in sculpture, Euripides may not be referring to a specific statue of Athena in (classical) Athens, but may be evoking only a generic statue of the goddess.

The statue seems to have a rather modern design. It carries a Gorgon shield, which became part of Athena’s iconography only ca. 600. In paragraph 3.1.4 I demonstrated that statues in tragic Troy are described as having contemporary characteristics. The same process of projection seems to be at play in the Electra.

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41 Cropp 1988, 184-5.
42 Kroll 1982, 69-71; Hurwit 1999, 20-1. That the image held a golden bowl in one hand becomes clear from an inscription, φιάλη χρυσῆ, ἣν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ ἔχει (IG II2 1424a, 365-6), which also lists a golden owl among the goddess’ attributes (364 γλαύξ χρυσῆ). Kroll argues that the image held this owl in its other hand. He bases himself on a scholiast on Aristophanes (Av. 516), who says that the ‘statue of Athena Ἀρχηγέτις’ had an owl in its hand. According to Kroll, the cult title Ἀρχηγέτις is synonymous with Polias because an inscription states that the Panathenaea were celebrated in honour of Athena Ἀρχηγέτις (although they were commonly known as a festival for Athena Polias) (SEG 28:60.65). Moreover, Kroll refers to third-century coins on which the statue of Athena Polias is possibly represented. These coins also show the statue with a bowl and an owl in its hands. If the image was originally aniconic (cf. note 37), it must have been later provided with anthropomorphic features, such as a face and arms, to enable the presentation of the attributes. The statue may have been reworked by Endoeus in the sixth century, for Athenagoras calls him its ‘sculptor’ (Legatio 17.3). The addition of anthropomorphic features to a statue is not unusual. For example, the Athenians provided the aniconic statue of Dione in Dodona with a face (Hyp. Eux. 24-5).
43 Palladion: LIMC II.1 965; II.2 711 (no.67). Promachos: LIMC II.1 969; II.2 716 (no.118). For further information see: LIMC II.1 1019-20.
44 Marx 1993, 227-8. The gorgoneion was used as a shield emblem as early as the seventh century (LIMC IV.1 306; IV.2 174 (no.156-62)), but it did not yet belong to the iconography of Athena at that time. The gorgoneion was represented on Athena’s aegis in the visual arts from ca. 540.
The statue’s modernity can be compared to the peripteral temple of Athena in the *Erechtheus* (see above). Both have contemporary characteristics but do not necessarily indicate specific structures in fifth-century Athens.

According to some scholars, a statue of Athena is referred to in the *Erechtheus*. When Eumolpus, the son of Poseidon, attacks Athens to claim the land for his father, Praxithea urges the citizens to defend the city (fr. 360 Nauck). She says that Athena must not be dishonoured and that the golden Gorgon (46 χρυσάθες ... Γοργόνς) and olive (46 ἐλαίας) must not be replaced by the trident (47 τρίαιναν).

According to Calder and Stieber, the ‘golden Gorgon’ refers to the *gorgoneion* on the shield of the statue of Athena Parthenos made by Phidias. The Gorgon blazon on this shield was made of gilded silver (*IG* II2 1388.52-3). In my opinion, Praxithea is not necessarily referring to this statue. The golden Gorgon was not a specific (unique) element of Phidias’ Athena Parthenos. For instance, it was also presented on the *aegis* of the statue of Athena Polias (*IG* II2 1424a.365 γοργονεῖον χρυσοῦν). In other words, it was part of the standard iconography in sculptures of Athena.

What is more, Praxithea does not have to be understood as referring to any statue, since the golden Gorgon was a traditional symbol of Athena. Earlier in the play, Praxithea instructs a band of women to raise a cry so that Athena may come to the city ‘with her golden Gorgon’ (fr. 351.2 χρυσῆν ἔχοσα Γοργόν’ Nauck). The queen here uses the golden Gorgon as a symbol of the goddess Athena. I think that this is also the case in the passage in question. Praxithea prefers the Gorgon and olive tree, the symbols of Athena, to the trident, the symbol of Poseidon. She urges the citizens to defend the city so that the city-goddess and her attributes will not be replaced by another god with his attribute.

*Precinct of Erechtheus*

A precinct created in honour of king Erechtheus features in his name play. When he dies on the battlefield, Athena instructs Praxithea to lay out a precinct where he will be worshipped with sacrifices of oxen:

πόσει δὲ τῷ σηκῷ ἐμ ἐς μέσῃ πόλει I command you to lay out for your husband
πεῦξα κελεύσα περιβάλοισι λαίνοις a precinct with a stone enclosure in the city centre.
(E. fr. 65.90-1 Austin)

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45 Calder 1969, 152-3; Stieber 2011, 141.
Some scholars regard this passage as a reference to the classical Erechtheum. At the time of the performance of the *Erechtheus* (ca. 422) the construction of the Erechtheum was either planned or had just begun. Other scholars argue that this passage refers to an earlier shrine of Erechtheus, one of the predecessors of the classical Erechtheum.

Not much is known about these earlier shrines. It is nonetheless clear that the site of the classical Erechtheum had been sacred even in the archaic period. It may have contained graves of local heroes (such as Cecrops and Erechtheus), some small shrines, and the olive tree of Athena. After the Persian Wars these separate cult places were probably combined in a composite precinct, which archaeologists call the ‘pre-Erechtheum’. This shrine probably consisted of an L-shaped Ionic stoa (defining the precinct of Pandrosus, which also contained the tomb of Cecrops and the olive tree), a small rectangular stoa, and a *naiskos* dedicated to Athena Polias (where her ancient, olive-wood cult statue stood). This precinct was replaced by the ‘classical’ Erechtheum at the end of the fifth century.

Does Euripides refer to one of these sanctuaries in the *Erechtheus*? To answer to this question, it must be determined what kind of sanctuary he envisages in his play.

(i) The sanctuary is called σηκός by Athena. This word can refer to any place of a certain extent that is reserved for a particular purpose. For example, it indicates a pen for rearing animals in epic (e.g. *Od.* 9.219) but a ‘crèche’ where infants of aristocratic parents are brought up together in Plato’s *Republic* (460c). It often

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46 E.g. Parker 1987, 202. Clairmont (1971, 490) claims that σηκός points to the separate room in the Erechtheum in which Erechtheus was worshipped. Treu (1971, 125 n41) asserts that the ‘stone enclosure’ (91) refers to the unfinished, half-erected walls of this room at the time of the performance of the *Erechtheus*. However, it is not clear which part of the Erechtheum was being built or already finished at that time.

47 Hurwit 1999, 206. The start of the construction of the Erechtheum in the late 420s follows from the fact that the building is not mentioned in the Callias Decrees of 434/3 (*IG* I 3 52). These regulations brought the construction of buildings on the acropolis to a halt due to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. It was only from the end of the 420s (when peace was restored) that these projects were resumed and new projects were started (such as presumably the Erechtheum). The construction of the Erechtheum was interrupted by the Sicilian expedition of 415 and was finally completed between 409 and 406.

48 E.g. Calder 1969, 156.

49 Hurwit 1999, 144-5. When Herodotus refers to the acropolis in 480, he mentions a sanctuary of Erechtheus containing the olive tree of Athena and the salt spring of Poseidon (8.55 νησίς Ἐρέχθεος). It is unclear whether Herodotus correctly describes a late archaic shrine of the hero or imagines its construction on the basis of the Pre-Erechtheum, which stood in its place in his own time.

refers to a sacred area, such as an open-air precinct (S. Ph. 1327-8 τόν ἄκαλυφην σηκόν) or a temple domain (E. Supp. 2, 30). In the Erechtheus σηκός also indicates a sacred area, since the Athenians have to worship their king with sacrifices there (93 φοναῖσι βουθύτοις). Yet, the word itself does not provide any clue as to the layout and components of this sacred area.

(2) The elements that the sacred zone has to contain (according to Athena’s instructions), are a stone enclosure (91 περιβόλοισι λαίνοις) and an altar. The altar is not mentioned explicitly, but is implied by the sacrifices of oxen that the Athenians have to make there (93). A sacred area consisting of an altar and stone enclosure probably indicates an open-air precinct. Such sanctuaries were common in Greece. The agora of Athens, for example, contained a precinct dedicated to the Twelve Gods that consisted only of an altar and an enclosing wall of stone.

If the sanctuary that Euripides envisages is an open-air precinct, it differs from the classical Erechtheum, which was a temple building. The sanctuaries, moreover, differ in another respect. The classical Erechtheum was a composite temple and accommodated cult places of several gods and Attic heroes. The western rooms of the building were probably dedicated to Hephaestus, Erechtheus, and his brother Butes; the eastern part was reserved for the cult of Athena Polias; the Pandroseum, the adjoining precinct, was dedicated to Cecrops and his daughter Pandrosus. These gods and heroes do not share the sanctuary with Erechtheus in his play. On the contrary, the cult of Athena, whose establishment the goddess herself instructs, seems to be separated from the precinct of Erechtheus. Athena appoints Praxithea as her priestess by granting her the right to make

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51 The word περιβόλος often indicates an enclosing wall. For example, in Herodotus (1.81), it indicates the wall around the palace in Babylon; in Thucydides (1.89), it stands for the wall around Athens.

52 Athena says that the king shall be called Poseidon-Erechtheus in the sacrifices on account of his killer (92-4). This is in contrast with the Iliad, where the Athenians make sacrifices to the king under his own name. The fusion of Poseidon and Erechtheus may have occurred in the fifth century, when the phrase ‘Poseidon-Erechtheus’ first appears on classical inscriptions (e.g. IG I 873). However, according to Lacore (1983, 217-22), this turn has to be interpreted as Poseidon <and> Erechtheus. She claims that the Athenian king and sea-god were fused only in the Roman period. In her view, Euripides invented the name for thematic reasons. By implicating Poseidon in the sacrifices for Erechtheus, Athena can appease his wrath and restore serenity in Athens. If Lacore is right, this would be an instance of a so-called fictive aetiology (2.1 note 33).

53 Altar and boundary (peribolos) were the basic elements of a Greek sanctuary. An altar was necessary for the sacrifice, which was the most important act of worship, and the boundary marked the space as sacred and as property of the god. The boundary consisted of natural elements (such as an outer row of trees indicating the entrance to a sacred grove) or man-made elements, such as boundary stones or a wall (Emerson 2007, 4-5).

burnt sacrifices (ἄμπυρα) on her altars (βωμοῖς), but she does not give any hint at incorporating her cult in the precinct of Erechtheus.

Thus, in all probability, Euripides does not refer to the classical Erechtheum. Does he refer to one of its predecessors? This question is difficult to answer. If the archaic acropolis contained an open-air precinct of Erechtheus, which is not certain (see above), and if Euripides had knowledge of this sanctuary (for example, from hearsay), then it is possible that he modelled the precinct in the play after it. On the other hand, it is also possible that Euripides gives the tragic precinct the generic design of an open-air precinct without bearing in mind the design of a specific historical shrine of Erechtheus.

The founding of a precinct for Erechtheus has a thematic function, as it contributes to the patriotic character of the play. The play repeatedly shows how the royal family devote themselves entirely to the survival of the city and put the communal interest above their private concerns. Praxithea persuades her husband to sacrifice their daughter, and Erechtheus fights himself to death on the battlefield. These patriotic deeds are in the end rewarded by the city-goddess Athena, who appoints Praxithea as her priestess (a very prestigious office) and grants Erechtheus a sanctuary and sacrifices. The royals’ patriotism also has a drawback: in the end Praxithea is overcome by grief about the death of her husband and the ruin of her whole family.

**Conclusion**

The absence of references to specific, unique features of fifth-century buildings and objects suggests that they are not adopted in the heroic world. Thus, buildings in tragedy that scholars have identified as those of the classical acropolis, must instead be regarded as generic buildings with a contemporary design. It is only natural elements (4.1.1) and ancient objects (such as the statue of Athena Polias and the royal palace, whose ruins were visible) that are adopted from the real acropolis. Their antiquity made them fit for the heroic world, whereas fifth-century buildings were too suggestive of the present world. The inclusion of ancient spaces and the exclusion of new spaces (e.g. the Parthenon and Erechtheum) gives tragic Athens an archaic patina. Generic heroic buildings and objects nonetheless have a contemporary design, which is a general tendency in tragedy (see chapter 3).

### 4.2 Areopagus

The Areopagus was the hill in Athens where an influential political and judicial council gathered in the archaic and early classical period. This council was called Areopagus after the hill. In 462 the reforms of Ephialtes deprived the council of all its powers except for the judging of murder cases (Philochor. FGrH 328F64).
In heroic myth, too, the Areopagus has jurisdiction only in homicide. The hill is the canonical setting of four heroic trials (e.g. Hellanic. *FGrH* 4Fr169): that of Ares, who killed the rapist of his daughter Alcipppe, called Halirrhothius; that of the Athenian hero Cephalus, who accidentally killed his wife Procris during a hunt; that of Daedalus, who murdered his cousin Talus in envy of his outstanding craftsmanship; that of Orestes, who killed his mother Clytemnestra in revenge for the murder of his father Agamemnon. It is difficult to determine the date of origin of these heroic stories. Since the council had judged murder cases since before 462, this date need not be taken as a *terminus post quem* for the origin of the myths.55

The tragedians present two of the heroic trials as *aitia* for the homicide court on the hill: (1) Aeschylus portrays Orestes’ case as the founding trial of the Areopagus court and (2) Euripides presents Ares’ case as such.

**Foundation of the homicide court**

(1) Orestes’ case is used as *aition* of the court in the *Eumenides*. Although the story of Orestes’ trial itself was traditional,56 it was not presented as *aition* of the court before Aeschylus: it was Ares’ case that was portrayed as such.57 Thus, the presentation of Orestes’ case as the first trial is an invention of Aeschylus. What is the function of this deviation from the precedent?

It serves the demands of the plot of the *Oresteia*, the trilogy to which *Eumenides* belongs. The *Oresteia* depicts the transition of a society where individuals exact justice by private acts of vengeance – Clytemnestra, for example, kills Agamemnon out of anger over the sacrifice of Iphigenia (*Ag. 1577-1611*) – to a society in which justice is restored via legal proceedings and punishments are imposed by

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56 Although the trial of Orestes is first attested in the *Eumenides*, Sommerstein (1989, 5) has plausibly shown that the story was already traditional in Aeschylus’ time. He bases his argument on a later variant of the story (e.g. E. Or. 1650-2, D. 23.66) in which Orestes is summoned before a divine tribunal instead of a human court, as is the case in Aeschylus. Sommerstein thinks that the ‘divine’ version existed *before* Aeschylus and that the tragedian changed it to a version that better corresponded to the contemporary situation (i.e. he changed the divine Areopagus to a court of human jurors). According to Sommerstein, the opposite is unlikely. Had Aeschylus invented the story of Orestes’ trial with a human court, later authors would not have changed it to a version with a divine tribunal, which would differ more from the contemporary situation. *Contra* Podlecki (1989, 18), who argues that the story of Orestes’ trial was invented by Aeschylus.
57 This is suggested by the facts that Ares’ case is persistently portrayed as *aition* in literary sources after Aeschylus (e.g. Philoch. *FGrH* 328F3, cf. Apollod. 3.180) and that his name is connected to the hill. Cf. Sommerstein 1989, 2-3.
courts. Had Aeschylus presented other trials (such as that of Ares) as precedents for that of Orestes, this transition would already have taken place.\(^5\)

(2) In the *Electra* Euripides presents Ares' case as the founding trial of the Areopagus court (1258-61),\(^5\) in accordance with most authors (e.g. Hellanic. *FGrH* 4F169; Philoch. *FGrH* 328F3). Why does Euripides choose this aition rather than that of Aeschylus?

This relates to the plot of the *Electra*. Castor instructs Orestes to go to the Areopagus to be tried for the murder of his mother Clytaemnestra. He selects this specific court because of its reputation for righteousness and steadfastness (1262-3 εὐσεβεστάτη ψήφου βεβαία τ' ἐστιν ἐκ τούτου δέσις).\(^6\) Euripides can only present the Areopagus as having such a reputation already in Orestes' time if he does not present Orestes' case as founding trial of the court. He therefore uses the trial of Ares as aition.

The reputation of the Areopagus in the *Electra* has a thematic function. The play questions the justification of the murder of Clytaemnestra. For example, after the killing Orestes states that the 'justice' of Apollo, who commanded the homicide, is 'obscure' (1190-1 δικαι' ἄφαντα). Similarly, Castor says that Apollo's

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\(^5\) Wallace [1985] 1989, 88. Scholarly debates about the relation of the *Eumenides* to the political circumstances of Aeschylus' time hinge on the specific functions that the council has in the play. The *Eumenides* was performed in 458, four years after the reforms of Ephialtes, who had deprived the Areopagus of its political powers. The only role that was left intact was jurisdiction in homicide cases.

(1) Macleod (1982, 127-9) argues that the council in the play is given only the responsibility of judging murder cases: Athena establishes the council simply to try Orestes' homicide. Macleod claims that Aeschylus in this way supports the recent reforms, as the tragedian makes the city-goddess herself establish the council in the form to which it had been reduced a few years before the performance of the play.

(2) Braun (1998, 138-43) suggests that the council is also given political functions in the play, such as *nomophulakia* (supervision over state affairs), which he bases on descriptions of the Areopagus as 'bulwark of the country' (γον ἔρυμα χώρας) and 'guardian of the land' (γον ἑρῴρημα γῆς). Braun asserts that Aeschylus opposes Ephialtes' reforms because Athena establishes the council as it had been before the reforms.

(3) Sommerstein (1996, 400), with whom I agree, thinks that the descriptions of the Areopagus are so vague that Aeschylus did not want to be seen partisan on this issue of current politics.

\(^6\) Cf. E. *IT* 945-6.

\(^5\) In the *Eumenides* Apollo sends Orestes to Athens not only to be tried by the Areopagus, but also to establish an alliance between Athens and Argos, which is Orestes' city of residence (667-73). Orestes promises the goddess Athena that she will have the Argive people as faithful allies if she acquits him (289-91). This motif relates to the contemporary situation. At the end of the 460s Athens had entered into an alliance with the city of Argos. Aeschylus thus seems to give a mythical equivalent of this alliance in the *Eumenides*. In this way he may support the course of the current politics in Athens (Sommerstein 1996, 392-8).
The justness of the murder becomes all the more questionable when Castor predicts that the jurors of the Areopagus will be divided on the case. Their voting will end in a tie (1265-8), which shows that this otherwise so steadfast court is all but united on the justification of the murder.

The above analysis shows that the tragedians connect various, even contradicting stories to a *lieu de mémoire*, a heroic landmark physically present in the world of the audience (cf. 2.1). On the one hand they adopt existing traditions about *lieux de mémoire* (i.e. Ares’ trial as *aition* for the court); on the other they connect new stories to *lieux de mémoire* (i.e. Orestes’ case as the founding trial). Both traditional and new stories are used in accordance with the needs of the plot.

**Etymology**

The story of Ares’ trial not only explains the foundation of the court on the Areopagus, but also clarifies the origin of the hill’s name: the hill (*pagos*) is called ‘Areopagus’ since Ares was the first to be tried there. Since Aeschylus presents Orestes’ case as the first trial, he has to give a different etiology for the name of the hill. He connects the name ‘Areopagus’ to the mythical tradition of the Amazon invasion of Athens, stating that the hill’s name derives from a sacrifice that the Amazons made there to Ares (*Eum. 689-90 Ἀρει δ’ ἔθυον, ἔνθεν ἐπώνυμος πέτρα*).

The Amazons pitch their camp on the Areopagus to attack the acropolis of Theseus from there (*Eum. 685-8*). In this respect they resemble the Persians who besieged the acropolis from the Areopagus in 480 (Hdt. 8.52). Aeschylus thus models the mythical Amazon War after the recent Persian Wars. It was a general tendency in fifth-century Athens to present the Amazon War and the Trojan War

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61 Cf. Paus. 1.28.5: ἢ στι δὲ Ἄρειος πάγος καλούμενος, ἐτί πρῶτος Ἀρεὲς ἐνταῦθα ἐκρίθη ... ’[The hill] is called Areopagus, since Ares was the first to be tried there.’ Hellanicus (*FGrH* 4F38) gives a slightly different etymology for the name of the hill. He states that Ares fixed his spear in the hill during the trial (ἐπηξε τὸ δόρυ ἐκεῖ ἄριστος πέτρα) from which the hill takes its name (πήγνυμι ~ πάγος).

62 Several traditions to explain the Amazons’ attack on Athens existed (Gantz 1993, 282-4). According to Pherecydes, the Amazons came to Athens to liberate the Amazon princess Antiope, who had been abducted by Theseus (*FGrH* 3F151). According to the sixth-century epic *Theseid* (referred to by Plutarch in his *Life of Theseus* (28)), the Amazons attacked Athens due to Antiope’s envy of Theseus, who had chosen Phaedra as his bride. This tradition may be referred to in *Eumenides*, where Athena says that the Amazons besieged the city ‘in jealousy of Theseus’ (686 θητὸς κατὰ φθόνον). *Contra Sommerstein (1989, 214-5)*, who explains φθόνος as ‘base jealousy of the glory of Theseus’. Lysias (2.6) presents the Amazonomachy as an unprovoked act of barbarian aggression. He states that the Amazons attacked the city out of greed for others’ land. For the development of the Amazon myth see: Blok 1995, 145-442.

63 Podlecki 1989, 180.
as mythical equivalents to the Persian Wars. The Athenians credited themselves with a prominent position in these mythical wars in order to emphasise their power and to portray themselves as protectors of Greece in all times.64 The Athenians used this constructed identity for several purposes, for example to justify their leading role in the Delian League.

**Trial of Orestes**

Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* elaborately presents the trial of Orestes before the Areopagus court. This trial contains many aspects of a fifth-century law court session, which I will list here.65 When the judges arrive onstage, Athena uses the technical term πληροῦν (570), which in its judicial sense indicates the convening of a law court session (D. 25.20). The goddess begins the trial by using the term εἰσέχω (582), which was also used by the *archon basileus*, who chaired the trials of the Areopagus court (Antiph. 6.42). The jurors do not discuss or voice their opinion during the trial but only cast ballot stones in urns to pass their judgement in the end (708-10).66 This resembles the passing of a verdict in a classical law court (D. 57.61). The voting in the *Eumenides* ends in a tie, whereupon Athena announces that Orestes will be acquitted (741, 752-3). A split vote was also considered in favour of the defendant in classical Athens (Arist. *Ath. 69.1*).67 The trial of Orestes is also referred to in Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Tauris*, in which Orestes mounts a platform during his defence (962 βάθρον). It resembles the practice in classical Athenian law courts, since the prosecutor and defendant both stood on platforms when delivering a speech (e.g. Lys. 10.15).68

The trial of Orestes reflects a generic law court session in classical Athens.69 In other words, the proceedings at Orestes’ trial in the *Eumenides* (such as the

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64 E.g. Hdt. 9.27: ἐν τοῖσι Τρωικοῖσι πόνοισι οὐδαμῶν ἐλειπόμεθα. ‘In the toils of the Trojan War we were second to none.’ For the paradigmatic use of the Trojan and Amazon Wars see e.g. Boedecker 1998.

65 I base the observations in this section on: Sommerstein 1989, 16-7; Braun 1998, 101; Rehm 2002, 94-5.

66 Cf. A. *Ag.* 810-7, where the gods who have gathered in assembly decide on the fate of Troy. They unanimously cast their ballot stones in the urn that declares Troy guilty.

67 In the *Electra* Euripides presents the tied vote at Orestes’ trial even as the *aition* for this rule: καὶ τοῖσι λοιποῖς ἔξε νόμος τεθήκεται | νικᾶν ἴσαις ψήφοισι τὸν φεύγοντ’ ἄει (1268-9). ‘And for posterity this law shall be established, that the defendant always wins the case if the votes are equally divided.’

68 De Bakker 2012, 380-1. The Areopagus contained two protruding rocks that were used as platforms. These rocks were called the Stone of Outrage (ὕβρεως) and the Stone of Ruthlessness (ἀναιδείας) (Paus. 1.28.5).

69 Some elements in the trial of Orestes differ from classical judicial practice. For example, the Erinyes interrupt Apollo’s defendant speech (640), whereas in the fifth century speeches were
casting of ballots) resemble the procedures not only on the Areopagus, but also in every court in Athens. Virtually every Athenian citizen could serve as a judge in these courts. Sommerstein argues that the behaviour of Athena and the jurors in the *Eumenides* provides a model for all Athenians who would ever be selected to sit on a jury, either on the Areopagus or in another law court.79

The trial of Orestes in the *Eumenides* differs from law court sessions in Homeric epic. An example of a Homeric trial is found on the shield of Achilles. At this trial two men disagree about the payment of a blood price. They are encircled by elderly men who sit on polished stones. In contrast to tragedy, these elders openly voice their opinion on the case. They accept a herald's staff in turn and thereupon give their individual judgement (*Il. 18.505-6*). Two talents of gold are laid in their midst for the man who 'has given judgement most righteously' (508 δίκην ἰθύντατα εἴποι). It is presumably the *histōr* (501 ἵστορι) who chooses this man. According to Van Wees, the role of *histōr* probably belonged to the privileges of the monarch.71 These Homeric customs are all absent in tragedy. Conversely, law court sessions in tragedy resemble those of the fifth century.

*Cave of the Semnae*

At the foot of the real, actual Areopagus lies a cave. This spot is perhaps referred to in Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* as the residence of the Erinyes. After the acquittal of Orestes the goddesses become furious and threaten to make the land of Attica infertile (778-93). Athena softens their anger by offering them an underground abode in Athens (805 ἔδρας τε καὶ κευθμῶνας) where they will be worshipped by the Athenian people (794-807).72 Aeschylus syncretically identifies the Erinyes with the Semnae goddesses,73 to whom the Areopagus cave was dedicated in Athenian cultic practice (Th. 1.126, Paus. 1.28.6).74 For example, when the Erinyes

spoken without the interruption of the opposition. Furthermore, Athena takes part in the voting (734-5), although the *archón basileus* was excluded from this privilege.

79 Sommerstein 1989, 17. This is an instance of the so-called ‘didactic function’ of tragedy. For this function in general see: Gregory 1991; Croally 2005, 55-70.


72 For the underground abode cf. 1023 (τοὺς ἔνερθε καὶ κατὼ χθονὸς τόπους) and 1036 (γᾶς ὑπὸ κεύθεσιν ὠγυγίοισιν).

73 For the concept of syncretism see 3.2.3. The identification of Erinyes and Semnae is first attested in Aeschylus’ *Eumenides*. Sommerstein (1989, 11) and Lardinois (1992, 316) argue that it is an invention of Aeschylus. Conversely, Lloyd-Jones (1990, 208-9) and Henrichs (1994, 51-2) claim that the identification had already become traditional in Aeschylus’ time, but that earlier attestations have not been passed down to us.

74 The cave had probably been dedicated to the Semnae in the seventh century. Archaeologists found a *pinax* from this period with a possible representation of one of the Semnae, although it might also be Athena (*LIMC* II.1 960; II.2 706 (no. 27)).
are accompanied to their underground abode, they are addressed as Semnae (1041 Σεμναί).

Brown and Sommerstein suggest that Aeschylus locates the cave of the Semnae-Erinyes under the acropolis instead of the Areopagus and thus takes liberties with the geography of classical Athens. They give two arguments for their view:

(1) Athena states that the sanctuary is located ‘near the palace of Erechtheus’ (855 πρὸς δόμοις Ἐρεχθέως), which is located on the acropolis, so the cave must also be situated there.

(2) Athena says that the Erinyes will arrive at the ‘apple of the eye’ (1025 ὄμμα) of Athens, which most likely refers to the acropolis. In my opinion, Aeschylus does not have to be understood as taking liberties with geography: it is possible that the sanctuary of the Semnae-Erinyes has the same location in the play as in classical Athens.

(ad 1) The location of the cave ‘near the palace of Erechtheus’ befits a place below the Areopagus, since this hill lay in the neighbourhood of the palace on the acropolis. The cave was located at the northeast slope of the Areopagus, which lies in the direction of the acropolis.

(ad 2) The claim that the ‘apple of the eye’ of Athens most likely refers to the acropolis is a petitio principi. The word ὄμμα serves a rhetorical aim in Athena’s speech. She attempts to mollify the Erinyes by glorifying them and their future residence (1032-47). She may describe the cave under the Areopagus as the ‘apple of the eye’ for this laudatory purpose.

Why does Aeschylus attribute the cave of the Semnae to the Erinyes in his play? This has a symbolic function. The Erinyes were the traditional goddesses of justice (e.g. Heracl. fr. 94 DK Δίκης ἐπίκουροι). They were supposed to punish perjurers and avenge those whose rights had been violated (e.g. Il. 19.259-60; A. Ag. 464). The cave that Aeschylus attributes to the Erinyes is located under the seat of a judicial council. Thus, he connects the powers of the goddesses in the cave and those of the council (i.e. the punishment of the unrighteous). The abode of the goddesses, then, becomes a symbol of the judicial powers of the council.

Conclusion
The places of fifth-century Athens that Aeschylus includes in his evocation of the heroic world are all of a natural origin (e.g. the hill of the Areopagus and cave of

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75 Brown 1984, 274; Sommerstein 1989, 250.
76 The Semnae were invoked in oaths sworn before the Areopagus and associated with the veracity of the council (Din. 1.47). For an elaborate analysis of the functions of the Semnae see: Brown 1984, 262-3; Henrichs 1994, 39-45.
77 For the political implications of this symbolism see: Lardinois 1992, 321. We may compare statues of Lady Justice, which personify the judicial powers of the court, in modern courtrooms.
the Semnae). He probably regarded them as fit for the heroic past due to their antiquity. Conversely, objects presented in the heroic world, such as those used at the law court (e.g. urns, ballot stones, and platforms), are all relatively modern. These objects are projections of general Athenian judicial practice. They were not specific to the Areopagus but also used in other Athenian law courts.

The presentation of the Areopagus can be compared to the image of the acropolis (4.1). The tragedians only include natural places of the real acropolis in their evocation of the heroic world (e.g. the Long Rocks and olive tree). They do not adopt elements of the built environment or visual culture from the fifth century (i.e. specific contemporary structures). Nonetheless, the buildings and objects that they evoke have a generic contemporary design (e.g. the peripteros temple of Athena), which is a general tendency in tragedy.

4.3 Demes

This paragraph analyses the layout of two Athenian demes, Eleusis and Colonus, in tragedy. I will determine what traditions influenced their presentation and how their described layout relates to that in the real, actual world.

4.3.1 Eleusis

Eleusis is the setting of Euripides' *Suppliants* and Aeschylus' fragmentary *Eleusini-ans*. These plays dramatise how the Athenians, led by Theseus, recover the bodies of Argive warriors who fell in the Theban War at the request of the Argive king Adrastus.²⁸ The Thebans refuse to release these bodies because the Argives attacked their city. The story of the recovery is a canonical episode in the tradition of early Athens (e.g. Hdt. 9.27).²⁹ It also expresses an important concept of Athe-

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²⁸ Scholars debate the relation between Euripides' *Suppliants* (probably performed in 423) and the contemporary situation.

(1) Jouan (1997, 216) argues that the play is a reaction to the battle of Delium in 424. The Thebans, who were victorious in this battle, refused to release the bodies of the fallen Athenian warriors for seventeen days (Th. 4.89-101). Jouan thinks that the *Suppliants* is an ‘indignant protestation’ against this act of the Thebans, since Euripides shows how much misery is caused by the refusal to release the war dead.

(2) Grethlein (2003, 194) suggests that the play need not react to the battle of Delium. He points at differences between the *Suppliants* and this battle. For example, whereas the Thebans released the bodies voluntarily in 424, they have to be compelled by force in the play. He argues, moreover, that the motif of releasing corpses is traditional and thus need not have been motivated by current events.

²⁹ Cf. *LIMC* III.1 805; III.2 587 (no.3). Grethlein (2003, 110) asserts that although this episode is first attested in the fifth century, the paramount role of Theseus suggests that it had perhaps already become part of the sixth-century *Theseid*.
nian civic ideology. The Athenians prided themselves on supporting those who are oppressed (e.g. Lys. 2.8-14).80

**Natural elements**

Tragic Eleusis contains two natural elements, which are also found in actual Eleusis: (1) the Spring of Callichorus and (2) the cliffs of the acropolis.

(1) The chorus in the *Suppliants* state that they want to leave ‘the water of Callichorus’ (619 Καλλίχορον ... ὕδωρ) to see the battle for the Argive bodies at Thebes. The spring is used here as a *metonym* for Eleusis. In actual Eleusis the Spring of Callichorus lies east of the sanctuary of Demeter, just outside the archaic-classical *temenos* wall.81

(2) The cliffs of the acropolis are the place where Evadne, the wife of the fallen Argive warrior Capaneus, commits suicide out of misery (E. *Supp*. 987-8). When the Argive bodies have been recovered, they are cremated in Eleusis. Evadne leaps from the acropolis cliffs into Capaneus’ pyre to be united with him in death (1017-24). This episode is probably Euripides’ invention for increasing the grief of Evadne’s father Iphis in the play.82 He comes to Eleusis to cremate his fallen son Eteocles, but also loses his daughter upon arrival.

**Graves of the Argive warriors**

When the bodies of the Argives have been recovered, they receive an elaborate funeral in Eleusis. In Aeschylus’ *Eleusinians* the Argive warriors are buried in the soil of Eleusis (Plu. *Thes*. 29.4-5). Conversely, in Euripides’ *Suppliants* they are cremated in Eleusis, whereupon their ashes are taken to Argos. Cenotaphs are erected in Eleusis on the place of the pyres (935-8; 1211 ἵν’ αὐτῶν σώμαθ’ ἡ γνίσθη πυρί).83

Graves of the Argive warriors were identified in actual Eleusis in the fifth century and possibly earlier (Hdt. 9.27; cf. Paus. 1.39.2). Aeschylus and Euripides seem to account for the presence of these graves, although in different ways (real graves vs. cenotaphs). The archaeologist Mylonas assumes that it was a cluster of

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80 Mills 1997, 110; Grethlein (2003, 195) suggests that Athenian civic ideology is also questioned in the *Suppliants*. For example, although dying for the country is considered glorious (e.g. Th. 2.42), Euripides shows that it causes intense misery to the bereaved.

81 For a discussion about the location of the spring see: Mylonas [1964] 1971, 44-7.

82 Collard 1975, 7; Grethlein 2003, 11. This is the only suicide in extant Greek tragedy that is presented on stage. Evadne must have appeared on the roof of the scene building, as the chorus see her appear ‘high on the cliffs’ (987 αἰθερίαν ... πέτραν). When Evadne leaps from the cliffs, she probably disappears behind the scene building. Collard (1975, 15) supposes that a smoking brazier was placed behind the building to represent the pyre of Capaneus.

Bronze Age graves in Eleusis, discovered and surrounded by a wall in the Geometric Period, that the Athenians identified as burial spot of the Argives. Mylonas thinks that it was the antiquity of these graves that enabled this connection with the heroic past. We may compare the tombs in the actual Troad, some of which were ascribed by the archaic-classical Greeks to the heroes of the Trojan War, due to their antiquity (3.2.2).

Why were graves of the Argives identified in actual Eleusis in the fifth century?

(1) The graves provided physical proof for the story of the recovery of the Argive bodies. In other words, the Athenians could claim the ‘validity’ of this story by pointing at the graves of the Argives in actual Eleusis. The Thebans for their part constructed a counter-version according to which they themselves had buried the Argive warriors (Pl. O. 6.12-7; N. 9.21-7). They did not recount the episode of the withheld burial and their subsequent defeat by the Athenians. This boosted their own reputation in the past. Moreover, the Thebans ascribed graves in the Theban plain to the Argive warriors to ‘validate’ their version of the past (e.g. Paus. 9.18.1-3). Since Aeschylus and Euripides support the version of the Athenian recovery in their plays, they do not mention these graves.

(2) The graves not only provided proof for the story of the recovery, but also supported the memory of it. The graves may also have reminded the Athenians of the ideal of protecting the oppressed, since this notion was inherent in the story (see above). Thus, the graves were probably lieux de mémoire for the myth of the recovery and its ideological connotations.

Temple of Demeter

The action of the Suppliants takes place in front of the temple of Demeter, which is represented by the scene building in the theatre. Mylonas argues that this temple refers to the classical Telesterion, the temple of Demeter built in the second half of the fifth century. In my view, this need not be the case. The only features of the temple that are mentioned are its doors (104 πύλαις) and the altar in front of it (93 βωμίαν). These are not specific features of the classical Telesterion but belong to the generic design of a Greek temple. Moreover, the classical

84 Mylonas [1964] 1971, 62-3. Cf. Pariente 1992, 208. If so, it is possible that the graves were identified as those of the Argives upon their discovery (i.e. in the Geometric Period). It is also possible that they had a different meaning at that time and were later re-identified as Argive sepulchres (Hubbard 1992, 97 n53).

85 Hubbard 1992, 92-100.

86 The scene building represents the temple of Demeter and the cliffs of the acropolis at the same time (cf. note 82). This may relate to the layout of actual Eleusis, where the cliffs stood directly behind the temple.

Telesterion had an unusual design, comprising a hypostyle hall whose walls were lined with tiers of steps from where the initiates could watch the ceremonies of the Mysteries. The hall contained a small, closed room where the cult objects were kept. Since none of these specific features are mentioned in the play, it is more likely that Euripides envisages a generic temple. Presumably, he considered the classical Telesterion not suitable to be connected to the heroic age because it was built shortly before the performance of the *Suppliants*.

We may compare Demeter’s temple in the *Suppliants* with the *peripteros* temple of Athena in the *Erechtheus*. Although scholars identified the latter temple as the Parthenon, it is more likely that it is also a generic temple, since it does not contain specific features of the Parthenon.

The presence of Demeter’s temple in tragic Eleusis is motivated by tradition, which probably has a historical origin. The temple is, for example, mentioned in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (270-2). Eleusis was a major sanctuary of the goddess from at least the Late Geometric Period. It was probably in the eighth century that the first temple of Demeter was built. Traces of early Demeter worship were still visible in the fifth century. For example, parts of the archaic temple were re-used in the construction of the classical sanctuary. Stones of this temple were employed in the *peribolos* of the sanctuary and in the bridge over a lake that interrupted the processional way (*IG* I 2 81.5-9). These traces were a physical reminder of the long-established worship of Demeter in Eleusis.

Thus, the temple of Demeter is presented in the *Suppliants* because it is characteristic of Eleusis. At the same time, it has a function in the plot. When Adrastus comes to Eleusis, he brings with him the mothers of the fallen Argive warriors. As reflected by their presence before the temple of Demeter, they resemble the goddess in several respects:

1. They have lost their warrior sons, as Demeter her daughter Persephone. The mothers are wearing dark clothes as sign of mourning, as is Demeter when grieving for Persephone (*Supp. 35, 97, h.Cer. 183*).
2. When they arrive in Eleusis, the women are aided by queen Aethra who persuades her son Theseus to recover the corpses (297-331). Demeter is assisted by queen Metaneira who receives her in the palace (*h.Cer. 206-18*).
3. The women receive the corpses of their sons in front of the temple in Eleusis (*Supp. 794-7*). Demeter recovers her daughter alive there (*h.Cer. 384-5*).

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88 The *Suppliants* was probably performed in 423. For a discussion about the dating of the play see: Collard 1975, 10-4.
89 For an overview of the temples of Demeter in Eleusis see: Mylonas [1961] 1974, 23-129. Mylonas thinks that the *megaron* building of the Bronze Age already had a cult function.
90 Shear 1982, 128-40.
Hence, the mothers find themselves in the sanctuary of a goddess whose vicissitudes resemble their own.\textsuperscript{90} The temple thus has a characterising function.

\textbf{4.3.2 Colonus}

Colonus is the setting of Sophocles' \textit{Oedipus at Colonus}. When the blind Oedipus arrives in Colonus, he asks king Theseus for protection against his enemy Creon, who attempts to abduct him to Thebes. An oracle revealed that Oedipus would exercise power after his death and that he would favour the land in which he would be buried. The Athenians frustrate Creon's attempt and obtain the grave of the hero themselves.

The story of Oedipus' arrival and burial in Colonus had probably become traditional in Sophocles' time.\textsuperscript{92} It is referred to by Euripides in his \textit{Phoenician Women} (1705-7) and possibly in his \textit{Oedipus} (ὤ πόλισμα Κεκροπίας χθονός).\textsuperscript{93} These plays were performed before the OC. The story expresses an important concept of Athenian ideology, as the Athenians set great store by offering protection to suppliants and support to the oppressed (e.g. Th. 2.40). Oedipus is presented as a very threatening suppliant in the \textit{OC}. His shameful deeds caused pollution that might threaten Athens if he is admitted inside the city (226-38, 254-7). Theseus nonetheless unquestioningly admits Oedipus and promises him protection against his enemies (631-41, 657-67). This is thus an example of great Athenian loyalty.\textsuperscript{94}

\textit{Grove of the Eumenides}

The setting of the play is the grove of the Eumenides in Colonus (42, 98). It is possible that Sophocles invented the grove to meet the demands of the plot. Historical sources, such as Pausanias' \textit{Description of Greece}, do not mention the grove, but two pieces of evidence suggest that it existed in actual Colonus:

(i) Birge asserts that the region of Colonus was rich in vegetation. Colonus lay outside the walls of Athens in an area with shrines and graves which, Birge argues, were often surrounded by trees that indicated the boundaries of the sacred territory. Furthermore, Colonus was the location of the gymnasium of the Academy,

\textsuperscript{90} Kuntz 1993, 80-2; Goff 1995, 69; Grethlein 2003, 147-9.
\textsuperscript{91} Cf. Lardinois 1992, 323.
\textsuperscript{92} Kearns (1989, 208) claims that the passage in the \textit{Phoenician Women} is an interpolation, based on Sophocles' \textit{OC}. I agree with Craik (1988, 267) and Mastronarde (1994, 626-7), who defend its authenticity. Craik reasons: 'It is in Euripidean manner to add an allusive detail in outlining the eventual fate of his characters [e.g. \textit{Hec}. 1265-73; \textit{Ba}. 1331-9]; and the tangential reference to local Attic cult is also in character (cf. \textit{IT} 1449-67).' For the fragment of Euripides' \textit{Oedipus} see: Collard and Cropp 2008b, 25.
\textsuperscript{93} Mills 1997, 160-71.
whose location was probably chosen due to the presence of trees that would have provided shade for athletes.95

(2) The Eumenides in Oedipus at Colonus are equated (syncretised) with the Semnae goddesses (89-90 δέσιν σεμνών),96 who were venerated in actual Colonus. This is suggested by the discovery of a terracotta roof tile in this area containing the stamp ΣΕΜΝΩΝ ΘΕΩΝ. This roof tile must have been part of a shrine of the Semnae goddesses.97

In sum, the probable presence of trees in the region and the roof tile of the Semnae make the existence of a sacred grove of these goddesses in actual Colonus plausible. This grove may find its tragic equivalent in the grove of the Eumenides, whom Sophocles equates with the Semnae.

The grove has a characterising function in the play. It is dedicated to goddesses whose powers reflect those of Oedipus after his death. The Eumenides are benevolent deities who protect the country and its inhabitants. For example, when the Thebans attack the country, they are asked to appear as ‘protectors and allies’ of Athens (1012 ἀρωγοὺς ξυμμάχους θ’). This competence will also belong to Oedipus when he is buried in the grove (576-82).98

An idyllic place

Colonus is presented as an idyllic place. Antigone mentions the presence of the laurel, olive, and vine on the spot (17); the chorus, in a song praising the region, speak of ‘green glens’, ‘wine-coloured ivy’, and ‘branches with countless fruit’ (673-6). The chorus also state that the landscape is ‘shady’, ‘windless’ and nurtured by dew from heaven (676-81). The idyllic landscape of Colonus stands in contrast with the landscape that Oedipus traversed during his wanderings. He roamed ‘wild forests’ (348-9 ἀγρίαν ὕλην) on bare feet without food and was tormented by showers of rain and the burning sun (349-50). The two landscapes have a symbolic function. The wild forests reflect Oedipus’ misery during his wanderings, whereas the idyllic landscape expresses the end of his sorrows. Upon arriving in Colonus, Oedipus says that he will find ‘respite’ there (88 παῦλαν).99

The idyllic character of Colonus is undercut by the presence of the nightingale (18, 672-3). This bird is associated with sadness and death in Greek literature.
(e.g. S. Tr. 966, El. 106-9). Its presence in Colonus may prefigure the death of Oedipus there and the resulting misery of Antigone and Ismene (1706-14).

Grave of Oedipus

The Athenians obtain Oedipus' grave in the OC. Oedipus takes Theseus into the grove to show him his place of burial. When they arrive on the spot, lightning strikes whereupon Oedipus mysteriously disappears.

Three cities in Greece claimed possession of Oedipus' grave: Athens, Thebes, and Eteonos (a village in Boeotia) all claimed that the Theban king lay buried in their soil. Lardinois suggests that this debate is reflected in the OC by the battle between Athens and Thebes for Oedipus' grave. The Thebans attempt to abduct Oedipus from Colonus to bury him in their own soil, but this attempt is frustrated by the Athenians, who obtain the grave for themselves. Sophocles thus supports the Athenian claim in his play.

The supposed presence of Oedipus' grave in Colonus enabled the Athenians to claim Oedipus' protecting powers. Heroes were supposed to protect the soil in which they lay buried. The Athenians, for example, asserted that Oedipus had supported them in the Decelean War (410 or 407). They said that the hero had appeared in battle and inspired them to dispel the Thebans (scholion in Aristid. Tett. 172.1). The belief that Oedipus supported the Athenian army adds to the ideological notion of Athens as a city favoured by the gods (cf. 4.1.1).

Although the Athenians claimed to possess Oedipus' grave, there is no archaeological evidence for its existence in Colonus. This can point in three directions:

1. There was a grave, but no remains of it have been found by archaeologists.
2. There was no grave, but the Athenians nevertheless claimed to possess it.
3. There was a grave, but its location was kept secret by the state and not marked by physical structures. Heroic graves in Greece were sometimes concealed in fear that enemies would bring sacrifices there or transfer the bones of the hero to their own land. It was believed that these acts would bestow the power of the hero on them. Secret graves were tended by privileged state officials. For example, Plu-
tarch says that the hipparch of Thebes sacrificed at the secret grave of Dirce and afterwards erased all his tracks (Plut. Mor. 578b).

The third option seems to be supported by the OC. Oedipus says that the location of his grave must be ‘unknown to all’ (1520-4) except for Theseus. The king must pass on this knowledge to his successor, who on his turn must reveal the location to his successor, and so on (1530-2). According to Kearns, this passage suggests that Athens had a state official who tended Oedipus’ grave in the fifth century.\textsuperscript{105}

A mysterious place
Before Oedipus shows Theseus the location of his grave, he pauses at a mysterious place. This place is described as follows:

\begin{quote}
\begin{verbatim}
ἐπεὶ δ’ ἀφῖκτο τὸν καταρράκτην ἀδεν χαλκοῖς βάθροις γηθεν ἀφειρωμένον,
ἐστη κελεύθων ἐν πολυσχίστωι μιᾷ,
κολύου πέλακα κρατήροι. ὁ ἀεὶ ἄεινθαματα·
ποτὲ τε κεῖται πίστ’ ἀεὶ ξυθήματα ἀφ’
μέσος στὰς τοῦ τε Θορικίου πέτρου κοίλης τ’ ἀχέρδου κἀπὶ λαίνου τάφου
καθέζετ’·
(S. OC 1590-7)
\end{verbatim}
\end{quote}

The landmarks on this spot have a symbolic function. Although some of them are difficult to interpret, on the whole they seem to symbolise the dichotomy between life and death.

(1) The threshold ‘fixed with bronze steps’ is a symbol for the entrance to the underworld and thus relates to death. Extant Greek literature presents the boundary between the upper and nether world as marked by a bronze threshold (e.g. Il. 8.15, Hes. Th. 8.11).

(2) The hollow crater with the tokens of Theseus and Perithous (here written as ‘Perithus’) may also relate to the underworld. The tokens of the heroes may be written, or in any case visible, marks of a covenant between them. This is suggested by the double meaning of ξυνθήμα (token/covenant)\textsuperscript{106} and its qualification as ‘faithful’ (πίστις). A story in which the two heroes feature together and perhaps also made a covenant is their \textit{katabasis} to the underworld. Theseus promised to support Perithous in abducting Persephone, whom the Lapith king wanted to marry, from the underworld (Hes. fr. 280 Merkelbach-West, Apollod. \textit{Epit.} 1.23-4).

\textsuperscript{105} Kearns 1989, 98.

\textsuperscript{106} Token: S. Tr. 158. Covenant: X. An. 4.5.20 (for example).
(3) The Thorician rock is perhaps the most difficult landmark to interpret. It may have connotations of life and birth. Nagy argues that the name Δορίκιος relates to Δορός, 'seed'. The combination of a rock and seed appears in a story of Poseidon. According to a scholiast (in Lyc. 766), the sea-god fell asleep on a rock in Colonus and had an emission of semen there, which gave birth to the first horse. If this story was already current in Sophocles’ time, the ‘Thorician’ rock, mentioned by the tragedian, may indicate the place where this was supposed to have happened. Since Poseidon is associated with horses in the play (e.g. 709-16), it is possible that the detail of the god having engendered a horse is hinted at here.

(4) The hollow pear tree may represent lost fertility. Pears were sometimes used as a symbol of fecundity. In a poem of the Anthologia Graeca, for example, pears are listed among the gifts presented to the god Priapus, who presides over the fertility of animals and vegetation (6.232.5); in a fragment of Praxilla, pears may be a symbol of the female genitals (fr. 1.3 PMG). The pear tree in the OC lost its fertility when it became hollow.

(5) The tomb of stone is suggestive of death. Thus, the landmarks between which Oedipus sits down, symbolise life, birth, and fertility on the one hand, and death on the other. This symbolism is perhaps expressive of Oedipus’ end, which is not an ‘ordinary’ death but heroisation. Although Oedipus will disappear from the earth, he will continue to exercise power and in that sense remain ‘alive’. His heroisation seems to have already begun by this point in the play. Although Oedipus is blind, he is able to place himself between the complex sanctities of the grove all by himself (1588 ἡγητῆρος οὐδενός).

Scholars have debated the historicity of this place, i.e. whether these landmarks existed in actual Colonus. I think that it is impossible to settle this debate with certainty due to the lack of historical and archaeological sources.

(1) Some scholars think that the bronze threshold refers to a visible cave or cleft in actual Colonus that was regarded as entrance to the underworld. Jebb even thinks that this cave was provided with bronze steps by the inhabitants so that its function was visualised. Although these suggestions are possible, we have no evidence for them. Conversely, a bronze threshold need not have existed in actual Colonus, since it is commonly used as a symbol of the underworld (see above). Moreover, Colonus need not even have had a cave that was regarded as entrance to the underworld. The Greeks might only have said that there was such an en-

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108 De Vos 2011, 11.
111 Gruppe 1912, 362; Mills 1997, 162.
trance somewhere in Colonus without identifying the specific place. This is suggested by the fact that the designation ‘bronze threshold’ is often used for the general area of Colonus as a whole (S. OC 57, Apollod. FGrH 244F144).

(2) The κρατήρ with the tokens of the covenant of Theseus and Pirithous caused disagreement, too. The text does not make clear what kind of memorial is meant. Jebb argues that the κρατήρ is a hollow in a rock. He bases this suggestion on Aristotle, who calls the openings in Mount Etna κρατήρες (Mu. 400a.33 τῶν Ἀττικῶν κρατήρων ἀμφοτέρων). Kamerbeek claims that it refers to a vessel. He compares this passage to Euripides’ Suppliants, where a covenant between Theseus and Adrastus is inscribed on a vessel (1202 τρίτοις). However, we have no historical or archaeological evidence for the existence of either a rock or vessel with a heroic covenant. Therefore, we cannot determine whether the κρατήρ is a real element from actual Colonus or a fictive element crafted by Sophocles to meet the demands of the plot.

(3) The same holds true for the Thorician rock. The only evidence that we have for the story of Poseidon’s ejaculation is the scholion on Lycophron (see above), if this is really the story that is implied. The scholion does not specify the location of the rock on which Poseidon ejaculated. If this story was connected to a rock in the grove of the Semnae/Eumenides, then Sophocles adopted this element from the real world. If not, Sophocles invented the presence of the rock in the grove.

(4-5) The hollow pear tree and the stone tomb do not provide a solution for the historicity of the landmarks. It is possible that the grove of the Semnae in actual Colonus contained these two elements. I have stated above that the area of Colonus contained many trees and graves. However, we have no evidence whether a hollow pear tree and a stone tomb existed in the actual grove together with the other landmarks mentioned in this passage.

All in all, it seems impossible to determine whether the landmarks in this passage are historical or fictive. This is due to a lack of sources, both archaeological and historical. If Sophocles invented the landmarks, they may have added to the secrecy of Oedipus’ grave, which is presented as lying in their vicinity.

Conclusion

What elements of actual Eleusis and Colonus are included in the tragic evocation of the heroic past? Only elements that were very old by the time of the tragedians: nature (the Spring of Callichorus and the grove of the Semnae) and graves (the sepulchres of the Argive warriors). Some landmarks had been connected to heroic stories before tragedy (the grave of the Argives); others were linked to the heroic world by the tragedians themselves (the cliffs of Eleusis). The tragedians do not

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refer to fifth-century buildings (the Telesterion) but present generic buildings with contemporary features, which is a general tendency in tragedy.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the presentation of Athens in tragedy. It has determined what traditions influenced the layout of the heroic city and in what manner it relates to the contemporary world. The analysis leads to the following conclusions.

*Lieux de mémoire*

Tragic Athens has many points in common with real, actual Athens. The classical city contained places to which heroic stories were connected, here called *lieux de mémoire*. When the tragedians adopt these places in their evocation of heroic Athens, they either adopt traditional stories connected to them (e.g. the contest between Athena and Poseidon, which was connected to the olive tree on the acropolis, and the fall of the Cecropids, which was linked to the Long Rocks) or invent new stories (e.g. the suicide of the Erechthids, located at the Long Rocks, and the murder of Orestes, which is presented as the first trial on the Areopagus). Tragedians invent new stories about existing *lieux de mémoire* in response to the needs of the plot. In some cases the invented stories contradict tradition, for example in the case of the first trial on the Areopagus. Thus, a *lieu de mémoire* does not necessarily support the memory of one fixed story but may support the memory of multiple, even contradictory, stories at the same time.

What is more, the tragedians invent stories about places that were not yet related to the heroic past. Examples of such places include the cave of Ion, which is presented as the location of his abandonment, and the cliffs of the Eleusinian acropolis, which are presented as the place of Evadne's suicide. By connecting new stories to places that were not yet conceived of as 'heroic', the tragedians themselves make them *lieux de mémoire* for their invented stories.

Places to which heroic stories, whether invented or traditional, are connected are always of ancient origin: on the one hand they are natural places, such as caves, hills, and trees; on the other hand they include graves erected in the past, such those dating from the Bronze Age. It was presumably the antiquity of these places that made them suitable to be connected to the heroic (distant) past. By adopting them in tragedy, the tragedians archaise tragic Athens. In other words, they make the city in tragedy 'look' old.

*Lieux de mémoire* have the same location in tragic Athens as in the actual city. For example, the tragedians locate the olive tree on the acropolis and the cave of Ion at the Long Rocks, where they were also situated in real, actual Athens. One exception may be the chasm of Erechtheus in his name play, which Euripides
locates on the battlefield instead of on the acropolis. In this case the demands of the plot may prevail over geographical accuracy.

**Buildings and objects**

Buildings in tragic Athens have a contemporary design. They include the *peripteron* temple of Athena and the walled precinct of Erechtheus. Commentators have linked them to their equivalents in classical Athens, namely the Parthenon and the Erechtheum. I have shown that these identifications are unlikely. The absence of references to specific, unique elements of fifth-century buildings, such as the Panathenaic frieze of the Parthenon, suggests that they are not adopted in tragedy. These buildings were presumably considered too modern and therefore unfit for the heroic past. Since only common features of fifth-century buildings are mentioned, it is more likely that the buildings have a generic contemporary design. This was also the case for tragic Troy (see chapter 3).

Objects in tragic Athens do not refer to specific equivalents in classical Athens either. Like the buildings, they are generic projections of the contemporary world. Examples include the statue of Athena with Gorgon shield and the requisites used at the law court (urns and ballot stones). The only exception is the ‘ancient’ statue of Athena in the *Eumenides*, which may specifically refer to that of Athena Polias in actual Athens. The reason why this statue is adopted in tragedy is easy to explain: it was of ancient origin and regarded as a relic of the heroic past.