The London School of Economics and Political Science

The Erotics of Empire: Love, Power, and Tragedy in Thucydides and Hans Morgenthau

Daniel Thomas Rothwell Falkiner

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Abstract

A number of influential early International Relations (IR) theorists explicitly theorised politics in terms of 'tragedy' and their discourse was revived at the beginning of the 21st century. This thesis engages with this 'tragic' tradition of international political theory and pushes the debate in directions that have previously been hinted at but which have nonetheless remained largely unexplored. It is argued here that from the late archaic to the end of the classical period in ancient Athens, *eros* ('sexual love', 'passionate yearning') and its cognates came to form the conceptual basis of a political discourse that fused elements of sex, power, and gender into what we might call a kind of 'erotic politics'. This discourse is clearly reflected in tragedy; many dramas take *eros* as a central theme and explore the role that the emotion could (and should) play in the community. Although it is usually transgressive and destructive, tragic *eros* is nevertheless redeemable in terms of the benefits it can bestow on the city when handled wisely. Using this contextualised reading of tragedy as a reference point, the dissertation critically analyses the texts of two influential commentators on international politics, namely, Thucydides and Hans Morgenthau. It is argued that both of these authors were heavily influenced by the Athenian discourse of erotic politics, especially as it appears in tragedy; love, power, and tragedy were central to both men's understanding of international politics. This analysis will provide an original perspective on Thucydides' and Morgenthau's political philosophies and will open up new ways at looking at some of the 'tragic' situations that recent scholars have identified in contemporary politics.

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Part Three
Love, Power, Tragedy: From the Ancients to the Modern World

Glossary of Ancient Greek Terms and Persons

Aeschines = politician and orator, born in Athens 389 B.C.

Agon = duel, competition

Alcaius = lyric poet, born in Mytilene c. 620 B.C.

Alcibiades = politician and general, born in Athens c. 450 B.C.

Anacreon = lyric poet, born in Teos c. 582 B.C.

Andreia = manliness, courage

Arche = rule, empire, power

Archilochus = lyric poet, born in Paros c. 680 B.C.

Aristogeiton = middle class Athenian tyrannicide, lover of Harmodius

Catharsis = release, purgation

Demokratia = democracy, rule of the people

Demos = the people

Demosthenes = politician and orator, born in Athens c. 384 B.C.

Dionysus = god of wine, theatre, wild nature, vegetation, fertility

Dynamis = power, might, force, empire

Dyserotas = sick desire, diseased lust

Eleutheria = freedom

Ekklesia = popular assembly responsible for making decisions and electing officials

Ephebes = youths of military age

Ephialtes and Otus = mythological giants said to have stormed the heavens to take Hera and Artemis as wives

Erastes/erastai = lover/lovers

Erinyes = Furies

Eros = sexual love, lust, passionate yearning

Eromenos/eromenoi = beloved/beloveds

Eumenides = Friendly ones, Well-wishers

Hamartia = blunder, go astray, miss the mark

Harmodius = aristocratic Athenian tyrannicide, beloved of Aristogeiton

Hubris = arrogance, over-confidence, outrage

Ibycus = lyric poet, born in Rhegium c. 600 B.C.

Isocrates = rhetorician, born in Athens 436 B.C.

Kalos k'agathos = fair and noble

Kratos = power, strength, force

Nemesis = retribution, revenge, catastrophe

Nicias = politician and general, born in Athens

Nomos = law, custom

Ostrakismos = a democratic procedure expelling any one citizen from the city for ten years, used to neutralise perceived threats to the state

Panathenaia = prestigious Athenian festival with athletics and games

Peitho = persuasion

Pericles = politician and general, born in Athens c. 495 B.C.

Philia = love (of family, friends, spouses)

Phusis = nature

Pindar = lyric poet, born in Thebes c. 522 B.C.

Polis = city-state

Pothos = desire, longing for what is absent

Sappho = female lyric poet, born in Lesbos c. 630 B.C.

Sophia = wisdom

Sophron = wise, moderate, sound of mind

Sophrosune = moderation, self-control, soundness of mind

Stasis = civil discord, civil war

Strategoi = elected military commanders

Tantalus = mythical figure who butchered his son Pelops to serve as food to the gods in a banquet

Themistocles = politician and general, born in Athens c. 524

Theseus = mythical founder-king of Athens

Tolma = daring

Tuche = fate, chance

Tyrannis/tyrannos = tyranny/tyrant

Part One

All's Fair in Love and War? Tragedy, Eros, Politics

CHAPTER ONE

"One repays a teacher badly if one remains only a pupil."

– Friedrich Nietzsche

<u>Introduction</u>

The First Battle of Ypres, a vortex of senseless violence known to the Germans as the Massacre of the Innocents (in reference to the great number of young and idealistic men who lost their lives there), left an indelible mark on the minds of all who were involved in it. It would, in fact, resonate across Western Europe for decades afterwards as a cultural symbol of the fratricidal insanity of the Great War.

Soon after participating in this battle, one newly promoted and decorated German soldier would come to a final, and fateful, conclusion about life – namely, that it was "a constant horrible struggle" (quoted in Kershaw 1998: 90-1) of which international politics was the most visceral instantiation. Nevertheless, the young corporal known as Adolf Hitler relished the bloodbath at Ypres, and he continued to fight with distinction.

Across the Channel and some fifteen years later, Professor Gilbert Murray (an eminent classicist and intellectual architect of the League of Nations) surprisingly found himself in agreement with the now-leader of the Nazi Party. Murray, though he was himself no militarist, argued that if peace-loving students of international politics were to "see the truth," they had to:

> face the essential tragedy of life. Biologically, the whole animal creation, or at any rate the carnivorous part of it, kills in order to live … This constant fighting and killing is one of the primary and

fundamental facts of life, which must be realized if we are to understand any moral problems. (1929: 15)

As the Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford, the foremost interpreter of the Greek world to his generation, Murray was aware of life's tragic elements (Wilson 2009a). Murray took from his distant observations of the Great War and in particular his close reading of Greek drama the same terrible lesson that Hitler and millions of other men had learned face-to-face at Ypres and Verdun and the Somme: international politics, like life in general, was a tremendous struggle of which conflict and suffering are certain, central and intractable elements.

Murray granted to the militarist that conflict, or 'strife', as he called it, was necessary for the development of moral character; for him war was "a true tragedy, which must have nobleness and triumph in it as well as disaster" (quoted in Perris 2010/11: 432). He believed that violence and barbarism could be constrained by restructuring conflicts in ways that allowed the unavoidable – and, for him, desirable – strife at their core to unfold in civilised, non-violent fashion, in the same way the duel been transformed into the law-court. War was, like the duel, a barbaric manifestation of strife; it was simply an accident of history, and the strife that caused it could be resolved with more peaceful manners.

Given that the terrible destruction wrought by modern war placed the very existence of civilisation in jeopardy, Murray said, it was the duty of all peoples to acknowledge and rectify the outstanding faults in domestic and global society that had allowed interstate conflict to take on such a savage form. The manner in which they could do so was to construct a set of international institutions – a League of Nations, as it were – that would help to redirect the combative passions of human beings in ways that would make another war between the great powers if not impossible at least unlikely.

In January 1933, when Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, Murray's dream of a League of Nations had already become a reality; its members, in fact,

were busy negotiating an international disarmament treaty. But by the end of that very same year, Hitler had terminated Germany's membership of the League and under his leadership the country launched an aggressive campaign to rearm. Six years later, the Wehrmacht – by that time the strongest army in Europe – marched into Poland, triggering the most destructive war the world has ever seen.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

Many early International Relations (IR) scholars – including Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans Morgenthau and Herbert Butterfield – followed in Murray's footsteps and theorised international politics in terms of 'tragedy.' Trying to fathom the horror and unprecedented destruction wrought by modern warfare and totalitarian aggression, these authors believed that the idea of tragedy seemed to be an appropriate starting point from (or at least a handy metaphor with) which to conduct an analysis of politics, insofar as tragic drama and the study of international relations dealt with the very same subject matter – the agony of humanity.

With the rise of positivism after the Second World War, however, the discourse of tragedy fell into obscurity and would remain in this condition until the turn of the millennium, after which a number of books and articles dealing with the topic of tragedy in international relations appeared in quick succession. Many prominent scholars of IR have involved themselves in this debate.

Of the various insights that are raised in this debate (which revolves primarily around the study of Greek tragedy) two seem particularly relevant to international relations and to the concern with human suffering that guides their study (Erskine and Lebow 2012a: 8). The first, in the tradition of Murray, is that tragedy is caused by clashes of irreconcilable ethical values embedded in different social institutions; the diverse variety of such institutions is an expression of the plural and dynamic nature of the world. Some such situations can be overcome through careful reflection and even more careful action to transform the envi-

ronments of the institutions that originally gave rise to the conflicts or to transform the institutions themselves. I call this the 'structural' approach to tragedy.

Another school of thought argues that tragic outcomes in international politics are the result of the misjudgements of powerful actors who, intoxicated by success, become blinded by overconfidence in their own capacities and/or the justice of their cause. Such misjudgements can be manifest in both action and thought, and the arrogant overconfidence (which the Greeks called *hubris*) that begets them is both a product and productive of different kinds of societies. The development of *hubris* tends to fray the bonds of attachment that support community and to encourage discord, hatred and violence. By finally breaking these bonds, the hubristic actor sows the seeds of a catastrophic reconfiguration of society that often leads to his or her own destruction. This is, we are told, a universal pattern of human action, the lessons of which remain applicable to contemporary politics. I call this the 'agentic' approach to tragedy in IR. Some of those who take this line also argue that Thucydides, Morgenthau and possibly also Clausewitz shared a tragic vision of politics and that their work cannot be fully understood without having first learned the lessons of tragedy.

The aims of this chapter are to fully flesh out the ways in which tragedy has been employed in contemporary IR theory, to determine the merits and flaws of these differing approaches, and to outline my own contribution to the discussion that has been built around the question of tragedy in international politics. In doing so, I will provide a preliminary answer as to how I will answer the guiding question of this research project: 'how can the study of tragedy enhance our understanding of international relations?'

Section One: Reviewing the Literature

(i) *The Structural Approach*

In a thoughtful and thought-provoking essay, Mervyn Frost (2012) defines the epicentre of a tragic situation as an ethical conflict, or *agon* ('duel', 'competi-

tion'). This conflict is between two ethical codes, both of which have a valid claim on the actors involved. Only one of these ethical codes, however, can remain unviolated: in a tragic situation it is not possible for the wishes of both parties to be accommodated. This, Frost tells us, is what it means to *agonise*. Well-meaning people acting in ethically appropriate ways can find themselves in situations of which suffering is an unavoidable outcome; given the particular constitution of the actors and practices in question, any action (or non-action) is bound to harm somebody. In these circumstances, acting so as to circumvent tragedy becomes impossible. James Mayall (2012) and Chris Brown (2012) share this general understanding of tragic situations in their responses to Frost's essay.

Building upon Hans Friedrich Gutbrod's (2001) reading of the tragic in the work of Herbert Butterfield, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Hans Morgenthau, Frost writes that the potential for tragedy in international relations arises from the fact that:

> we live in a plural world in which different states (and the nations and peoples they contain) are guided in what they do, internally and externally, by a wide range of different ethical, religious and cultural codes. In this plural world there is no clear overarching set of values to which all subscribe. There is also no clear goal towards which these diverse states, nations and peoples are moving. Where any particular state sets out to implement its preferred set of values in the world, it is likely to come up against resistance. It will encounter a world in which its own power confronts that wielded by other actors. The reality of power politics might in turn bring about consequences far removed from those originally sought; it might bring about tragic consequences. (2012: 22)

The principal *agon* that both Frost and Brown see at work in today's world is the one that exists between the duties attached to the ethic of global civil society, in which all human beings are afforded certain fundamental rights, and the duties

that are inherent to statehood, such as the maintenance of sovereignty and the pursuit of the communal good. Tragic outcomes of this *agon* include military interventions in the name of humanity (e.g. Somalia, the Balkans and Iraq) and in policy areas concerning global distributive justice (e.g. protectionism versus free trade; border control versus freedom of movement).

As Richard Ned Lebow notes, "Frost is primarily interested in tragedy as a normative theory that allows us to frame and understand ethical dilemmas and their consequences more clearly" (2012: 66). This is as true for Mayall and Brown as it is for Frost: for all three scholars, the study of tragedy can help us to clarify the ways in which protagonists are constituted within specific social practices, each of which has an ethic embedded in it, and illuminates how these practices can come to catastrophically conflict.

Where Frost seems to differ from Brown and Mayall, however, is in his insistence that understanding the existence of tragedy in international relations will not only help us to *perceive* some contemporary ethical problems in international relations more clearly, but may also help to create the intellectual conditions by which we can *learn* to overcome these problems. Because tragedy dramatically highlights the social constitution of actors in a diverse range of social practices – the embedded ethics of which can compel behaviours that cause antagonistic conflicts ending in disaster – it inspires rational reflection on the possibilities of changing the social institutions that created the tragic *agon*. By doing so, it provides us with theoretical tools for identifying opportunities for making practical progress; the dismantling of *apartheid* and the establishment of the European Union are invoked as support for this thesis. Although tragedy therefore "does not solve ethical problems, but, rather, poses them to us" (Frost 2012: 42), the development of a tragic sensibility may have the potential to stimulate inspired yet realistic attempts to enact progressive transformations of international politics.

While not dismissive of this view, Mayall and Brown are wary of its optimistic bent; Mayall, for example, argues that "even if one pattern of behaviour with tragic consequences can be transcended, another is always likely to loom up from beyond the horizon" (2012: 46). Mayall and Brown instead emphasise that committed reflection on the existence of tragic situations is lacking in the work of many contemporary international political theorists and that this is in urgent need of addressing. The absence of a tragic sensibility, they argue, has given rise to a misplaced and widespread faith in the capacity of rational argument to heal the suffering of humankind; this is evident in analytical philosophy's obsession with concrete definitions and complete logical coherence – there is no room in it, according to Brown, for the real world's ambiguities and contradictions – and in many political theorists' underestimation of the residual power of the tragic morality of honour and competition at the international level.

In Mayall's and Brown's own words, "[a]n awareness of tragic outcomes is a necessary antidote to the hubris of progressive thought" (*ibid*: 46) insofar as such an awareness causes "us to act modestly, to be aware of our limitations and to be suspicious of grand narratives of salvation which pretend that there are no tragic choices to be made" (Brown 2012: 83). Recognising that the political world is inherently pluralistic and complex requires that we exercise extreme caution in attempting to force this reality into the mould of a cosmopolitan ideal. Apart from allowing us to frame significant ethical issues in international relations more clearly, then, a study of tragedy helps to check the development of hubristic overconfidence in our ability to steer the world in an unambiguously progressive direction. In this sense, Mayall and Brown remain committed to the idea that a study of tragedy can help us learn to make the world less painful, if only by showing that the hope of making the world a better place can actually make it worse.

(ii) *The Agentic Approach*

A number of other scholars pick up on the theme of *hubris* and in their development of it expand the scope of tragedy's contribution to IR wider than Mayall's and Brown's critiques of liberal international political theory allow for. This approach, which is exemplified by but not restricted to the work of Richard Ned Lebow, is based in an explicitly Aristotelian understanding of tragedy as a poetically condensed imitation of reality that has a positive ethical effect on its audiences. Greek tragedians, on this view, "believed that the cycle of *hubris* (arrogance), *ate* (seduction), *hamartia* (missing the mark, miscalculation), and *nemesis* (catastrophe) would repeat itself as long as humans stride the earth" (Lebow 2012: 65).

Tragedians, in other words, recognised that it is a universal tendency of powerful actors to become overconfident of their own success and of their ability to foresee and control the future, which leads them to commit gross errors of judgement that sever their ethical connections to the communities to which they belong. One frequent and serious consequence of this is the humiliation of others members of society, who feel compelled to seek vengeance.

Tragic dramas were attempts to educate people of these facts and, through the elicitation and *catharsis* ('release', 'purgation') of particular emotions such as pity and fear, to psychologically compel spectators to be on guard against hubristic behaviour. This reading of tragedy "encourages us to confront our frailties and limits and the disastrous consequences of trying to exceed them" (Lebow 2003: 43). Furthermore, by focusing our attention "on the role of agency, and, more specifically, on the kinds of actors most likely to succumb to hubris" (Lebow 2012: 64), it leads us beyond the characterisation of tragedy developed by Frost, Mayall and Brown (who concentrate more on the broader structures of tragic situations than on the agents who participate in them).

To some it may still seem "quite a stretch to claim that Greek tragedy can teach us important things about how to study international politics" (Euben 2012: 93).

Nevertheless, it should be "no stretch at all to say that Thucydides can" (*ibid.*). Indeed, Thucydides's *History* continues to be read in military colleges and universities around the world and is accepted by most IR scholars, especially realist ones, as an important text for students of international relations to engage with and comprehend (Cook 2006). As Michael Doyle points out, for most scholars in the discipline "to think like a Realist is to think as the philosophical historian Thucydides first thought" (1990: 223).

J. Peter Euben believes that the usefulness of a study of tragedy and IR lies in the fact that there exist substantial continuities between tragic drama and Thucydides' *History* that are "significant enough to establish the former as a preface to, and necessary condition for, understanding the latter" (2012: 93). Lebow, David Bedford and Thom Workman fully agree with this proposition; indeed, they go one step further and argue that "[t]he entire history is conceived of as a tragedy" (Lebow 2003: 42) so as to reveal "Thucydides' lament for the eclipse of reasoned moderation in Greek life generally, and in Athenian conduct in particular" (Bedford and Workman 2001: 52).

Although these scholars disagree somewhat about the didactic directions of both tragedy and Thucydides' text, the idea of *hubris* is central to all of their estimations of Thucydides' debt to tragic drama. Understanding the nature and consequences of *hubris* is, according to these scholars, important for two main reasons: first, it helps us to recognise Thucydides' overarching problematique, and thus to comprehend the meaning of his work at its deepest level; and second, on a level closer to the surface of the text, it allows us to fathom the political dynamics of the war itself by virtue of their similarity to the dynamics of tragedy.

According to Lebow, Thucydides' vision of politics was, like tragedy, a response to the massive social, political and economic changes that swept Greece in the three hundred years preceding the fifth century B.C. These changes, which included large increases in population, increasing urbanisation, growth in

trade and diplomacy, the specialisation of labour, and advances in military technology "can only be called a process of modernization" (2003: 152). The crucial issue that occupied Thucydides – his meta-theme, so to speak – was the widespread abandonment of old or malfunctioning social institutions and their rapid replacement by destabilising 'modern' practices. Witnessing the dynamism and plurality of social life so boldly manifested in the final stages of this process forced Thucydides to put the problem of modernisation "into historical and conceptual perspective as a first step toward making sense of ongoing change and its associated threats" (*ibid*: 303).

Thucydides, Lebow tells us, understood the consequences of modernisation as expressions of "evolving identities and discourses" (*ibid.*); human beings were not trapped by historical circumstance or by 'fate' but were, rather, always reproducing, reinventing and representing their culture, institutions and possible choices in new ways. Thucydides recognised that language enables "the shared meanings and conventions that made civilization possible" and that when "words lose their meanings, or their meanings are subverted, the conventions that depend on them lose their force, communication becomes difficult and civilization declines" (*ibid*: 161).

The Greeks became conscious of this fact as their traditional beliefs and conventions were challenged and undermined by the enormous changes that modernisation effected. One of these great changes was the flowering of philosophy and the reasoned scepticism toward myth, religion and established truths that it encouraged. Philosophy, itself the product of the evolving identities and discourses made possible by modern systems of exchange, developed the competitive Greek logic of the *agon* around the prize of truth; philosophy was essentially a wrestling match of abstract reason that only the strongest philosopher could win (Strong 2012: 148-9).

"At the heart of this approach [to knowledge]", Benjamin Schupmann observes, "is a pervasive rationalization of phenomena that allows for the logical equation of things and events in the real world by discovering their rational essences as quasi-noumenal 'forms'" (2012: 132). Philosophy, like all thought, relies on concepts: to develop a theory of human nature, for example, the philosopher must arbitrarily abstract from billions of particular concrete manifestations of reality (all of which he cannot intimately know and which are constantly undergoing change) and eliminate the differences between them to forge the concept of the 'human' into which all appropriately similar units can equally fit. But equality of this kind is the product of the mind's idealisation of phenomena, not an inherent quality of the world; identity is a function of language insofar as the mind selects 'individual objects' from fluid 'reality' and places them into conceptual categories that make of these particulars identical (or at least similar) units. In other words, a philosophy of 'human nature' is a creation, not a discovery.

This manner of thinking is, of course, perfectly normal for human beings; indeed, it is necessary for an agent to categorise, infer, remember, learn and act intentionally in the world (that is, it is necessary for an agent to survive). But the successes of natural philosophy in shaping the environment to serve the needs of humanity led people to forget that a reality in perpetual flux was not in fact reducible to concepts, causes and effects and to forget that any philosopher was, by virtue of his system's reliance upon concepts, the *creator* of truth rather than its discoverer.

Tracy Strong argues that tragedy, as a political education, was designed to keep its audience "from resting on the need to believe, as it were, that a word has one and only one correct meaning" (2012: 146-7). Tragedy was therefore a means of preventing the rise of philosophical tyrants. The fantastic success of rational, conceptual thinking (as embodied in the approach of Socrates), however, led its adherents to a belief in its absoluteness as a system of comprehending the world,

that is, it led to an unshakeable faith in the power of rationality and conceptual schemes to fully understand and direct the destiny of humankind. Reason, in short, became a tyrant of the mind (at least in significant sections of society), and this led to the death of tragedy. Schupmann describes this philosophical development as an early form of the scientistic rationalism that Lebow, Brown, Mayall, and others identify as the dominant philosophy of modern social science (Strong 2012).

For all of its success, Lebow tells us, rationalism ended up biting its own tail. Originally focused on the *phusis* ('nature') of the universe and the *nomos* ('law') that governed it, rationalist philosophy eventually focused its attention on humanity and began to fundamentally question traditional understandings of the nature of humankind and the laws that governed it. By doing so, it helped to destroy people's faith in the immutability and validity of the norms and institutions that had for so long defined their relationships with the world; this development "changed the way people thought about each other, their society and obligations to it, and encouraged barbarism and violence by undermining long-standing conventions and the constraints they enforced" (Lebow 2003: 147; cf. Dodds 1951). Some actors concluded that the self was the locus of meaning and that morality was nothing but an expression of egoism; dissatisfied with their lot, they cut themselves off from their societies and began to wander off into the wilderness of nihilism. The community of Athens was one such tragic figure.

We can now examine the second layer of tragedy's influence on Thucydides' text. Following Francis Cornford, Euben (2012: 94) points out that Thucydides' narrative sequencing of the Athenian invasion of Sicily after the Melian Dialogue is not historically but, rather, dramatically determined; likewise the Funeral Oration of Pericles and the subsequent description of the plague. Each of these important sections of the *History* cannot be appreciated simply in temporal terms (the digression on the tyrannicides, for example, is historically – but not literarily – puzzling); they must be read against the city's increasingly hubristic

leadership and the tragic resonances of such *hubris* if they are to be properly understood.

There are, therefore, elements of and consequences to the behaviour of certain actors in the *History* that, by virtue of Thucydides' dramatic rendition of them, do indeed very much resemble the categories identified by Aristotle as being central to the genre of tragedy. Bedford and Workman (2001) make this case implicitly by employing these categories in their analysis of the *History*. Lebow, however, summarises the argument most succinctly:

> Like the playwrights, Thucydides depicts cities and their leaders as archetypal characters confronting archetypal situations. His history is not an exhaustive narrative, but a sparse, abstract and artfully constructed account that selects and emphasises those aspects of the story that serve their author's broader purpose […] It is an illustration of a more general human pattern: success spawns greater ambitions, overconfidence and self-defeating behaviour. (Lebow 2003: 42)

By personifying Athens and others as tragic heroes, that is, Thucydides was able to exploit a well-developed and widely understood set of concepts to explain the behaviour of agents at various political levels, from the interpersonal to the international. Thucydides created a vision of politics that stressed the similarities rather than the differences between international and domestic politics. He made clear the importance of language, convention and community in preserving the stability of both; without broad social agreement on the meaning of words, values and norms, on which the bonds of affection that constitute community are based, the conventions that depend on them lose their force and society begins to disintegrate (Lebow 2003: 161).

The deterioration of these affective bonds often encourage, and are intensified by, the unrestrained pursuit of individual interest, a behavioural trait most likely

to occur in those actors who come to identify themselves as being above and beyond society and therefore "no longer bound by the laws and conventions of man" (*ibid*: 131). When the *hubris* of these actors results in *hamartia* and the infliction of injustice on other members of the community, the *nemesis* of offended parties is bound to follow and is likely to provoke tragic catastrophe (Bedford and Workman 2001). For Thucydides, just as for the tragedians, self-interest "defined outside of the language of justice is [therefore] irrational and self-defeating" (Lebow 2003 p. 276; cf. Monoson and Loriaux 1998).

Like Aristotle, Lebow writes, Thucydides believed that the function of tragedy was "to expose us to the monstrous possibilities of human behaviour without at the same time infecting us with the madness that leads to that behaviour" (Lebow 2003: 43) – an exposure which, to be sure, was no inoculation against disaster, but one which could still help to make his audience more introspective and attuned to the dangers of hubris developing in their persons and political communities. Representing the Peloponnesian War as a timeless tragic drama in which the limits of responsible politics are broken was the expression of Thucydides' "hope that familiarization with the time-worn script [of Athens' tragedy] would encourage future actors to become wise enough to write new endings" (*ibid*: 366).

Bedford and Workman seem convinced that the tragic vision of politics is confined to the *History*; by appropriating Thucydides to support their arguments, they argue, subsequent realists "could not miss the mark more thoroughly" (2001: 54). Lebow, however, makes a sophisticated argument that the work of Carl von Clausewitz and, in particular, Hans Morgenthau must also be read in the tragic tradition, insofar as these thinkers shared Thucydides' belief that "order was fragile, that human efforts to control, or even, reshape, their physical and social environments were far more uncertain in their consequences than most leaders and intellectuals recognized, and that hubris – in the form of an exaggerated sense of authority and competence – only made matters worse" (2003: x). Ka-

mila Stullerova supports Lebow in this regard, at least concerning Morgenthau: "Limiting hubris", she writes, "is the single invitation for ethical intervention Morgenthau and Lebow consider inherent to tragedy" (2012: 117).

The greatest lesson that these influential figures in the discipline took away from history and the events through which they lived, we are told, was "the need to know one's own limits" which is also "the core insight of tragedy" (Lebow 2003: 309). The involvement of strong emotions in the process of reflection is crucial in learning this lesson; it cannot be assimilated in the detached and abstract way we so often associate with academic learning. Studying tragedy is one method by which to experience this fact. By engaging both our emotions and our intellect – by instilling, in other words, both a deeply felt *and* critical appreciation of the vagaries and contradictions of life – tragedy and the vision of politics that emerges from it encourage the growth of what the Greeks called *sophrosune* ('wisdom', 'moderation', 'self-mastery'), which ordinary abstract reasoning, although it may lead to great 'knowledge,' simply cannot reproduce.

To sum up the agentic argument, the propensity of modern IR scholars to foster scientific, rationalistic theories of human beings as naturally autonomous and egoistic agents encourages hubristic behaviour in international relations. Incorporating the lessons of tragedy into the discipline, as per Thucydides (and arguably Clausewitz and Morgenthau), can help to mitigate this: a tragic understanding of politics has the potential to make us "more empathetic, prudent and insightful – and less arrogant and far-reaching in our goals" (Lebow 2003: 188) in "recognition of the self-defeating outcomes of excesses of power and confidence" (Erskine and Lebow 2012a: 10). Alongside the greater understanding of these three pivotal figures in international relations theory that an awareness of the tragic dynamics of *hubris* affords us, for authors taking the agentic approach to tragedy in IR the most important contribution that a study of tragedy can make to the discipline is through its potential to limit *hubris* through the development of *sophrosune* in both theory and practice.

Section Two: Critiquing the Literature

(i) *The Structural Approach*

The parallels between Mervyn Frost's and Gilbert Murray's understandings of the didactic value of tragedy are rather striking. Both believe that agonising conflict is central to both tragedy and international politics. Both agree that, having acknowledged the existence of tragic situations, through rational reflection on these situations it is possible to imagine civil ways in which to transform the social environment so as to minimise the violence and suffering such situations produce. Both agree that modern audiences cannot afford to allow pessimistic passivity in the face of massive violence. Furthermore, both seem to be justified in taking this message away from tragedy – or, at least, from one tragedian, namely, Aeschlyus. As Erskine and Lebow point out, one needs only:

> recall his *Oresteia*, in which one violent deed breeds another, all conceived and carried out in the name of justice. The cycle of revenge, which in the end pits the Furies (*Erinyes*) against Orestes, is finally ended by a court established by Athena. The jury of twelve Athenians is deadlocked and Athena intervenes to cast the deciding vote for Orestes. She convinces the Furies to accept an honoured home beneath the city and henceforth become well-wishers (*Eumenides*). Justice, which took the form of revenge in the *Oresteia* and in Athens, is transformed from a private to a public responsibility. Argument replaces violence as the means by which justice is pursued. (2012b: 189)

On the other hand, given the historical record recounted in the introduction to this chapter, the sceptical reserve that Mayall and Brown show towards Frost's (and Murray's) position seems entirely justified. Murray's and others' attempts to civilise the combative passions of European peoples through the institutions of the League of Nations may have resolved or redirected some sources of po-

tentially violent conflict, and, as Mayall grants, such an approach may have similar success in the future. Nevertheless, optimists such as Frost and Murray would do well to remember that when faced by actors like Fascist Italy, Imperial Japan, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, the League ultimately proved impotent, arguably even deleterious to the causes of peace and freedom. Indeed, it is plausible that the League, by virtue of its commitment to discourse and its abhorrence of violence, contributed significantly to the postponement of a military action that was to a large extent inevitable, and thereby enabled leaders of aggressive states to prepare for the war they knew was brewing. Such inaction, it might be said, thereby magnified the intensity of the 'tragedy' that engulfed the world in September 1939.

Where does the truth lie here? Are Brown and Mayall wrong to be sceptical of Frost's apparent optimism? If, however, they have a right to be so, should Aeschylus no longer be considered a tragedian? Alternatively, if the *Oresteia* is truly a tragedy, why did it lie so treacherously in the early years of the discipline?

As in good drama, there is reason to believe that each side here possesses an element of right. However, to understand how this might be so it is necessary to place tragedy within its historical context and to read tragedies as specific texts within this broader frame of reference. Doing so, as I show at greater length in Chapter Three, suggests that the logic, symbolism and historical circumstances of the *Oresteia* reflect an authorial concern with civilising conflict *within* the city of Athens, while international war, for Aeschylus, was in fact something to be desired insofar as it provided an outlet for pressures that would otherwise tear the city apart. On this reading, Frost would be entitled to take away from Aeschylus the idea that it *is* indeed possible to transform institutions to avoid certain forms of violence. Brown and Mayall, however, are also right to find in tragedy the sentiment that violence and suffering, on one level or another, are inevitable aspects of political life.

This leads me to my first point of criticism of the structural approach. What each of the otherwise very insightful scholars who engage with tragedy in this way misses, and what an adequate historical contextualisation of tragedy reminds us of, is the fact that the Greeks experienced not only emotional pain when viewing drama but also great pleasure. The Great Dionysia, the festival at which tragedy was performed, was an occasion for celebration as much as it was for mourning. This is a serious disconnect between the ancient and modern audiences of tragedy; the latter are overwhelmingly inclined to believe that "tragedy is distinctive in its emphasis on negative emotions" (Stullerova 2012: 117), while for the Greeks tragic drama definitely had positive emotional value. The *Oresteia*, for example, ends on a positive note for the city of Athens, which gains an eternal ally in Orestes, the domesticated power of the Furies as a weapon of war, and newfound civic harmony. Similar outcomes occur in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and Euripides' *Suppliants*. It is implausible that the Athenian audience would have lamented the outcomes of these plays. The emotional disjuncture between ancient and contemporary spectators of tragedy thus raises doubts about the universality of its lessons or at least about the ability of moderns to fully comprehend them.

The broader point of which this criticism is only one part is that, in the words of Quentin Skinner, "we must probe *below the surface* of a text in order to attain a full understanding of its meaning" (1972: 394, original emphasis). As David Runciman writes, "[the] accumulated evidence of the last 30 years about the historical circumstances surrounding the composition of the great texts … has made it practically impossible to argue that these texts can be understood simply by reading them, regardless of what their authors may have meant by writing them when and as they did" (2001: 84). The reason why this is so is that without having some understanding of the audiences that a given text was meant to address, of the place of that text in a particular tradition, its use of a particular idiom and so on, we are liable to learn lessons from the text that its author may

not have intended to give. If we wish to extract rather than superimpose meaning upon tragic texts, therefore, we need first of all to grasp the range of things that could recognisably have been done by staging tragic dramas and by the treatments of their particular themes at the particular times that they were produced (Skinner 1972).

Many of the authors writing on tragedy and international relations profess to respect this argument, but nevertheless insist that "just as texts take on meanings beyond those intended by their authors, so do genres" (Erskine and Lebow 2012a: 4). However, if this is the case – if these scholars are not seeking the lessons inherent to historical tragic texts, and are content to "mine the rich trove of tragedy and reflections about it" (*ibid*: 6) for use as "inkblots *a la* Hegel, Nietzsche and Freud"[1] (Lebow 2003: 57) to interrogate contemporary problems – several important questions arise: Why return to tragedy, and why to Greek tragedy in particular?

Euben admits that he is made "uneasy about saying (as Frost does) that tragedians were concerned with ethical dilemmas and portray a world full of actors with clashing ethical perspectives and strong unyielding commitments to them [… because] the language of good and bad seems too much the product of Aristotelian and Christian moralizing" (2012: 89). Strong seems to concur, adding that another "problem with the conflicting demands view is that there is nothing for tragedy to accomplish. As the way of dealing with the conflict all that can be done is to establish toleration" (2012: 145).

Theirs are valid concerns. If structuralist scholars are seeking to inculcate humility and tolerance in their readers, why do they not invoke the 'sin of pride' as did Niebuhr and Morgenthau? Why do some authors use the term *hubris* – an

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[1] Lebow's editorial position in *Tragedy and International Relations* (Erskine and Lebow 2012a) seems to have changed from his earlier position in *The Tragic Vision of Politics* (2003); there Lebow argues convincingly *for* a contextualised reading of tragedy.

ethical concept expressed in a dead language belonging to an ancient society of slaveholding warriors – to evaluate contemporary behaviour? Instead of tragedy, why not engage with the stories and moral categories of the Bible, with which many contemporary societies – especially Western societies, with whose political behaviour most scholars are primarily concerned – are much more familiar?

Doing so could theoretically help to alleviate the problem that Robbie Shilliam finds in contemporary studies of Greek tragedy in IR (namely, a neglect of the 'Adamic' possibilities of objectified people to create themselves as subjects within a New World colonised by the West) insofar as the Biblical narrative is fundamental to the self-understandings of many colonised peoples in a way that Greek tragic narratives are not. "The key issue", he suggests, "is to resist presenting the Caribbean islands [or any other colonised land] as a simile of the Aegean … because this would 'humiliate' the landscape of the New World in so far as it robs this nascent public space of its Adamic constitution" (2012: 178).

Indeed, Shilliam argues elsewhere that the "black biblical hermeneutic" can redemptively reconfigure antiquity as African "through the material and spiritual prominence […it gives] to Ethiopia in contradistinction to putatively European powers, especially Greece and 'Rome'" (2011: 108). The gain of taking this approach, he tells us, lies in "loosening the obsession the Western Academic often holds of her/himself as subject, and to imagine herself/himself – for a while – as objects in the drama of someone else's awesome subjectification" (2012: 181).

So it may be, but if after this while we wish to return to the subject at hand, we might ask why scholars do not engage with more modern texts, written in living European languages, like those of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Wagner, or even Arthur Miller, to whose work Aristotelian and Christian categories of analysis perhaps fit more appropriately. These authors, who, to employ Shilliam's terms, can still be considered geo-culturally separate from the Greeks, nevertheless write in

a self-consciously tragic tradition. Reading their work would appear to make it easier to avoid the folly of learning lessons that were never actually taught.

Related to these questions of context is the problem identified by Catherine Lu, who writes that the "narrow account of tragedy as ethical dilemma … deprives the genre of its stimulating and provocative role in political and theoretical analysis" insofar as "there are different types of tragedies" (2012: 158-9). The issue, broadly speaking, is whether tragedy can unambiguously speak to us as a *genre* as opposed to a collection of various authors whose many texts, although sharing many similarities, differ in a number of significant ways.

A classical example of this question is the fictional *agon* between Aeschylus and Euripides for the title of 'Best Poet' in Aristophanes' comedy, the *Frogs*. According to Dionysus, the judge of the contest in the play, in Aeschlyus' day the men of the Athenian navy "knew nothing but to call for grits and sing 'Yo-ho!'" Under the tutelage of Euripides, however, the sailor has learned to question his superiors, and now only argues and refuses to row (1073-6). Aristophanes' play suggests that each poet, when writing tragedy, sought to teach the wider Athenian community very different lessons about appropriate political behaviour (Arnott 1991). And while it is of course a platitude that rather than reflect reality the comic stage exaggerates and distorts it, presumably no one seriously disputes the existence of at least some didactic element to tragedy. Indeed, this is precisely the reality that Aristophanes plays upon; his comedy would make no sense without it.

It follows that we should be careful when talking very broadly about what 'tragedy' tells us. In Lu's words: "A pluralistic account of tragedies rather than a singular 'tragic vision' reveals the ways in which the genre of tragedy ought to open up rather than settle ethical debates and reflection about human agency and responsibility in world politics" (2012: 159). I agree with Lu, and I believe that

an adequately contextualised reading of tragic drama will help us to open new avenues for reflection about the place of tragedy in international politics.

(ii) *The Agentic Approach*

What I have called the agentic approach is less vulnerable to criticism regarding the attention it pays to the historical context in which tragic drama was written, insofar those who take it usually give some consideration to the ethical universe in which the Greeks lived. Ned Lebow's work in particular provides a rich and insightful account of tragedy and the three authors he believes share the vision of politics that emerges from an appreciation of it. His readings of specific tragic texts are sensitive to detail and are well grounded in the secondary literature on the plays in question. Likewise, he pays due attention to the complex milieu of social, economic, political, and philosophical factors that influenced how Thucydides and the tragedians thought and wrote.

Nevertheless, there are important objections to be made against some of the assumptions made and conclusions reached by those taking the agentic approach. The first of these concerns the dissonance that exists between the ethical qualities agentic scholars allege is fostered by tragedy and the historical descriptions of the Athenians who produced and consumed tragic drama. Erskine and Lebow, for example, argue that the potential for learning from tragedy is embodied in the figure of Oedipus. They claim that Oedipus the Tyrant brings his fate upon himself "by a double act of hubris: he refuses to back off at the crossroads when confronted with a stranger's road rage, and he trusts 'blindly' in his ability to reason his way to a solution to the city's infertility, despite multiple warnings to the contrary" (2012a: 8-9). The Oedipus we meet at Colonus, however, has undergone a transformation:

> He has reflected on his fate; his blindness has led to vision and he
> has shed his hubris and become a wise and prudent man. Wisdom,
> or *sophia,* for the Greeks, and for the aged Oedipus, consists of a

holistic understanding of the world and one's place in it. It is a source that comes from being at one with nature and human society. (2012b: 187)

Erskine and Lebow insinuate that it is this latter Oedipus that we should aspire to imitate in thinking about and practicing international politics. But while the claim that Oedipus has an important value for the city of Athens is a just one, the idea that the Athenian audience would have seen in a broken, blind and beggarly old man an appropriate role model is at odds with the fact that honour, youth and power – not disgrace, advanced age and dependency – were some of the most important values in Greek culture. As Euben notes, "the 'prideful' man made the world come alive, whatever else he might do" (2012: 89). The act of a free man (and a prince at that) 'refusing to back down' from an aggressor would hardly have been considered hubristic by the Greeks. On the contrary, it would have been an ethical response mandated by the honour system that prevailed in their societies (cf. Cairns 1993).

In this context, as Euben points out, it is important to remember that what saved Thebes from the terrible Sphinx was Oedipus' extraordinary knowledge. His investigation into the killing of Laius, furthermore, ended the plague that was afflicting the city, even as it destroyed his own house. Had Oedipus the Tyrant listened to his advisors instead of following his instincts, he would have continued sleeping with his mother while forcing the people of Thebes to suffer the consequences of his family's abominations (which in Homer's version of the tale he actually does). It seems unlikely that Erskine and Lebow would, on reflection, condone as sound political advice the warnings of Jocasta and Teresias.

On a similar note, it may justly be asked as to how the empathy fostered by the tragic vision can be reconciled with some of the historical anecdotes describing Athenian behaviour during the Persian War, in the course of which the newly democratic (and tragedy-obsessed) Athens came to possess its great empire.

Consider, for example, Xerxes' satrap Artayctes's execution at the order of Xanthippus, the father of Pericles, after the Persian's son had been stoned to death before his eyes (Hdt. 9.120.4), or the sacrifice of three of Xerxes' young nephews to Dionysus by Greeks under the command of Themistocles, "the man most instrumental in achieving the salvation of Hellas, and foremost in leading the Athenians up to … high repute" (Plut. *Them*. 13.2).

Furthermore, how can the "[f]ear that the act will undermine everything" (Schupmann 2012: 140) that underlies the sense of caution allegedly fostered by tragedy be reconciled with the characteristic daring of the people of Athens? In Euben's words, "[d]id the Athenians ignore tragedy on their way to empire? How could they, given that tragedy was part of a religious ritual and form of political education that helped constitute democratic culture?" (2012: 89).

This dissonance between the estimation and the reality of Greek life, is, I think, rooted in what is an understandable but fundamentally flawed reading of Aristotle's *Poetics*. For the agentic approach emphasises the importance of tragedy in eliciting pity and fear in order to emotionally deepen our understanding of international relations, and the Aristotelian concept of *catharsis*, which those scholars taking this approach understand to mean either the "release" (Erskine and Lebow 2012a: 3) or "purgation" (Lebow 2003: 43) from the soul of toxic emotions, is central to this process.

Although according to the long tradition of scholarly comment on the *Poetics* these are acceptable definitions of the meaning of *catharsis*, such an understanding does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that, for Aristotle, the aim of drama was to *foster* deep-seated and long-lasting feelings of fear and pity (which, the agentic approach suggests, leads to the political virtues of prudence and empathy), as contemporary IR theorists maintain it was. On the contrary, it is logical to assume that *catharsis*, as a 'release' and especially as 'purgation,'

expunged these feelings (or, at least, 'bled' them within tightly controlled bounds). In other words, it is perfectly reasonable to argue that according to Aristotle *the tragedians did not want their audiences to possess strong feelings of fear or empathy, but to be largely rid of them.* This conclusion is very much in accord with the sentiments of Aristophanes' comic Aeschylus, who declares that he composed his work in order to "rouse the citizenry to strive to equal [the tragic heroes] when it hears the call to arms"; he intended to teach the men of Athens to "lust for battle" and to "yearn to beat the enemy" (Aristoph. *Frogs* 1021-45) – not to fear or feel great sympathy for him.

Richard Beardsworth makes a second objection to the agentic approach, which relates to its methods. He points out that the formula for tragic outcomes (in which a hubristic individual tightly woven into the fabric of a community with strong and, most importantly, enforceable rules breaks free from that society and transgresses sacred moral boundaries, thereby triggering retribution and his or her own downfall) that Lebow and others apply to international politics is much less applicable to the international level than it is to that of relations within an ancient city-state. In his words, "the bond revealed between individual unit and international community is much thinner than that in Greek tragedy and, for many thinkers and international actors today, is precisely what is *not* presupposed by international society" (2012: 100; cf. Sheets 1994).

International law, the human rights regime, notions of just war and so on do indeed form an increasingly important basis for a global society of states, Beardsworth notes, but given "the radically different order of political bond in [tragic] dramatization of the ancient *polis* and in contemporary world politics, to argue *already* for the immanence of ethical community to world politics must … be done in less determinate, less substantive terms" (2012: 100-101). Furthermore, the fact that the emphasis of the agentic approach on *nemesis* as a secularised 'revenge of the gods' being the causal factor of the tragic hero's destruction seems to assume, when applied to the international realm, the existence of a cen-

tral authority that can distribute punishment to wrongdoers. In contemporary international politics there is, as is well known, no such authority. Lebow and others thus address different levels of analysis, community, civic duty and loyalty and in doing so, Beardsworth correctly notes, "ride the distinction between the domestic and international too easily" (*ibid*: 100).

The agentic claim that Thucydides wrote his history 'as a tragedy' is also dubious. There is good reason to believe that this idea potentially distorts the meaning of Thucydides' text. A tragedy "was first and foremost a *play*, a play that performed and was intended to perform a significant political and cultural education" (Strong 2012: 145). There is little ground to believe that Thucydides wanted or expected his work to be read aloud or performed in any other fashion (a point Lebow alone concedes but which he attributes to the decline of oral culture [2003: 42-3]). As Richard Rutherford points out, "tragedy engages the emotions by direct enactment; history sometimes does this, but the episodes in which this happens are framed by the stabilizing narrative voice of the historian, who guides the reader and suggests evaluations and explanations much more frequently and explicitly than is possible in drama" (Rutherford 2011: 508; cf. Hornblower 1994). The very form of the *History*'s presentation, in other words, speaks against an interpretation of it as a tragedy. Aside from all this, Thucydides "partly defines his project *against* the poets whom he condemns for their rhetorical indulgences and desire for popularity at the expense of truth" (Euben 2012: 93, original emphasis).

In other words, understanding Thucydides as a tragedian is to place him into a category with which he himself could not have identified. While he may certainly have drawn upon tragic themes, ideas and imagery, he was not a tragic *poet* and he makes this fact explicitly clear. It is therefore misleading to claim that the *History* is itself a tragedy. Doing so suggests that Thucydides' work inspired the very same intellectual and emotional reactions in his readers as those that tragic drama inspired in its spectators, which, if only because of its mode of presenta-

tion, it very likely did not. The major differences that exist between tragedy and history therefore lead to the conclusion that analysing Thucydides' text through the lens of Aristotle's theory of drama is not appropriate.

Notwithstanding these hermeneutical and methodological problems, perhaps the most troubling problem with the agentic approach is that its primary conclusion about the relevance of a study of tragedy in IR (to wit, its teaching of the necessity of establishing *sophrosune* as an antidote to *hubris*) leads to a logical impasse when its policy prescriptions are applied to state actors.

Chris Brown correctly notes that most of the contributors to the debate on tragedy in IR have a "take on the world [which] is largely state-centric and [which] gives due importance to the role of power in international relations" (2012: 76). He also observes that the central realist notion of the 'security dilemma' can be expressed as a sort of tragic situation, and cites John Mearsheimer's *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2001) as an example of this. These are important points that must be developed further, especially given that most commentators ignore Mearsheimer's contribution to the debate entirely.

As has been shown in detail above, the agentic approach to tragedy "warns of the dangers that accompany power's overconfidence and perceived invincibility" (Erskine and Lebow 2012b: 185), makes individuals more aware of the limits to their knowledge and the contingency of their place in the world, and helps more generally to make us "more empathetic, prudent and insightful – and less arrogant and far-reaching in our goals" (*ibid.* p. 188). In order to survive or to at least maintain their security, the agentic approach warns, states must avoid becoming either the perpetrator or the victim of *hubris* (to which testify the fates of both the Athenians and the Melians in the *History*, or that of Antigone and Creon in the *Antigone*). Possessing *sophrosune* is the best way to ensure the realisation of these goals. Given that it encourages the growth of *sophrosune*, a stu-

dy of tragedy is therefore in the best interest of those who study and influence state policy.

If we understand the state to be a concrete individual actor in global politics (as those taking the agentic approach do) and one to which Aristotelian categories apply, however, then we very soon run into problems.

For there is at least one thing that can be taken as a fact when considering international politics: groups of people, like individuals, have an inherent capacity to act offensively against other groups of people or individuals (whether with fists or feet or with weapons as extensions of these appendages). States are no different in this regard.

States may, of course, have no intention whatsoever of acting offensively against other states, and can imagine, empathetically, that other states may have no intention at all of acting offensively against them. Nevertheless, the agentic approach tells us that if states and their leaders are *sophron* ('wise'), they must also be keenly aware of the limits to what they can know. As a result, Mearsheimer does well to point out that "[a]nother state may be reliably benign, but it is impossible to be certain of that judgement because intentions are impossible to divine with 100% certainty" (1994/5: 10). *Sophron* states, furthermore, should be aware of their 'mortality' and vulnerability; they can never be certain that other states will not use their offensive capabilities against them in a way that might not only damage them but might completely annihilate them.

Preparation against such an outcome is especially necessary in a world in which there are no 'gods' (that is, no international government), and where the *nemesis* for any potential *hubris* must come from individual members of the offender's community (that is, the international society of states). Defending order in international politics in such a world is, in other words, left up to international society, and this is perhaps why "not every act of hubris has tragic consequences" (Erskine and Lebow 2012b: 197): sometimes international socie-

ty is simply unable or unwilling to police wrongdoing. This, in turn, eliminates some of the disincentives for powerful actors to behave hubristically, and increases the incentives for individual states to ensure that international aggression, which might end in their own destruction, is less likely to take place against them. The international, in other words, is largely a self-help system.

We have thus established that there is no reliable mechanism to punish hubristic actors on the international level, that states must therefore take care of themselves, and that states must maintain a healthy level of distrust toward other states if they are *sophron* and aware of their limits. Taken together, it can well be argued that these conclusions should encourage wise states to pursue a position of power over other states, because having such power is the best guarantee for them against becoming the victim of another state's *hubris*, even if this state is, for the moment, reliably benign. Having such power also implicitly places states in a better position to punish actors for any instance of *hubris*. Thus Mearsheimer concludes:

> [The] cycle of violence [that characterised the 20th century] will continue far into the new millennium. Hopes for peace will probably not be realized, because the great powers that shape the international system fear each other and compete for power as a result. Indeed, their ultimate aim is to gain a position of dominant power over others, because having dominant power is the best means to ensure one's own survival. Strength ensures safety, and the greatest strength is the greatest insurance of safety. States facing this incentive are fated to clash as each competes for advantages over the others. This is a tragic situation, but there is no escaping it unless the states that make up the system agree to form a world government. Such a vast transformation is hardly a realistic prospect, however, so conflict and war are bound to continue as large and enduring features of world politics. (2000: xi-xii)

In a tragic world, it would be far-reaching to posit complete disarmament as a goal; taking the risk of beating one's own swords into ploughshares would be considered, if not an act of *hubris* toward one's own people, at least extraordinary folly (as Gilbert Murray would later come to recognise). Remaining guardedly under arms is, in these circumstances, an act of proper moderation and prudence. When all sides adopt such behaviour, however, they are led into a situation in which violent clashes between states in the pursuit of power over one another become all too likely. Thus, at least for Mearsheimer, a truly tragic situation arises.

Lebow, Bedford and Workman and others reject the rational choice model that underlies this theory and they have a much broader and deeper understanding of power than the largely material one advocated by Mearsheimer. Nevertheless, as I hope to have just shown, by considering states as actors to whom the lessons of tragedy applies, the 'tragic vision of politics' very soon begins to look cross-eyed and its logic, as a rule of thumb, somewhat disjointed. The road that appeared to have left messy tragic endings behind actually leads us right back into them. Something is obviously amiss. Just what *is* lacking will be made clear over the course of this thesis.

Section Three: Overview and Method

So far I have argued that, while having contributed much to the discipline, both the structural and agentic approaches to tragedy in IR do not exhaust the instructive possibilities of a study of tragedy and international relations and are flawed in some significant respects. In the rest of this chapter I outline my own contribution to the debate on tragedy in international relations.

I agree with Lebow that an adequate contextualisation of tragedy is crucial if we are to understand the meaning of tragic drama and if we want to trace the way in which it influenced subsequent international political theory. I also agree with Euben and Strong that Greek tragedy provided its audience with an important

political education, and that this was bound up with issues relating to democracy, tyranny and empire. My thesis is that an in-depth, contextualised understanding of tragedy yields a much richer understanding of how democratic Athenians thought about and dealt with the issues of tyranny, democracy, war and empire, and that this deeper understanding sheds a great deal of light on significant but understudied elements of the work of Thucydides. Furthermore, I agree that Hans Morgenthau can be located within the tragic tradition, but for different reasons than have been offered to date. Apart from the new perspectives that my interpretation brings to bear on these two thinkers, my thesis provides some preliminary answers to some of the 'tragic' problems that they did, and we continue to, face.

I differ from agentic scholars such as Lebow insofar as I reject a predominantly Aristotelian interpretation of tragedy and concentrate instead on what I see as the most important and enduring political themes in tragic drama. Following Skinner's two suggested rules for approaching historical texts, I will focus "not just on the text interpreted, but on the prevailing conventions governing the treatment of the issues or themes with which that text is concerned" and "on the writer's mental world, the world of his empirical beliefs" (1972: 406-7).

We must do this, because, as Skinner writes, there is a "perpetual danger, in our attempts to enlarge our historical understanding, […] that our expectations about what someone must be saying or doing will themselves determine that we understand the agent to be doing something which he would not – or even could not – himself have accepted as an account of what he *was* doing" (1969: 6, original emphasis).

Contemporary scholarship on tragedy in IR falls into this trap, at least insofar as it ignores almost entirely an important theme in tragic drama – what the Greeks called *eros* ('sexual love') and its role in political life. Ned Lebow, to his credit, is aware of the importance of *eros* in tragedy, the *History* and Athenian society

more generally (2003: 278-281). Nevertheless, he does not explore this theme in any depth. This is unfortunate, because *eros* features prominently in plays such as Aeschylus's *Suppliants*, *Danaids*, *Agamemnon*, *Eumenides*; Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, *Antigone*; and Euripides' *Bacchae*, *Medea* and *Hippolytus*. Indeed, I will argue that an adequate appraisal of the nature of *eros* is crucial to understanding (a) tragedy and its role in democratic Athens; (b) the pervasive influence of tragedy on Thucydides and, thus, the deeper meanings of his text; and (c) how the 'erotic politics' identified by the Greeks have been utilised in more recent political theory, specifically Hans Morgenthau's. My dissertation will investigate these three interrelated areas and is divided into three sections.

I begin Chapter Two by outlining the contours of sexuality in ancient Greece.[2] I engage with and interrogate the influential modern thesis that sexuality in ancient Greece did not conform to the dichotomy of homo- and heterosexuality, in which the objects of sexual desire are classified by sex (male and female). In ancient Greece, sexual partners were classified according to their *role* in sexual relations, namely the 'active' role (defined by penetrating) and the 'passive' role (defined by being penetrated). The active role was associated with dominance and superiority, and was confined to males; the passive role was associated with submission and inferiority, and could be taken by males as well as females. Sexuality in ancient Greece was thus closely bound up with relations of power and the construction of gender.

I then discuss the representation of *eros* in poetry, religion and philosophy and in light of these consider the psychophysiological dynamics of *eros*, which include not only appetitive but also affective and aesthetic components. I then examine representations of extra-sexual *eros* (that is, *eros* applied to non-human objects), which are usually found in political contexts.

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[2] Sexuality is defined henceforth as the socially conditioned complex of beliefs about, commentary on and practices of sexual behavior.

Following this I investigate the role of *eros* in classical Athenian political discourse and practice, what I call 'erotic politics.' Firstly, I provide a brief history of pre-democratic Athens. Archaic Athens was plagued by violent competition between aristocratic clans; this rivalry was eventually quashed by the institution of a tyranny which finally brought peace and prosperity to the city. Eventually, this dynasty was attacked by a pederastic couple composed of a middle-class man named Aristogeiton and his aristocratic younger beloved, Harmodius. The attempt at tyrannicide failed, but it initiated a sequence of events that eventually toppled the regime and ushered in a new form of political organization: *demokratia*.

Despite their failure to remove the tyrants, Aristogeiton and Harmodius were hailed as heroes under the new democracy. The 'tyrannicides,' as the pair was known, were considered ideal democratic citizens, and the love and mutual esteem that characterised their relationship were represented by the state as the emotional pillars of a 'tyrannicide model' of citizenship with which the men were encouraged to think about their own relationship to each other and to the *polis*.

Eros figured in democratic self-definition in another respect also. In official discourse, 'the tyrant' was the anti-type of the democratic Athenian: indulgent, violent, and cruel, 'the tyrant' was immoderate in all of his actions and appetites. Nowhere was this more so than in the realm of sex. 'The tyrant' was consistently associated with an uncontrollable and transgressive species of *eros* that the Athenians tried their best to differentiate from the 'just' *eros* of the 'tyrannicides.' Adultery, rape, incest, necrophilia – a whole array of perversities were pinned onto this generic and hateful figure.

But alternatives to the democratic narrative did exist. In these discourses, the figure of the tyrant was presented in a much more ambivalent – sometimes outright positive – light. His power was thought of as godlike and beautiful, and as

such an object of illicit desire for both individuals and the community as a whole. 'The tyrant' therefore provided an image with which classical Athens could not only reaffirm its democratic identity, but also with which it could, under certain circumstances, flirt and even positively identify.

One of the arenas in which Athens could engage with the figure of the tyrant in this manner was on the tragic stage. This is the focus of Chapter Three. First I review the contemporary literature that deals with the political context of tragedy, and argue this context reflects the concerns of democratic Athens with tyranny and related themes such as war and empire. Following this I discuss the religious context of the Great Dionysia, and argue that this, too, helps to shed light on the dramas performed there. The foundational myth of the Great Dionysia, which was recounted each year in the opening procession of the festival, concerns the original refusal of the Athenians to accept the god and his subsequent punishment of them. This punishment took the form of 'impotent potency,' or ithyphallicism; a condition of permanent erection that led to pain, infertility, over-excitation and death.

When considered in light of the political and religious context of the play, together with other aspects of Dionysian cult, many tragedies can be seen to take up the theme of erotic politics. The representation of *eros* in tragedy is almost uniformly transgressive and destructive but not, on account of this, necessarily shameful. I argue that by encouraging identification with characters afflicted by diseased *eros*, tragedy created a fantasy realm for the Athenian in which they could subject their values and norms to scrutiny and exercise darker aspects of their imagination. At the same time, however, the ritual context of tragedy reaffirmed the values and norms of the *polis* and attempted to inculcate democratic ideology and foster civic unity in its participants.

This discussion will conclude the first section of the dissertation. By its close, we will have seen that the ethically ambiguous notion of *eros* was central to ancient political thinking. *Eros* was intimately bound up with Athenian notions of

sexuality and political action; it provided the ideological foundation for ancient democracy; and it lay at the core of the Greek understanding of tyranny. The notion of *eros* was closely related to the Greek understanding of power, which obviously had implications for their international politics, especially in terms of war and imperialism. Tragedy explores these topics, which were crucially important to the Athenians and in their broader sense remain central to the discipline of International Relations today.

In the second part of the dissertation, I turn my attention to Thucydides' *History* and attempt to bring the insights gleaned from earlier chapters to bear on it.

Many scholars have shown in great detail that *eros* plays an important but widely misunderstood role in Thucydides' *History*. In Chapters Four through Six, I attempt to consolidate their arguments while adding a number of my own.

Eros appears a number of crucial junctions in the *History*. The first of these is Pericles' Funeral Oration, in which Pericles constructs a model of citizenship based on the relationship between the pederastic lover and his beloved (a relationship which is an allusion to the love of the 'tyrannicides'). This is the focus of Chapter Four. Here, I discuss in depth the ideational parameters of Pericles' metaphor of 'the lover of the city,' arguing that this model requires war and the death of citizens in battle to reach its logical fulfilment. It was, as such, very volatile and liable to become undone, which it was in fact to do during the Athenians' disastrous expedition to conquer Sicily.

In Chapter Five, I argue that both Nicias and Alcibiades (two important political figures in Athens after Pericles' death) are implicated in Thucydides' narrative of the catastrophic Sicilian expedition (which many consider the clearest reflection of Thucydides' debt to tragic drama). In the Athenian tragedy, if we can call it that, all alike are afflicted by human weakness; their follies combine with unfortunate circumstance to produce complete disaster. However, Thucydides appears to conclude that Alcibiades was Athens' best hope in the war, and he sug-

gests that by following unnamed demagogues in recalling Alcibiades for trial on trumped up charges the Athenians proved themselves their own worst enemies. If anybody was to blame for the disaster that struck the people of Athens, it was the Athenian *demos* itself.

The tragedy of Athens, Thucydides seems to suggest, lies more in the repetition of the behaviour manifest in the community's mythical mistreatment of the god Dionysus than in the personalities and leadership of either Alcibiades or Nicias. Alcibiades is capable of unifying the city and leading it to victory, and this he eagerly desires to do – on the sole provision that his (own self-estimated) worth is fully recognised. Like Dionyus and Pericles, he is the individual most capable of arousing – and curing – the *eros* of his city. But when his people refuse to honour him and instead turn against him, he ruthlessly engineers their ruin.

In Chapter Six, I examine the 'erotic theory of politics' that is espoused by the mysterious Diodotus in the Mytilenean Debate. In his speech, Diodotus claims that all men have at the root of their consciousness an insolent and violent erotic impulse that will stop at nothing to achieve its aims. *Eros* is the egg from which humanity's political dreams hatch; hope and fortune feed these dreams and are what eventually turn them into nightmares. I argue that this theory, which can only be considered tragic, is shared by both Diodotus and Thucydides himself. This chapter will conclude the second section of this dissertation.

Chapter Seven compares some of the erotic elements of Thucydides' text with similar ideas expressed in Plato's well-known dialogue, the *Symposium* (and in particular, with the ideas expressed by Aristophanes in the speech attributed to him there). There are three elements of Aristophanes' speech that stand out in this regard: first, an emphasis on homoerotic love as the basis of virile democratic politics; second, the idea that *eros* as the means to reunite with 'what is our own' and to achieve a wholeness that is politically potent but at the same time linked to death; and, third, the suggestion of a web of ambition, criminality, and

violence in which those afflicted by *eros* finds themselves inextricably caught. This discussion helps to understand the connections between the tragic *eros* found in Thucydides' *History* and the conception of power in the work of Hans Morgenthau, insofar as the *Symposium* acts as a kind of intellectual stepping-stone between these authors and their texts.

In Chapter Eight, I leap forward some two and a half thousand years to consider Hans Morgenthau's thoughts on the relationship between love and power. In this regard, Morgenthau owes a great debt to the ancients. Before elaborating on this claim, I describe the intellectual and political context in which Morgenthau composed his texts. While a wide variety of authors influenced Morgenthau's overall political philosophy, his concept of the *animus dominandi*, which is so central to his theory, is indebted not only to authors such as Nietzsche and Freud, but also to the classical discourse on *eros* that these other thinkers themselves drew upon. Part of the reason this is the case, I argue, can be traced to the volatile historical circumstances in which Morgenthau found himself.

Following this I examine some of Morgenthau's comments on freedom and democracy. I argue that although Morgenthau does not explicitly employ erotic terminology when talking about these issues, the concepts and reasoning that he uses are on closer examination remarkably similar to those we find in his understudied thoughts on love and power. This discussion will draw out some of the ways in which Morgenthau's thoughts on love and power relate to his general political philosophy. It will also place us in a position to examine the theme of tragedy in Morgenthau's work and its relation to the same in Thucydides.

In Chapter Nine, I detail the connections that exist between Morgenthau's thoughts on love and power and the theme of tragedy in his broader oeuvre. I argue that, for Morgenthau, international politics boils down to the dichotomy between love and the lust for power and their root in the loneliness that defines the human soul. This is because these phenomena are what create the urge for society and as a result give birth to all political orders, whatever scope and level

of complexity they eventually come to possess. The tragedy of international politics is only a larger manifestation of the fundamental tragedy of man; through the process of collective identification, the individual's lust for power is transferred onto the nation and reproduces its dynamics on a much grander scale.

I then consider the ways in which Morgenthau's philosophy relates to Thucydides' *History*. Although Morgenthau draws mostly upon the Platonic corpus for direct inspiration on love and the will to power as responses to man's existential loneliness, he and Thucydides construct remarkably similar accounts of erotic politics due to their shared discursive setting in tragedy. Morgenthau found in Thucydides a philosophical forebear whose shared understanding of the basic elements of human behaviour made selectively quoting from the *History* seem a natural and legitimate exercise. Thucydides' insights and emphases, furthermore, confirmed Morgenthau's own.

In Chapter Ten, I conclude the dissertation by summarizing my findings and outlining the broader implications of the thesis for IR. I will also suggest some avenues for further research.

Before continuing it is necessary to say a few words on method. This has been a thoroughly interdisciplinary project, and I have not been hermeneutically dogmatic in undertaking it; my reading of historical texts is not 'Freudian,' nor 'Constructivist,' nor determined by any other kind of -ism. This being said, there are some significant influences on my work, which will undoubtedly shine through. The first of these has been noted above, namely the work of Quentin Skinner and of the Cambridge School more generally. The anthropology of Clifford Geertz and his intellectual descendants factors heavily, especially in the first two sections of the dissertation. Finally, when interpreting texts and in describing the historical links between them I have often utilised the literary theory of Stanley Fish, and in particular his idea of 'interpretive communities.'

Without having the training of a philologist or classicist, in my discussions of

the ancients I have often had to rely on the work of those who have. Given the various and often conflicting theoretical and methodological perspectives these scholars take, in terms of its eclecticism my reliance upon them may seem somewhat troublesome. Nevertheless, when selecting and presenting evidence from the vast store of material available I have endeavoured to ensure that this evidence is not decontextualised or 'contraindicated.' When using ancient sources I have stuck to the same rule and drawn on those authors who were roughly contemporaneous with the periods under discussion (namely the archaic and classical). Where sources of a later date are used, I have, to the best of my knowledge, made note of this.

CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections. I begin the first by outlining the contours of sexuality in ancient Greece, which was closely bound up with relations of power and the construction of gender. I then discuss the representation of *eros* in poetry, religion and philosophy and in light of these consider the psychophysiological dynamics of *eros*, which include not only appetitive but also affective and aesthetic components. I then examine representations of extrasexual *eros* (that is, *eros* applied to non-human objects), which are usually found in political contexts.

In Section Two, I investigate the role of *eros* in classical Athenian political discourse and practice – what I call 'erotic politics.' Firstly, I provide a brief history of pre-democratic Athens. Archaic Athens was plagued by violent competition between aristocratic clans; this rivalry was eventually quashed by the institution of a tyranny which brought peace and prosperity to the city. This dynasty was later attacked by a pederastic couple composed of a middle-class man named Aristogeiton and his aristocratic younger beloved, Harmodius. The attempt at tyrannicide failed, but it initiated a sequence of events that eventually toppled the regime and ushered in a new form of political organization: *demokratia*. In the new democracy, both the tyrannicides and the figure of 'the tyrant' became central to the democracy's self-definition in the ideological function they had as positive and negative models of political activity.

Section One: Love and Society in Ancient Greece

(i) *Sexuality in Ancient Greece*

For the Greeks – or so Aristotle would have us believe – the distinction of sex was "a first principle" (*GA.* 2). The one fundamental difference between male and female human beings was thought to hold also in the difference between

reason and appetite, light and darkness, limit and the unlimited, unity and plurality, straight and crooked, good and bad, Uranus and Gaea; in all of these instances, Aristotle says, "the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject" (Aristot. *Pol.* 1.1252b). Masculine and feminine principles were, in other words, embedded in the cosmos; the universe was thoroughly gendered, and where 'Man' stood for activity, reason and the generation of form, 'Woman' was that which was passive, emotional and the material to be moulded. These beliefs were encouraged by, not least because they were embedded in, the Greek language and its fondness for gender distinctions.

These distinctions were, unsurprisingly, also expressed in sexual terms. In Athens, sexuality did not fully conform to the modern dichotomy of homo- and heterosexuality or even, on some readings, to the belief that sex is a collective enterprise. Rather, Athenian sexuality incorporated and, some scholars argue, was fundamentally structured by the same masculine emphasis upon activity and domination that characterised Athenian social life in general (Winkler 1990a). To some extent this should be expected; as R. W. Connell notes, "masculinities as cultural forms cannot be abstracted from sexuality, which is an essential dimension of the social creation of gender" (1993: 602).

Building upon the arguments of Michel Foucault, who himself drew heavily on the seminal work of the renowned classicist K. J. Dover, scholars such as David Halperlin contend that in classical Athens sexual objects came in two different kinds, albeit not male and female but rather masculine and feminine, active and passive, aggressive and submissive (1986: 39). The sexual deed was considered an action that one person performed upon another, the primary meaning of which was located in the penetration of a 'passive' body (either male or female) by an 'active' body (invariably male). In Halperlin's words:

> Different social actors had different social roles: to assimilate both
> the superordinate and the subordinate member of a sexual relation-

ship to the same "sexuality" would have been as bizarre, in Athenian eyes, as classifying a burglar as an "active criminal," his victim as a "passive criminal," and the two of them alike as partners in crime – it would have been to confuse what, in reality, were supposedly separate and distinct identities. (1989: 261)

Sexuality, on this account, was therefore a largely (if not exclusively) masculine phenomenon in ancient Greece. 'Sex' was something that was done *by* one person *to* another; it was an activity, restricted to sexual actors (e.g. men). Feminine sexuality, if it could be called such, was "objectless, passive, and entirely determined by the female body's need for regular phallic irrigation" (quoted in Bassi 1998: 109). Given that at Athens it was the sole prerogative of the free adult male to initiate sexual activity, sexuality there was enmeshed with, if not fully representative of, the androcentric social configurations of power that defined the Athenian *polis*. In light of this, Halperlin defines sexuality in Greece as essentially 'phallic', that is, as a "generalized ethos of penetration and domination, a socio-sexual discourse structured by the presence or absence of its central term: the phallus" (1986: 40).

Many cultural artefacts and representations suggest that this was indeed the case. On Attic vases displaying male-female sexual scenes, for example, women are represented "almost invariably in a 'subordinate' position, the man 'dominant'; the woman bent over or lying back and supported, the man upright or on top" (Dover 1978: 101). Even in those instances in which physical penetration was absent, as was urged to be the case in pederastic relationships between men and boys (in Athens, at least), the act remained polarised; the individual who put part of his body (e.g. his thighs) at the service of another's pleasure would be deemed the passive partner of the pair. Artistic representations of pederastic partnerships show the junior partner as nearly always sexually inert, which reflected the widespread belief that youths should yield to their lovers out of a

mixture of gratitude, friendly affection and respect. Anything more than this, and particularly any erotic response, would have suggested a willingness on behalf of the youth to play the role of a woman or a slave. This, of course, detracted from which that made him attractive to his lover in the first place: his budding manliness (Ludwig 2002: 52). It was for this reason that intercrural intercourse was the culturally favoured means of gratification for active lovers of youths, for it spared the boy the shame of penetration and thereby maintained his proto-masculinity and thus his erotic allure.

The close conceptual relation of male sexual organs and *hubris* also seems to lend support to the 'phallic' model of sexuality. Pindar, for example, spoke of the 'erect *hubris*' of donkeys, and other texts mention that *hubris* in stallions and bulls could be excised via castration (Csapo 1997: 260). In Plato's *Timaeus*, we are told that "in men the nature of the genital organs is disobedient and self-willed, like a creature that is deaf to reason, and it attempts to dominate all because of its frenzied lusts" (91b). This description is reformulated by Socrates' characterization of *hubris* as a disobedient stallion in the *Phaedrus*. As we shall see in more depth in the following part of this chapter, its logic is also implicit in Aristotle's advice to despots who have committed sexual *hubris* against their subjects. Male genitalia were, as it were, a microcosm of men.

While the 'phallic' line of analysis generates valuable insights, some of its advocates are prone to making serious exaggerations. To maintain that sexual desire is "merely a construct, even a modality of power" (Wohl 2002: 127), for example, or simply "a reflection of the dominant themes in contemporary social relations" (Halperlin 1986: 40), is to rely on a grossly reductive view of culture and sexuality that makes "a bleak political cartoon" (Paglia 1991: 141) of classical Athens and nonsense of human biology.

For while sexuality was, in classical Athens as elsewhere in time and space, socially conditioned, this fact does not invalidate the possibility (or indeed the li-

kelihood) that social norms were themselves affected by the innate psychological and physiological tendencies of individuals, whatever cultural baggage they may have inherited from their societies (Reddy 1997). At least many Athenians believed this to be the case; sexual desire was considered by many to be an appetite largely akin to thirst or hunger; something basic, inborn and biological that men shared in common with the animals. This was not all fantasy, of course, and modern scientific research has made significant strides in demonstrating the various ways in which biological factors such as genes and hormones affect sexual desire (e.g. Okami et al. 2004).

But more importantly, the issue has as much to do with the obsessional Greek concern with self-control (and its lack) as it does with patterns of dominance and submission during sexual intercourse and the social structures these reflected (Davidson 1997). Bruce Thornton contends that the Greeks believed that a man who indulged his sexual appetites (of which being penetrated was considered one of the most lascivious and bestial) so indiscriminately and excessively that he incurred social opprobrium thereby is "shameless not so much because he has acted the part of a woman or slave or 'other,' but because he has given in to the itch of pleasure, has ignored the controls that limit the destructiveness of appetite, the controls without which the Greek versions of civilization and political order, indeed human identity itself, cannot survive" (2000: 158). In other words, being penetrated was considered a pleasure like others, albeit a pleasure that was particularly lewd and hence particularly subject to discipline.

Certainly, artistic representations of satyrs – whose mythical existence as donkey- and goat-men lingered just beyond the bounds of the civilised *polis*, at the frontiers of wild nature – support such an argument. The exaggerated genitalia and ithyphallic nature of these creatures suggests a boundless sexual energy masculine in nature but in its intensity and permanence more bestial than human. Satyrs are also often represented as playing a 'passive' role in sex or self-stimulation; they seem very happy to be penetrated by animals, other satyrs, dil-

dos and dildo-like objects such as phallus-birds. Furthermore, satyrs are insatiable in their appetites for food, wine, and sleep. In light of this, it seems that willingly submitting to anal penetration is not what marks satyrs out as grotesque counter-models of man, as necessarily 'unmanly'; what marks them out as such is their general bestial licentiousness. What we see in the representation of satyrs, in other words, is the imagined influence of the animal in man, packaged as a catalogue of the ways in which lasciviousness and excess – whether expressed in drinking, eating, sleeping, or the ins and outs of sex – can distort, devalue and eventually destroy the civilised order (Lissarague 1990; Padgett 2000).

To give an example from the real world of the *polis*, when a male adulterer was caught (if not in the act, when he could be killed) he would be subject to a lasting public humiliation in the form of having a large radish or spiny fish inserted into his anus, before an assembled crowd of fellow citizens, by the man whose wife he had seduced. Such a punishment seems somewhat random when seen through the lens of 'phallic' sexuality, insofar as the adulterer, though a criminal, always remained 'dominant' and 'active' in terms of his sexual 'role.' However, as Thornton suggests, this bizarre practice becomes comprehensible if we accept that it reflects the idea that "anyone who is so sexually driven that he would risk death and shame when relief [… at the hands of a prostitute] could be had for a pittance, is an uncontrolled compulsive on par with the pathic – so let his anus reflect that equality" (2000: 160). We might then say that, like the satyr, the (apprehended) adulterer is both ithyphallic and anally receptive; like the satyr, that contemptuous slave to his pleasures, the adulterer is a laughing stock and a warning for the whole community because of this.

Although Thornton does not consider how the symbolic sexual aggression, or *hubris*, that the adulterer committed against a married woman's husband (insofar as she was essentially his property and thus an extension of his person) may have shaped the punishment in this case (cf. Cohen 1991), we would neverthe-

less be well-advised to follow his advice to steer clear of the structural myopia of the 'phallic' model of Greek sexuality and to pay more attention to the psychologies of Athenian men and the ethics by which they tried to regulate their behaviour (especially their sexual behaviour) (Nussbaum 1990: 62).

Consider the fact that courage (*andreia*), along with wisdom, moderation and self-mastery (*sophrosune*), were cardinal virtues of Athenian manhood (and, hence, citizenship) (Loraux 1993). *Andreia* is etymologically derived from the Greek term for 'real man' (*aner*) and given this, Dimitra Kokkini notes, the correlation between maleness and courage became "so deeply rooted in the ancient Greek mentality that the combination of women and courage [was] regarded as both linguistically paradoxical and as extremely rare" (Kokkini 2010: 32; cf. Balot 2004).

Self-mastery and moderation, furthermore, were the root of *andreia*, as Aristotle suggests in his discussion of war as the ultimate test of courage (*Nic. Eth.* 1115a), and rationality was a natural component of self-mastery of moderation. Thus, Euripides suggests, "rashness in a leader causes failure; the sailor of a ship is calm, wise [*sophos*] at the proper time. Foresight too, makes manly courage [*tandreion*]" (*Supp.* 508-510). 'Man,' in other words, was considered that deliberative and reasoning faculty of the subject that controlled and directed its quantum of 'Woman,' the various emotions and bodily appetites. As John Winkler notes, "'woman' [was] not only the opposite of man; she [was] also a potentially threatening 'internal émigré' of masculine identity" (1990b: 182). Some men were believed to be manlier than others, while other males were not even really 'men.' The qualities generally considered central to citizenship were, in sum, the same as those that defined a man; self-indulgence, rashness and passion were their less admired feminine counterparts, and had no place to play in politics.

This would explain why both the 'active' adulterer and the 'passive' homosexual could be considered, in light of their sexual excesses, essentially feminine creatures despite the marked differences in their sexual roles and practices. Contra Thornton, men who willingly played a passive role in sex *were* indeed considered more irrational than others when they were penetrated, because only more irrational and beastlike beings (such as women or the mythical satyrs) were thought capable of degrading themselves by engaging in such wanton behaviour. Allowing oneself to be penetrated marked one out as fundamentally unmanly; it was a cultural marker of lasciviousness and femininity, which were conceptually linked with irrationality and poor decision-making skills. But the same was true of men who penetrated others willy-nilly, without regard for laws, personal property and other civic boundaries; they, too, were considered feminine, not because they took the passive role in sex (they obviously did not) but because they were constantly prone to indulge their desires in the gross manner thought characteristic of women. As Martha Nussbaum observes, to indulge such genital lust so freely and completely "is already to be in the process of getting fucked – by one's own appetites, by the control of women's (or young men's) allure, by life itself" (2005: 167). Whether it concerned active or passive sexual behavior, in sum, the unrestrained pursuit of sexual pleasure, like any other pleasure, was considered a feminine and thus a politically negative attribute. As such, it received no welcome in the masculine world of the *polis*.

As the preceding discussion has made clear, considerations of power, gender and status within the hierarchical structure of the *polis* as well as individual psychology are important for building an understanding of Greek sexuality, and in particular the role of genital desire in it. But they alone are not sufficient, for this discourse of sexuality takes place largely without reference to *eros* in its emotional (rather than genital) aspects. A discussion of *eros* is crucial if we are to gain a complete picture of Greek sexuality. It is to such discussion that we now turn.

(ii) Eros, *Sexuality and Society*

Monica Cyrino observes that "the lyric poets of the Greek Archaic Age viewed the experience of erotic desire as a potentially destructive force: their poems develop a long and varied series of metaphors to portray eros as a power often hostile and even pathological to the sufferers of love" (1996: 371). Anacreon, for example, compares *eros* to a champion boxer, a blacksmith hammering the hot iron of his body, and the fever and chills of a sickness; Alcaius, Pindar and Ibycus liken the state of being in love to one of fitful madness; Theocritus sings about Eros having sucked out his blood; Archilochus, harking back to Homer, evokes the image of the lover as a dying warrior whose flesh is pierced by sharp weapons; and Sappho describes the fire under the skin and the painful ringing of the ears of the love-struck, who is unable to listen to reason, her senses stunned (Cyrino 1996; Carson 1998; Faraone 1999). Other metaphors included "crushing, bridling, roasting, stinging, biting, grating, cropping, poisoning, singeing and grinding to a powder" (Carson 1998: 41). Similar images can be found also in tragedy, where, among other terrible things, Eros is a "tyrant of men" (Eur. *Hipp.* 538) who remains "unconquered in battle" (Soph. *Ant.* 780).

We should pause to appreciate the fact that these images, which have become somewhat clichéd and powerless in modern times, were immediate and visceral to the Greeks (Thornton 1997: 17-8). Ancient boxing, for example, had no padded gloves and no protective headgear; a well-placed punch from a skilled and strong opponent could break a rib, a nose, a tooth or a jaw – it might even knock a person unconscious or kill him. There were, in the case of madness, no sanatoriums, psychiatrists or anti-psychotics; lunacy was an indefatigable possession by a god or demon or some other occult force that often singled a person out for harassment, persecution and sometimes destruction by the community. Battle was always looming, and an arrow, appearing out of nowhere, could easily find a gap in a soldier's armour, pierce his flesh and lodge its barbed head in his lung or intestines; removing it was difficult and dangerous as the wounds were prone

to infection, which carried all the associated risks of gangrene, septicaemia and hyperpyrexia. Other weapons of war melted skin, severed limbs, spliced organs, cracked skulls and crushed bones; and as there were no antibiotics, no chemical ointments or painkillers, often enough the burned, broken and bleeding were forced to die or recover in a state of agonising pain.

Conventional Greek syntax is in keeping with these unhappy poetic metaphors and compounds the psychology of *eros* as domination. *Eros* as a noun tends to force itself upon people; it carries them away; it is very much a *passion*, something that happens *to* people, not because of them or as a function of their will. The word is often employed together with the verb *damazo*, for example, which in Homer *"*is used to describe the breaking of a horse, a warrior killing another, and the sexual subjection of a young girl to her husband" (Thornton 1997: 15). Plato regularly speaks of the lover as enslaved by his desires, a figure of speech likely to have been a reflection of popular usage (Golden 1984: 314), and Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides all speak of the way in which *eros* falls upon or grabs hold of people, against their will or acknowledged best interests. So too did those authors with more clearly political concerns, including Isocrates, Aeschines and, as we will later see in much depth, Thucydides.

Eros, in sum, robs the individual of "limbs, substance, integrity and leaves the lover, essentially, less" (Carson 1998: 32). Given this fact, Bruce Thornton says with some cheek, "we must not think of our Valentine's Day chubby babes with their 'weak, childish bows,' as Shakespeare put it, when we encounter [this kind of] imagery in Greek literature. Imagine instead Eros brandishing an Uzi like some sexual Rambo or diapered Terminator, and we might get closer to the impact of the image for the Greeks" (1997: 29).

Thornton's point is important to note insofar as "to sing of love was not only to represent erotic desire but also to establish it as a social practice" (Calame 1999: 6). As Douglas Cairns observes:

the labelling of an emotion in a given culture can make all the difference as to what the emotion actually is, and so, when infant members of a culture acquire their emotional repertoire and vocabulary, what they learn is not (or not solely) how to label discrete psychological experiences, but how to recognize the situations which their culture considers appropriate to particular concatenations of evaluation, feeling and behaviour. (1993: 10)

Beyond poetry, *eros* was represented as a primordial force of nature upon which life itself depended. The desire for copulation that it stoked in (almost) every living creature was considered a fundamental biological urge, akin in many regards to thirst or hunger. In the *Laws*, for example, Plato postulates the existence of three basic appetites, which relate to drink, food and sex. Of these lusts, *eros* is described as the keenest. In his *Republic*, *eros* is characterised more negatively, as a tyrannical drone that directs the manifold variety of other bodily desires in their assault on the rational mind. The sophists and other philosophers likewise tended to impose a degree of conformity on the various desires by grouping them all together under the rubric of *eros* (Ludwig 2002: 121).

That *eros* was an immense, if not omnipotent, power, that it was almost unavoidable in the course of a normal life, and that it was essentially rooted in the world of the animals meant that man was always under threat of becoming bestialised by it. But although it was inextricably sexual and common to all creatures, *eros* was a great deal more than just a sexual appetite that reduced man to the level of the beasts; it was as much a function of the mind as it was of the body.

This claim can be substantiated in a number of ways. The first lies in the fact that although animals obviously experience sexual desire, they are (or were thought to be) incapable of displaying, at least to the same degree as humans, a number of specific affective components of *eros*. Animals such as dogs, for example, were recognised as being capable of maternal love and affection for

their masters, but they were not considered able to express the complex of qualities and behaviours that the Greeks would call erotic (and which we might today ascribe to a person who has 'fallen in love' with someone else). Such qualities and behaviours might include exaggerated esteem for the beloved, daydreaming and fantasising, obsession, devotion, tenderness, great care, jealousy, an increase in energy, a new sense of daring and generosity, a willingness to fight and sacrifice for the beloved, giddiness in his or her presence, and so on (cf. Konstan 2013; Dover 2003; Ludwig 2002).

The institution of marriage, based on dowries and political alliances as it primarily was, was in most instances more practical and in many instances likely less erotically intense than were pederastic sexual relationships. Nevertheless, marriage still incorporated erotic desire into its fold. The most obvious and important instantiation of this was in its role in the production of legitimate children, which was an important civic and familial duty. For married men, sex was considered a form of work comparable to ploughing the fields; it was thought that by means of erotic labour, "the Greek husband domesticates his wild bride and, just as he does for his land and the beasts on it, brings to fruition what would otherwise remain savage and unproductive" (Carson 1990: 149). Through wedlock, the wantonness presumed natural to women could be channelled and made politically useful; their insatiable *eros* was yoked by their husbands to produce new citizen stock for the good of the gods, the family and the community. "In the classical Greek representation of conjugal union, the – in effect essential – function of reproduction thus depends directly upon the intervention of Eros and the fulfilment of love on a shared bed" (Calame 1999: 124). But the affective dimensions of *eros* were not entirely absent from (the ideal) marriage; support, affection, and trust were valued attributes in both husband and wife.

But, at least according to the records, the full breadth of human *eros* was most pronounced in the context of pederasty. Here, Plato tells us, men behaved in ways that, if done for any other reason other than erotic love, "would reap the

most profound contempt" (*Symp.* 183a). This is because many a Greek lover would act like a drunkard, a dog, or a slave:

> [He] followed his beloved about everywhere, sometimes spent the night in front of his house, serenaded him, composed verses and songs in his honour, carved his name on walls, doors and trees, hung up garlands of leaves or flowers, like religious offerings, in his porch, and sent him all kinds of presents, such as fruit, a bag of knuckle-bones, a cock, a hare or a dog, as well as painted vases on which the artist had been instructed to engrave the boy's name, followed by the adjective *kalos*, 'fair.' (Flaceliere 1962: 58)

The reason such affection, rooted in animalistic genital desire though it was, did not reap such 'profound contempt' seems to be that it helped to generate and fertilise a number of positive political outcomes. In homoerotic contexts, *eros* inspired a man to exercise with and train his beloved in the gymnasium, to school him in poetry and philosophy, to fight bravely and act honourably in front of him, and generally to invest a great deal of time, effort, and care into guiding his physical and psychological development. All of this contributed to preparing the youth for his future life as a warrior and citizen (Percy III 1996; Ludwig 2002).

Not only did the beloved receive attentive tutoring in a variety of important spheres of public life, however, but the feats to which the lover was spurred by his wish to impress the object of his desire (in order to capture that youth's affections) would, ideally, act as an example for the youth himself to follow (and, if possible, outdo). As a result, both the lover and the beloved would (so it was hoped) continue to grow together in a virtuous spiral upwards (Ludwig 1996: 541). Thus the pair *and* also city were thought to reap great benefit from such relationships (a point to which the speakers in Plato's *Symposium* attest).

Claude Calame rightly concludes that "whenever it is a matter of educating future citizens or of introducing their wives into their roles as fully developed

women," in ancient Athens erotic desire played a central role in "the institutions designed to facilitate the passage to adult life, in order to produce a sexuality that is at once controlled and productive" (1999: 130). It must be emphasised that this 'eroticised' sexuality was significantly different from the phallic model we have discussed above. Erotic relationships – and particularly homoerotic relationships, which, due to their centrality to the politics of ancient Athens, are our primary concern here – were imbued with more than just the social codes of power; sex and sexual passion were not always rapacious, oppressive and predatory, as the phallic model tends to portray them as being. While elements of this 'socio-sexual discourse' certainly persisted, and the possibility of shame and exploitation constantly lurked in the background of all erotic relationships, a great variety of affective behaviours considered inherent to *eros* were available to the lover to shield and protect his beloved from the defilements associated with the appetitive aspects of this phenomenon. Martha Nussbaum summarises the issue well:

> On the one hand, *eros* is beneficent, showing a tender regard for the young man's personality and his education; on the other hand, it is characterized by strong genital desire, which … is a source of madness and distraction, a force that disrupts reasoning and threatens virtue, but if it threatens virtue, it also seems to threaten, inevitably, the good conduct of the lover toward his partner. Nor can we even cleanly separate these two tendencies in *eros*, for it would appear (according, again, to deeply entrenched popular ideas) that the very madness and distraction in the lover that put virtue most at risk are among the sources of his generosity to the beloved … [Hence, what] is at stake in sex is not only one's own self-mastery, but also the well-being, happiness, and ethical goodness of another. (2002: 55-8)

These ethical questions were compounded by the fact that, as has been noted, *eros* was considered a kind of possession by a force that originated from beyond the deliberative self. *Eros* was an assault on the rational mind that was difficult, if not impossible, to successfully combat; indeed, it was an invasion that even the Zeus himself could not resist. This belief apparently diminished the ethical responsibility of the actor who fell under the sway of erotic passion and committed outrage because of it. If a person was consumed by a passion as powerful and ethically hazardous as *eros*, many Greeks seemed to believe that his culpability for any wrongdoing done in the name of it should be mitigated. Such wrongdoing was, after all, done against his will, or at least without his rational consent.

A brief example from Aristotle's *Politics* helps to illustrate the point. Here, Aristotle advises tyrants to refrain from committing two common types of *hubris* – violence against free men and sexual abuse of their children (1315a15-28). These are the offences that he believes are most likely to cause civil disturbance and *stasis*, on account of the fury they cause in the families of the dishonoured victims and the desire for vengeance that this breeds.

Importantly, when discussing *hubris* as sexual exploitation, Aristotle suggests that the ruler who fails to heed his initial advice to refrain from it altogether should at least pretend that his crime was committed under the influence of *eros*, and to make good on his trespass by granting public honours to his victims. Doing so will help reduce the risk that the children's families will seek revenge against him.

Aristotle makes no suggestion that the sexual exploitation he is discussing must involve physical violence. Indeed, as David Cohen points out, this issue appears to be largely irrelevant. But if this is so, the tyrant's action does not seem out of place in the phallic model of sex; after all, he has not (necessarily) raped the youth, only 'dominated' him or her. But in this case, how are we to understand

Aristotle's advice? Why should a family be so outraged by what we have been led to believe are culturally sanctioned indulgences?

The point seems to be that the tyrant exploits his dominance to gain his pleasure at the expense of the dishonoured youth; if he creates the appearance of acting under passion, however, "though the same implicit coercion might be involved, the attribution of *hubris* is attenuated … If the sexual relation arises merely from an act of power, rather than passion, then it necessarily merely expresses a relation of domination where the boy or girl submits to *hubris* and the disgrace it entails" (Cohen 1995: 146). What it is about *eros* that erases the hubristic quality of the tyrant's conduct, in other words, is the absence of the intent to assert himself and take pleasure in "the infliction of harm, humiliation, or disgrace" (*ibid*.).

Given that the penetration of males (and unmarried females) was in itself considered disgraceful (for the penetrated), the sexual deed could only be excused if it was carried out in the name of *eros*. Instead of merely lusting for sex and the feeling of power it gave, as would the tyrant or lecher, the true lover *cared* for the well-being of his beloved. If sometimes genital desire blinded him to what the interests of his beloved actually were and he ended up wronging his beloved (by penetrating him) because of this, it was the intensity of passion that was to blame, not the lover himself. As Deianara in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* says regarding the love of her husband Heracles for young Iole: "Whoever stands opposed to Eros, with fists clenched like a boxer, does not understand him; for he rules over gods as he desires, and over me. Why not another like me? If I blamed my husband for the passion which has afflicted him, I would be mad" (441-446).

A second distinction between animal and human *eros* is the extent to which the latter is bound up with visual perception. For by taking hold of a person in response to a physical stimulus, which was almost always visual (the eyes, the means to perceive physical beauty, were considered its primary pathway into the

human body) *eros* became, for human beings at least, intricately bound up with aesthetics and value judgment. This is important to note, for two reasons.

First, it further complicates the simplistic picture of sexuality offered by the 'phallic' model. For it might well be asked why, if "the proper objects of [a Greek man's] sexual desire include, specifically, women, boys, foreigners, and slaves" (Halperlin 1986: 39), were only women and particularly adolescent boys idealised by Greek men as beautiful and worthy of erotic attention? Why were adult male slaves and foreigners rarely, if ever, represented as desirable sex partners? As Gloria Ferrari notes, "the effect of classifying sexual partners into two categories – 'active' and 'passive' – is to equate the several diverse targets of a man's attention … Here we face a reductio ad absurdum. If we know any-thing about notions of sexual relations in ancient Greek society, it is that the youth with a citizen's pedigree is a radically different object of love and desire from all others" (2002: 129; cf. Lear and Cantarella 2008).

The second reason to note the role of perception in the experience of *eros* is quite simple, but no less important on account of that. If the phenomenon of *eros* "has its source in perception, which is common to mankind and other animals, it nevertheless involves elements of belief, and hence possibilities of error or mi-sinterpretation, that are specific to human beings" (Konstan 2013: 25). As the Nurse in Euripides' *Hippolytus* says, some people "lust for what is vile" (*kakon erosi*, 358) rather than what is beautiful. In other words, one could be mistaken as to what was beautiful and what was base; it was possible to fall in love with the 'wrong' things. It follows that while perhaps *eros* itself was not amenable to rational control, it was possible to rationally reflect on one's beliefs about the constitution of beauty, to thereby to alter one's conception of the beautiful, and, thus, to deliberately choose the direction in which one's *eros* should be focused. This is precisely the logic that Socrates appeals to in the *Symposium* when he tries to direct his companions' *eros* for earthly things upwards into the realm of

ideas. *Philosophia* – 'love of wisdom' – is practical proof that the *eros* of man, open to the direction of reason as it is, differs from the *eros* of the beasts.

This discussion points us to the final manner in which human *eros* differed from the *eros* of animals. Human *eros* can be extra-sexual. Erotic desire could be experienced by humans in non-sexual contexts towards inanimate objects and, as we have seen, abstractions such as 'wisdom.' Importantly, the objects of *eros* in most of these cases were politically salient.

Homer uses the word *eros* and its cognates to describe the longing for simple things like food and drink. Such usage corresponds with the English term 'desire,' which lacks the power of sexual passion. However, Bruce Thornton points out that Homer's mundane use of the term became much less common over time and by the sixth century the implication of potentially destructive excess, "of overwhelming desire sexual in its intensity, colours the use of eros in what are not sexual situations, creating an effect nearly impossible to duplicate in English" (1997: 14). For the Greeks after Homer, then, "to 'eroticize' a desire is to claim that a generic object is desired with specific intensity" (Ludwig 2002: 128). To *be* specific, the intensity of this longing was of the kind one has for the person with whom one has fallen madly in love. Such desire has the potential, should it obtain its object, to transport the person who feels it to the highest realms of happiness; it is, or at least appears to be, the road to bliss. Yet the emotional heights to which *eros* can carry individuals necessarily have also their depressions, their valleys and chasms.

This eroticizing trend can be seen in archaic lyric poetry, for instance in the poems of Sappho, who speaks of men loving great armies, and Archilochus, who professes that he has no 'great *eros*' for tyranny. Theognis and Pindar likewise employ the term in this sense to other non-human objects, such as money or 'far away things.' Most importantly for our purposes, however, and as we shall see

in more depth in the following chapter, "the tragedians tend to 'eroticize' everything, practically as a requirement of their genre" (Ludwig 2002: 136).

It might be objected that most of these uses are simply poetic embellishments or metaphors. For how can we be sure that the author of any passage pairing *eros* with non-human objects means to express the idea that their subject really feels about, and acts towards, the object in the same way that the subject feels about and acts towards another person with whom he or she is in love? As Paul Ludwig explains, "[t]he difficulty for readers who wish to reduce *eros* … to sexual desire is not to explain how sexual desire could be used metaphorically of so many mundane objects (that would be quixotic), but rather to show any passages in which *eros* conclusively means 'sexual desire' (as opposed to 'desire')" (2002: 126).

This Ludwig admirably manages to do. Herodotus, he notes, in a number of instances in the *Histories* conceptually couples *eros* and tyranny. The most important example of these, for our purposes, is his statement that 'tyranny has many *erastai*.' As Ludwig points out, the primary meaning of *erastes* was the active, older partner in a pederastic relationship (although it could sometimes take on a heterosexual meaning, for example, in adultery, concubinage or, much less commonly, marriage). Thus the word denotes not a feeling but a defined and well-understood social role; to employ it outside of its normal context would immediately and necessarily conjure in the listener's mind the affective (as well as the sexual) components of *eros* along with the social behaviours commonly ascribed to the lover. "The sense of acting out the social role of courting or wooing a political entity (e.g. 'tyranny has many suitors')" is therefore crucial to understanding Herodotos' use of *erastes* in this instance (2002: 148).

But Herodotus was by no means the only Greek to use language in the context of politics in a way that can only be called erotic. Scholars have recently begun to explore how over the course of the fifth century, as the fledgling Athenian

democracy grew into an increasingly tyrannical empire, questions regarding to proper role of *eros* in politics became more and more important to the city's men. We read that "the metaphor of *eros* is remarkably common in the political discourse of classical Athens" (Wohl 2002: 1). Two consistent themes accompanies this metaphor, "in texts ranging from the eleventh Nemean to the *Antigone* to Thucydides' Nicias," – the first being that *eros*, like pride, goes before a fall. The second motif "is the association of *eros* with tyranny" (Ludwig 2002: 153). Politics for the Greeks is "not a separate conceptual area: it is rooted in, and imagined in terms of, a world of natural growth and human relationships" (Buxton 1982: 42) and as such the experience of *eros* on a human level provided the Athenians with "a shared consciousness upon which to ground political discourse, if not always the discourse of politics itself" (Scholtz 2007: 10). For the men of Athens, these scholars suggest, there were enough similarities between politics and sex to make the discourse and indeed, the practice of erotic politics possible – perhaps even logical. In classical Athens, *eros* and power were fundamentally, and inextricably, connected. This leads us to the next part of the chapter, where we will consider the erotic politics of Athens in depth.

Section Two: Tyranny and Democracy in Athens

(i) *Tyranny and the Birth of Democracy*

The word *tyrannis* ('tyranny') was borrowed by the Greeks from a Near Eastern language; its original meaning is thought to have been simply 'monarch' or, more precisely, 'sole ruler.' During the archaic age, the word contained no pejorative overtones (Rosivach 1988). A *tyrannos* ('tyrant'), to the Greeks of that period, was "a kind of miniature, local equivalent of the almost mythical beings who presided over the great kingdoms of the Near East"; all would-be tyrants "fancied themselves hailed someday as the Midas or the Gyges of their respective polis communities" (Anderson 2005: 209). This was recognised by the cultural elite of the day; the poet Xenophanes, for example, "understood tyranny

as the final expression of the competitive ostentation of an Orientalized aristocracy" (Georges 1994: 38).

It was in the pursuit of tyranny that the aristocratic factions of archaic Athens (and elsewhere) constantly fought with each other, using whatever means they could come up with. In the attempt to outmanoeuvre one another and gain supremacy within the community, the noble clans not only employed constructive methods such as the commissioning of buildings, cult and song in honour of the gods and heroes but also less genteel tactics such as murder and mass exile (Anderson 2005; Forsdyke 2000). Weapons were carried openly at this time (under the democracy they would be outlawed in public), which made the situation extremely inflammatory; any insult could result in parties coming to potentially fatal blows, which would lead the members of the different noble clans, following archaic notions of loyalty and honour, to spread the hostility even further throughout society (Ellis and Stanton 1968).

Archaic Athens was consequently plagued by bloody attempts at tyranny and it remained unstable and unprosperous (Finley 1953; French 1956; Ellis and Stanton 1968). In the mid-540s, however, the leader of one clan managed (after two unsuccessful attempts) to establish himself through clever diplomacy, dramatic political pageantry and force of arms as the sole ruler of Athens (Boardman 1975; Connor 1987a). This man's name was Pisistratus.

Plutarch tells us that, long before Pisistratus had made an attempt at power, the great mediator Solon perceived the man's character and detected his tyrannical designs. "He did not, however, treat him as an enemy, but tried to soften and mould him by his instructions. He actually said to him and to others that if the desire for pre-eminence could but be banished from his soul, and his eager passion for the tyranny be cured, no other man would be more naturally disposed to virtue, or a better citizen" (Plut. *Sol*. 29.3).

Solon's instructions fell on deaf ears. However, the reign of Pisistratus was not as vicious as Solon had feared it would be. In fact, the tyrant worked hard to narrow the political distinction between the aristocrats and the *demos*. He did this by fostering an identification of the citizenry as a whole and the state (as it was manifest, of course, in his person), and in the traditional manner of aristocratic self-aggrandisement – that is, by sponsoring major building programs and initiating or restructuring several major cults and celebrations, such as the Panathenaia (Ober 1989: 43-4).

As Pericles Georges notes, tyrants "sought a monopoly of prestige and unchallengeable power by purchase, which began with mercenaries but ended necessarily with shrines and festivals to the gods. To gain the gods as allies, great temples rose everywhere in this age" (1994: 43-4). One of Pisistratus' most important acts in this regard was the warm welcome he extended to the priests of Dionysus – a god who made no distinction between slave and master and accepted all who spoke Greek into his worship – and the institutionalisation of the tragedies that were performed as part of a yearly festive competition in his honour (Nellhaus 1989; West 1989; Rhodes 2003). The tyrant's promotion of this 'god of the people' likely helped to direct religious attention away from the religion of the hearth and the hero-cults promoted by the various noble clans towards a more democratic celebration that was open even to (Greek-speaking) slaves; it suggested that the *polis* was their 'real' family (Knight 1943; Ober 1989; Whitley 1994).

Under the tyranny of Pisistratus, song culture was promoted, refugee poets and artisans from Ionia (then under attack by the Persians) were given sanctuary, merchants and traders were encouraged to set up business, black figure pottery exploded as an export, monetarisation progressed rapidly, and Athens, internally, became peaceful and prosperous. The support of the people that Pisistratus en-

joyed made sure that his rivals, should they attempt to oust him, would have had to face not only the tyrant's aristocratic supporters but also the opposition of the masses who had come to enjoy the relative peace and prosperity that his rule had given them (Podlecki 1966: 133):

> [While] the masses had no more real power than before, the effective control by elites of their "clients" must have declined as the tyrant worked to weaken the hold of deferential behavior patterns, publicly humiliated his enemies, and emphasized ideological bonds that cut across class lines. … Mass awe for the elite was being replaced by awe for the state. The state was, on one level, Pisistratus the benevolent tyrant and on another level, "The Athenians" – all citizens. The ultimate result was the beginning of … the "civilian self-consciousness" of the Athenian demos. (Ober 1989: 67)

Pisistratus had decisively prevailed over all of his competitors, both by attracting more allies than they and by defeating them in armed confrontation; he had, in short, beaten his aristocratic opponents at their own game. But instead of finding themselves exiled or barred absolutely from public life, many of Pisistratus' former opponents were co-opted to work with and for the tyrant. For many aristocratic Athenians, it seems, living under the tyrant was tolerable; for the majority of commoners, life was very good.

Greg Anderson writes that in the archaic period the authority of tyrants was "not so much unconstitutional as extra-constitutional. Forged in the uniquely superheated furnace of mainstream political competition in the archaic Greek polis, a *tyrannis* was 'normal' leadership in its most amplified form, conventional de facto authority writ large" (2005: 202). Nowhere was this more so than in Athens at the time of Pisistratus. Both Thucydides and Herodotus confirm this; according to the latter, Pisistratus ruled "neither disturbing existing rights nor

changing the laws; using what was already in place, he controlled the city, ordering it well and attractively" (Hdt. 1.29; cf. Thuc. 6.54.6). In light of this, it could reasonably be argued of Pisistratus that, at the time of his reign, "the feeling the *tyrannos* most commonly stirred in the breasts of others was envy" (Anderson 2005: 204; cf. Dewald 2003).

But the picture of tyranny as the greatest of things was to change. When Pisistratus died (circa 527 B.C.), his eldest son, Hippias, inherited the tyranny. He was supported in his rule by his brother, Hipparchus. The brothers' reign, for the most part, was characterised by the same relatively light-handed manner with which their father had ruled. At the opening festivities of the Panathenaia of 514, however, *nemesis* struck the house of Pisistratus; an aristocratic youth by the name of Harmodius (whose affections Hipparchus had unsuccessfully tried to court) and his adult lover, the commoner Aristogeiton, leapt out of the crowd and stabbed Hipparchus to death.

The accepted explanation for the murder is that, in revenge for the hurt caused by the boy's rejection of his love, Hipparchus insulted Harmodius's sister and thereby initiated a fateful vendetta. Hipparchus, we are told, humiliated the girl at his court in a way that cast doubt upon her sexual integrity as a maiden and on her worthiness as a member of the Athenian community (Thuc. 6.54.3; cf. Lavelle 1986). While trying to avoid a show of force against Harmodius (which, as the abuse of a free male citizen, would have constituted an unmistakable instance of *hubris*) Hipparchus nevertheless deliberately dishonoured the boy's sister and, by extension, her entire family.

Harmodius, feeling outraged, yearned for vengeance. Aristogeiton, meanwhile, was fearful that the tyrant's brother might use his power to take Harmodius from him by force, and wanted to secure his beloved for himself. On Aristogeiton's initiative, therefore, the two began plotting the overthrow of the Pisistratids

(only with Hippias gone could Hipparchus be safely reckoned with). On the day of the planned assassination, however, the two saw Hippias chatting cordially with one of their co-conspirators and concluded that they had been betrayed; in an act of desperation they leapt upon Hipparchus and slew him before they themselves were captured, tortured and killed.

Harmodius and Aristogeiton therefore left the job of freeing the city from tyranny incomplete. In fact, as Herodotus notes, "by killing Hipparchus, they roused up the rest of the Pisistratids and did not at all stop them from ruling as tyrants" (Hdt. 6.123.2). Indeed, after his brother's assassination, Hippias's behaviour became marked by violent paranoia and increasingly brutal repression. But his harsh rule became hated and within a few short years some members of the powerful Alcmaeonid clan, who had left Pisistratid Athens and taken up refuge at Delphi, bribed the oracle there to make a tailored prophecy that they hoped would convince the Spartans to help them overthrow Hippias. The credulous Spartans took the bait, and in 510 invaded Attica despite the fact that the Spartan royal family had extensive *xenia* ('guest-friendship') relations with the Pisistratid tyrants. After initially blundering, the Spartans managed to depose Hippias and sent him, together with his family, into exile at Sigeion, a possession of the Persian Empire. He would return some thirty years later with his Persian hosts at Marathon, where he would be repulsed once and for all.

During Hippias's absence, Athens suffered under the yoke of a repressive Spartan puppet government, descended into civil war, and in the wake of it all introduced a number of radical political reforms. These reforms dismantled the archaic aristocratic stranglehold on power and birthed something that had never been seen before: a 'democracy.' This democracy was political experiment in which all citizens – rich and poor alike – were nominally *isonomos*, 'equals before the law.' All citizens were invited, indeed duty-bound, to participate in the defence, government and economic management of the state. And although

ideological and economic divisions between classes remained, and some (such as the Old Oligarch) even felt themselves to be oppressed by the masses, officially the democracy was, or at least aimed to be, a collective, single unit: it was the *demos* ('the people') which, in rhetoric at least, possessed the *kratos* ('power,' 'strength', 'force') that enabled them to make sovereign decisions about the future of the city. The *eleutheria* ('freedom') that formerly the tyrant alone had claimed now belonged to the whole people, the *demos*. Enjoying *kratos* as it did, the *demos* now also enjoyed real liberty; it was its very own master. This was reflected in the personal freedoms accorded to individual citizens in their day-to-day lives; as Pericles would point out, *eleutheria* was the possession of every citizen. But it was reflected also in the fact that important decisions were made communally; the decisions made at the assembly, in the institution of the *ostrakismos* and in the popular courts were all reflective of a communal will, the will of the *demos*.

(ii) *The* Demos *and the Death of Tyranny*

Under the rule of the *demos*, Harmodius and Aristogeiton were officially considered tyrannicides and hailed as heroes, despite their obvious failure at ridding the city the Pisistratids. Their direct descendants were given free meals, exemption from taxes, and other special privileges; songs were sung in the pair's honour; they received cult honours at their tomb; and bronze statues in their likeness were given a prominent position in the Agora. These statues, which were the first and for almost a century the only ones to be made in the image of individual citizens, summarise the meaning the 'tyrannicides' held for the Athenians (Raaflaub 2003):

> [At] the edge of the orchestra, the meeting-place of the citizens' Assembly … the tyrant-slayers stood not only as praiseworthy heroes but above all as concrete examples of behavior for the citizens dur-

ing the *ekklesia* and the *ostrakismos*. Its paraentic character is particularly evident from the fact that this monument recognizes not a successful achievement but a political attitude … Harmodius and Aristogeiton were supposed to encourage [the Athenians] to embrace the ideology of the tyrannicides. (Hölscher 1998: 160)[3]

What, then, was the ideology expressed by the cult of Harmodius and Aristogeiton? According to Andrew Stewart, the official elevation of this relationship "not only placed the homoerotic bond at the core of Athenian political freedom, but asserted that it and the manly virtues (*aretai*) of courage, boldness, and self-sacrifice that it generated were the only guarantors of that freedom's continued existence" (quoted in Wohl 2002: 5). And indeed, the resistance to tyranny that the pair embodied became enshrined in law, state ritual and daily democratic life: at the beginning of each Assembly meeting, for example, a curse against tyrants was publicly pronounced; the oaths of judges and councillors contained a clause condemning tyranny; laws against tyrannical subversion were enacted; ostracism was institutionalised as a defence against politically overweening individuals; and each year, before the performance of tragedies at the Great Dionysia, a declaration was made announcing a reward for any citizen who managed to kill a tyrant. As Kurt Raaflaub notes, "all this reminded [Athenian citizens] regularly of their civic duty to fight would-be tyrants when and in whatever shape they might appear" (2003: 71).

In this instantiation, the tyrannicide myth clearly worked to encourage the development of communal feeling and values of self-sacrifice among the citizens

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[3] It is doubtful that many of the various interpretations of 'ideology' we find in contemporary political science can have fully applied to the city-states of ancient Greece. This being said, there certainly were conscious efforts, as well as subconscious logics, that helped to generate and shape political attitudes in classical Athens. To avoid confusion, unless otherwise noted I will from this point employ Andrew Scholtz's simple definition of ideology when discussing this phenomenon. At base, Scholtz says, "ideology is … social evaluation expressed through signs" (2007: 7).

of Athens. The motive Harmodius and Aristogeiton had for what they did, as the myth is framed here, was not so much personal as political; with selfless devotion they died on behalf their city and fellow citizens, fighting for freedom and justice for all.

Some scholars, however, argue that the so-called tyrannicides also provided "a model for a particularly democratic mode of sexuality: every Athenian was an Aristogeiton … Through this homosexual relationship, the whole Athenian demos can be imagined as a polity of *erastai*: elite, active, and sexually potent" (Wohl 2002: 8-9). On this view, democratic freedom is "freedom from the sexual, as well as the political, domination of tyrants" (Wohl 2002: 4; cf. Ludwig 2002). Freedom and domination, however, were two sides of the same coin of power; being free, for the Greeks, also meant ruling: over oneself at least and, ideally, over others (Larsen 1962; Hansen 2010).

The citizens of democratic Athens, therefore, were "no longer passive subjects but active participants in the history-making business of public life" (Ober 2003: 219), and in becoming so they appropriated all the privileges and responsibilities denied them under the tyrant. Inherent to these privileges was the right for citizens to rule, to dominate, and, according to Victoria Wohl, to penetrate "as they desire a variety of socially inferior *eromenoi* [beloveds] – boys, women, slaves" (Wohl 2002: 9). Wohl concludes, logically, that "when the people fall in love with a vision of themselves as elite lovers, they also subscribe to a broader elite hegemony" (*ibid*: 10).

Such a view brings to mind the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity,' which is widely understood to mean the patterns of practice that distinguishes and hierarchically rank "the currently most honoured way of being a man" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 832) against not only femininity (practically, those people understood to be women) but also 'deviant' or otherwise subordinate masculinit-

ies (those people understood to be less than men but not women). Hegemonic masculinities do not necessarily have to correspond closely to the lives of everyday men, but they do express "widespread ideals, fantasies, and desires" which provide models of social relations and solutions to social problems (*ibid*: 837; cf. Donaldson 1993). Aristogeiton, it might be argued, came as close as possible to embodying the hegemonic masculinity of fifth-century democratic Athens. As a legendary figure who struggled against domestic tyranny, his life was far removed from that of ordinary fifth-century democrats, but despite this distance the political ideals and personal virtues that he was thought to have expressed helped shape common understandings of what it meant to 'be a man' in democratic Athens (cf. Wohl 2002).

Thucydides, as we will see in greater depth in Chapter Five, certainly lends substantial support for such an argument. The quasi-mythical figure of Aristogeiton, he clearly suggests, provided common Athenians with a heroic figure with whom they easily could, and usually did, identify. Aristophanes, however, suggests that the aristocratic Harmodius (the junior, 'passive' partner in the relationship) was also widely used as a civic model. At lines 631-634 in the *Lysistrata*, for example, the chorus of old men declare that "these women won't set up a tyranny over me, for I'll stand on guard … I'll stand at arms in the Agora beside Aristogeiton: Like this! I'll stand beside him." As Josiah Ober notes, when the chorus sing 'Like this!' we must imagine the men involved mimicking the pose of the Harmodius statue, their right (sword) arms cocked back behind their heads, preparing to deal the 'Harmodius blow' that strikes the tyrant dead. Thus, on Aristophanes' account, the model democratic defender was as much Harmodius as Aristogeiton (2003: 217). Harmodius complicates the idea of Aristogeiton as the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity at Athens, however, insofar as his own proto-masculine qualities compete with those of his lover. In short, although certain aspects of masculinity at Athens – such as the warrior ethos – were non-negotiable, masculine identity was hardly monolithic or simple.

Ultimately, however, with which partner of the relationship and their respective masculinity each and every citizen identified is not so much the issue here. This issue, rather, is that the myth of Harmodius and Aristogeiton "operated to show Athenians how private *eros* could provide a path to public deeds, that is, how an erotic relationship could be, and properly should be, politicized" (Ludwig 2002: 161). In other words, although "Athenian citizens interpreted [the tyrannicide figures] differently, [… the myth] represented crucial civic values that were shared by the entire community, such as responsibility, equality (*isonomia*, celebrated in the 'Harmodius Song'), and collaboration across age groups" (Raaflaub 2003: 63). The love of Harmodius and Aristogeiton was a 'just love' defined not only by the passionate intensity of *eros* but also by the esteem and tenderness of *philia*; it was a physical and spiritual union of the mature and active *mesos polites* (the middle-class citizen) and the youthful, beautiful *aristos* (the nobleman). Their relationship, it can well be argued, symbolised the unity, reciprocity, mutual trust and respect that were valued and encouraged by the democratic *polis* ((Ludwig 2002: 192; cf. Smith 2011). It was in this *relational* and *communal* context that the conduct considered definitive of the ideal democratic citizen was thought best taught and learned. Andrew Scholtz eloquently elaborates on this point:

> Aristogeiton, lover and supposed tyrant-slayer, became a touchstone for a civically and sexually empowered masculinity … Still, desire as one might, to actualize empowerment in self-interested ways, to be seen using one's right of free speech to push policy benefiting not the many but just a few or even one – *that* prospect summoned misgivings, lest ambition develop into a rapacious kind of *eros*. For individualism, once it entered the public sphere, found itself face to face with a rival value: communitarianism … [Aristogeiton's] collaboration with Harmodius, and its basis in *eros*, for

Athenians could also model the kind of unity that held the city's enemies at bay, whether at home or abroad. It is important to keep in mind that this is not some new sort of *eros,* different from the preceding. In distinguishing between 'self-assertive' and 'communal *eros*', I am distinguishing between different ways of inflecting the same thing. Self-interest persists, as does a sense of phallic victory. Only now, these reside in team effort, in the bond formed by lover and beloved fighting for the city – in the desire to become part of a larger and stronger collective self. (2007: 15)

Scholtz's comments on bond between lover and beloved, the danger of 'rapacious *eros*' and the interplay between individualism and communitarianism point us towards the following section, which deals with the figure of the tyrant in the democratic imagination.

(iii) *The Tyrant in the Democratic Imagination*

In official ideology, Harmodius and Aristogeiton stood in stark opposition to the generic figure of 'the tyrant.' Hipparchus, of course, remained embedded in the tyrannicide narrative; he was a necessary and essential element of it. But the wrath of the democracy was not confined to him alone; from the beginning to the end of the democracy in Athens, much public discourse tended to represent the tyrant generically and in overwhelmingly negative terms.

This was, partially, a result of Athens' traumatic experience of eastern despotism during the Persian wars. The very word *tyrannos*, born as it was from an Asiatic tongue, seemed a natural fit with the Greek term *barbaros* and all the connotations it carried. As if to confirm that link, during the Persian Wars, after the Athenians – who were under threat of attack by Xerxes' troops – had deserted their city for the relative safety their ships, Xerxes tore the precious tyrannicide

monument from its honoured place in the Agora and had it carted back to his palace. He then outraged the temples of Attica and torched the city of Athens itself. Many of the stereotypes associated with the east – sensuality, effeminacy, cruelty, excess, weakness – were, in the wake of all this, definitively grafted onto the generalised image of 'the tyrant' in Athenian discourse (Austin 1990; Georges 1994; Castriota 2000).

Along with the Persian invaders came the hated Hippias, once again, reminding the Athenians of the crimes their own tyrants had committed. Herodotus relates that on the eve of the Battle of Marathon, while waiting for his barbarian allies, Hippias had a dream in which he attempted to mate with his mother. This anecdote, which is in all likelihood a fiction, is clearly meant to represent not an infantile fantasy of the Freudian variety on Hippias's behalf but the monstrous ambition of the old man; it seems rather obvious that 'mother' in this instance equals the land that gave Hippias birth (e.g. Attica) and copulation with her, conquest and rule (cf. Scholtz 2007: 13). But the dream also alludes to the sexual transgressions of Hipparchus, whose misdeeds and eventual death at the hands of Harmodius and Aristogeiton had originally initiated Athens' nightmarish experience of tyranny.

However, Hipparchus and Hippias were only continuing what was believed to be a general trend among tyrants; a rampant, purely appetitive and thus transgressive species of *eros* was linked with, even considered constitutive of, the phenomenon of tyranny from the very beginning. In the first recorded appearance of the word *tyrannos* in Greek, the poet Archilochus compares the wild lust of a man for a woman to the tyrant's power over his city. Later, as we know, he would sing that he had no such *eros* for the mantle of tyranny itself.

Herodotus continues in this vein; in his *History*, he refers twice to an *eros* for tyranny (including that of the Spartan Pausanias for ruling over all of Greece),

and his other uses of *eros* and its cognates all involve antinomian objects of longing (such as family members). In fact, "the whole *History* more or less concludes with an account of the illicit love of Xerxes, who elsewhere announces quite openly that his goal is universal empire" (Davis 2000: 641). Thucydides would likewise, in his own way, reinforce the conceptual connection; in fact, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters, he would make the link between tyranny and transgressive *eros* a centrepiece of his narrative of the Peloponnesian War.

As we will see in more depth in the following part of this chapter, the association of transgressive *eros* and destructive, tyrannical behaviour was ubiquitous in Attic tragedy also. As scholars have noted, tragedy reflects "the Athenian experience of, and continuing preoccupation with, tyranny" (Seaford 2003: 96) – indeed, "the fall of Hipparchus and Hippias itself was treated by Athenian tradition in some respects as an erotic tragedy" (Georges 1994: 79). It is in this context that "the tragedians tend to 'eroticize' … whatever objects of desire might cause the protagonist to change his or her fortune" (Ludwig 2002: 132-6). Not only the language of tragedy but also its themes and allusions reflect this fact. As Calame notes, "there was never any shortage on the Attic stage of dramas about love" (Calame 1999: 3; cf. Levine 1949) – we find it at the heart of such plays as Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, and Euripides' *Hippolytus*, to name but a few.

Importantly, the only play we have that explicitly deals with contemporary political concerns (Aeschylus's *Persians*), confronts the problem of tyrannical *eros* head on. Here, the tyrant's desire is alluded to in Atossa's dream, in which her son Xerxes tries, unsuccessfully, to yoke two Greek maidens to his imperial chariot. This image, which represents the Persian attack on Greece (the central concern of the play), unmistakably recalls very common and long-standing Greek metaphors for *eros* and particularly for pederasty and marriage (Calame

1999: 122-3). The image also brings to mind the Eurymedon Vase, and in doing so it seems to confirm, contra David Halperlin, that the Athenians did in fact view "public and political life as a dramatization of individual sexual psychology" (1986: 40).

The disciples of Socrates, who in so many other cases are at odds with popular opinion, consolidate the conceptual partnership of transgressive *eros* and tyranny. Plato, for example, in the *Republic* and elsewhere consistently expounds on, and derogates, the intrinsic connection between *eros* and tyranny (and, indeed, democracy). In Plato's account, the great winged drone of *eros* gathered together all the other desires as his bodyguard in order to drive weak and democratic men insane and into the arms of tyranny. "Even the great taxonomer Aristotle cannot separate the tyrant's sexuality from his political authority," notes Victoria Wohl, pointing out that, in his discussion of the reasons why tyrannies fall, the philosopher says that most tyrannicidal plots begin as attempts to avenge the despot's *hubris* – and of the historical examples of *hubris* and its punishment that he then goes on to list, the majority are of a sexual nature (Wohl 2002: 220-1).

In sum, the overall picture of the tyrant that is painted by our sources is of a man who stands beyond and indeed in deliberate opposition to the established norms of democratic masculinity. Nowhere is this *paranomia* ('lawlessness', 'perversion') more pronounced than in the realm of sex, where the tyrant indulged a litany of criminal acts ranging from adultery and rape to incest and necrophilia. Defined by his power, excess, and lack of regard for anybody or anything other than the (logically impossible) satisfaction of his own boundless desires, in much public discourse "the tyrant is *eros* as pure drive" (*ibid*: 249).

The tyrant, in the final analysis, is a repulsive and disgraceful creature, a dishonourable slave to his appetite; weak and feminine, unable to control the wild

lusts that run rampant in his body, he possesses the nature of a sub-human barbarian, even an animal. In fact, the tyrant *was* often compared to a number of aggressive beasts, including the wolf and the lion (Kunstler 1991; McNellen 1997). One animal in particular stands out in this regard, however, and this is the cock.

The *hubris* of a powerful cock was proverbial, the reason being that a bird victorious in contest with another will often mount the body of its fallen rival not only to crow but also to bugger it; in Greek iconography, "the cock's ritual triumph is both a military and a sexual conquest" (Csapo 1993: 18). The reason for the ferocity of these fights, the Greeks noted, was at root no more than sexual rivalry. As such, it was easy for Aristophanes, in the *Birds*, to link the cock back to the discourse on eastern despotism when recounting the (fanciful) history of the cock's homonym, "the Persian bird" (481-5).

In such guises, then, "the metaphor of the tyrant, and the historical memory of both the sixth-century Peisistratid tyranny and the threat of Persian domination, served to define Athenians and were reflected not only in genres like tragedy but in the daily realities of democratic Athenian life" (Kallet 2003: 117). But in spite of – or, if we follow Foucault (1992), perhaps even *because* of – this widely held and officially sanctioned image of the tyrant, real or provocatively feigned opposition to the dominant interpretation of tyranny was not at all absent from public discourse, and it likely never disappeared from private meditation or conversation either. Tyranny, that is to say, functioned "not simply as a liminal construct providing graphic images of incorrect citizen behaviour, but as a defining model of political freedom" (McGlew 1993: 183).

Sophists such as Gorgias, for example, accepted the commonly held view of the tyrant as a supremely erotic being, but flipped the official image on its head to create a more positive vision of tyranny as "deliberately self-interested political

action" (*ibid*: 1). Gorgias and others recognised that the figure of the tyrant expressed a hyper-masculinity which embodied the qualities of the god of Love himself: all-powerful, dominating, warlike – 'unconquered in battle,' as Sophocles put it. The political power and correlate sexual potency the tyrant enjoyed – he could, after all, do whatever he liked to whomever he fancied – feminised all around him (at least symbolically), thereby transforming him into a kind of 'superman' who enjoyed the freedom of the gods (Ludwig 2002; Wohl 2002; Raaflaub 2003; cf. Woodford 1989; Loraux 1990). Those supermen who managed to achieve a position of absolute dominance (and, so it was thought, absolute freedom) did no wrong, for they were acting only according to natural necessity; for in the natural world, to which man necessarily belonged, it was a rule that the strong tyrannised over the weak. At least by the time of the Peloponnesian War, such a view seemed to have become relatively popular, a fact to which the Athenian speech in Thucydides' famous Melian Debate rather gruesomely attests (cf. Pl. *Laws*: 661a-b).

Elsewhere and when, important Athenian politicians – the great Pericles among them – described their city's rule over its allies as a 'tyranny' in very ambiguous terms, and on the comic stage and elsewhere the political position of the *demos* at home was represented, often in apparently positive terms no less, as that of a despot ruling over itself and over those factions of the aristocracy that longed to subvert it (Henderson 2003).

The Athenians, it seems, recognised that the functioning of the courts, the defence of the city and especially the magnificent building program initiated by Pericles all relied upon the tribute the Athenians extracted from their allies (or, more precisely, from their subjects). According to Aristotle, for example, "more than twenty thousand men earned their living as a result of the tribute, the taxation and the money the empire brought in" (*Const. Ath.* 24.3). The drama of the

Great Dionysia likewise depended for its production upon expensive liturgies made obligatory for wealthy (and usually aristocratic) citizens.

As was noted in the first section of this chapter, the splendour of Pisistratus' building projects and his use of them, along with festivals like the Dionysia, to consolidate his power vis-à-vis his aristocratic rivals were well-known to the ancients. In light of all these facts, Lisa Kallet argues persuasively that:

> The demos, assuming the role of public benefactor, was acting not simply in an aristocratic way but like a tyrant, and that its control over and magnificent expenditure of wealth provided a crucial demonstration of its power not just abroad, but at home. Pericles, while deflecting the idea that he himself might be a tyrant, was, in effect, elevating the demos to that position, especially through the excessive, extraordinary expenditure of its wealth. Like tyrants, who may have appropriated wealth unjustly but put it to acceptable use in adorning the city, the demos could enhance its power through the skillful use of accumulated wealth … [And so] the ambiguous image of Athens the tyrant city as ruler of an empire may have been accompanied by a more positive construction of the demos-as-tyrant spending its wealth on the city. Furthermore, if the city in the form of the collective demos was tyrant, its extraordinary wealth and control over resources would make it difficult for any individual Athenian to threaten this order. (1998: 52-4; cf. Else 1954: 25)

Indeed, we could go further and argue, as does James McGlew, that when the Pisistratids were expelled, and after the dust had settled enough for the *demos* to find and firmly grab a hold of the sceptre of sovereignty, the power of the tyrants was not finally annulled or abolished. Rather, it was appropriated by the people, who put the *eleutheria* and *kratos* which previously the tyrants alone had pos-

sessed to their own self-interested uses. "Insisting (logically) that power could remain in the middle (*en mesoi*) only if citizens were true political equals and if the *polis* were formally identified with the *demos*, the Athenians maximized the numbers involved in all state actions and subjected magistrates to the scrutiny of the popular courts" (McGlew 1993: 150; cf. Raaflaub 1998). The same was true also of ostracism: decisions over exile had previously belonged to the aristocrats and, later, the tyrant, and "the *demos*' usurpation of this power was central to their assertion of political authority in the community" (Forsdyke 2000: 252). Through its inclusivity and univocal nature, the whole machinery of democratic government demonstrated, and even justified, the definition of the *polis* as a collective will whenever the people exercised the powers this definition gave them. This will, furthermore, had the same authority and power as had the individual tyrant it now replaced (McGlew 1993). In other words, Aristogeiton had not thrown Hipparchus's baby out with the bloody bathwater; he had instead given the *demos* the opportunity to take the tyrant's place, with all the power, prestige and privilege this entailed.

In the shadows beyond official ideology, then, tyranny could be and clearly was understood as "godlike" (Eur. *Tro.* 1169). As such, it could be the object of an intense, albeit illicit, longing for individual men who had to live *as* men in the democratic *polis*, as mortals that were duty-bound to remain equal to their fellow citizens. The figure of the tyrant thus provided not only the anti-type of the democratic citizen but also a realm of fantasy and flirtatious identification in which citizens could imagine the possibilities and consequences of a life without limits (Wohl 2002: 223). As we will see in the next part of the chapter, this was especially the case in tragedy, which is one reason why Plato despised it; the tragic poets, in his opinion, are no good for cities because they "lead their constitutions to tyranny and democracy" (*Rep.* 8.568a-d).

But tyranny could also figure as a more positive state of being to which the democratic community, the Athenian *demos*, could collectively aspire. The communal *eros* that was rooted in the tyrannicide myth provided a glue with which to unite individual citizens in a larger and more powerful collective self, a tyrannical self, as and through which 'the Athenians' could exercise power over others. As we shall see in the following chapters, such a vision did emerge, and it found its expression among the Athenians in the form of a muscular democratic imperialism, an erotics of empire that would ultimately end in tragedy.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that *eros* was a highly gendered cultural phenomenon. Despite his youth, the male god Eros displayed many of the characteristic qualities attributed to the Greek 'superman,' and *eros* as an emotion was represented as warlike, dominating, possessive, and irresistibly strong. These representations helped to shape the way in which *eros* was lived and *experienced*; penetrative sex, for example, was generally considered an act of power and domination, if not exploitation, as much as it was an act of affection. Power, gender and status within the hierarchical structure of the *polis* as well as individual psychology are thus important considerations when building a picture of Greek sexuality, and in particular the role of genital desire in it.

However, human *eros* was different from animal *eros* (which was characterised by genital lust) in a number of important respects: the affective dimensions of this 'emotional appetite' were much broader and more complex in humans; human *eros* was closely tied up with aesthetics, the values of which were open to reasoned argument; and human *eros* could be experienced with regard to nonsexual objects, such as wisdom or (especially) power. This is important to note, because the semantic use of *eros* in these contexts meant that certain *feelings*

and *behaviours* appropriate to the interpersonal experience of *eros* could potentially be transferred into the political realm to political objects.

Finally, we have seen that such feelings and behaviours were, in fact, so transferred. This is particularly true in the case of Athens' experiences of tyranny and democracy. Many men were thought to be 'lovers' of tyrannical power, and in its pursuit they would act accordingly; obsessively, jealously, energetically, daringly, and often violently, they would seize the object of their love by force. So, at least, figured the tyrant in the democratic imagination. Related but different behaviours were expected also from the democratic citizen, whose official role models were the so-called tyrannicides; passionate, committed, caring and mutually respectful, Aristogeiton and Harmodius were the ideal types of the newly liberated Athenians – their 'founding fathers,' as it were. Nevertheless, the tyrant remained central to the democratic imagination, both in his function as the ideological image of the 'anti-citizen' but also, on a different and darker level, as the embodiment of the absolute freedom that the *demos* as a whole could now enjoy.

CHAPTER THREE

Introduction

In the first section of this chapter I begin by reviewing contemporary literature that deals with the political rituals framing the performance of tragedy. Many scholars have argued that this context affected the content of tragic drama in important ways insofar as these rituals articulated and affirmed the social order of the city, and by highlighting democratic norms, provided a pre-performance foil to the transgressive dramas that followed them on the stage. Following this I discuss the religious context of the Great Dionysia. The foundational myth of the Great Dionysia, which was recounted each year in the opening procession of the festival, concerns the original refusal of the Athenians to accept the god and his subsequent punishment of them. This punishment took the form of 'impotent potency,' or ithyphallicism; a condition of permanent erection that led to pain, infertility, over-excitation and death. The punishment was lifted when the Athenians gave due honour to the god, which was institutionalised in the Great Dionysia. I argue that these rituals, like the other pre-play rituals, affected the dramas in important ways.

When considered in light of the political and religious context of the play, together with other aspects of Dionysian cult, many tragedies can be seen to take up themes related to what we have called 'erotic politics.' This forms the core of the discussion in the second section of this chapter. The representation of *eros* in tragedy is almost uniformly transgressive and destructive – but not, on account of this, necessarily bad or shameful for the figures afflicted by it. I argue that by encouraging identification with characters afflicted by (what is often a diseased kind of) *eros*, tragedy created a fantasy realm for the Athenian in which they could subject their values and norms to scrutiny and exercise darker aspects of their imagination; they could flirt and play with the image of the tyrant, which in official discourse was taboo. The ritual context of tragedy, however, articulated

the values and norms of the democratic *polis* and attempted to inculcate democratic ideology and civic unity in its participants. Tragedy, in its broader context, was thus both subversive and affirmative of democratic ideology.

Section One: Tragedy in Context

(i) The Politics of Tragedy

Friedrich Nietzsche's belief that Greek tragedy had nothing to do with politics is simply wrong. Many scholars have demonstrated that the festival of the Great Dionysia was an extremely important one for the city of Athens in terms of the function it held as a ritual celebration of both its patron god and of the *polis* itself, as well as in its role as a platform for citizens to explore and comment on important sociopolitical concerns of their day. Tragedy, in other words, was as much a didactic and political phenomenon as it was aesthetic.

Influential in this regard have been Simon Goldhill's articles on the Great Dionysia and civic ideology, in which he argues that "there are specific ceremonies, processions, and priestly doings that form an essential and unique context for the production of Greek drama and which do indeed importantly affect the entertainment" (1992: 98).

According to Goldhill, given the importance of the ritual institutions surrounding the Great Dionysia in the developing democratic ideology of Athens, it is reasonable to assume that this ideology is, to a substantial degree, reflected in the tragedies themselves. In the course of his argument, Goldhill references four institutions that over time were added to the customary context of the festival: the appointment of the ten *strategoi* (elected military commanders) to pour the libations of wine before the opening performance; the public announcement of the names of conspicuous benefactors of Athens and their award with a crown or

garland; the parade and display of allied tribute; and the procession of armour-clad *ephebes* (young men, the sons of citizens killed in battle, who had been supported to their majority at the city's expense) onto the theatre stage at the same time that the allied tribute was being laid out before the assembled citizens. Peter Wilson (2009b) rightly adds to Goldhill's list the pre-play tradition (which reaches back to the beginning of the fifth-century) of heralds announcing awards for those who managed to kill aspiring tyrants.

Goldhill's conclusion regarding of all this is that, insofar as they express both conspicuous individual distinction and intense feelings of community, the rituals reflect "the difficult interplay of the hierarchical pursuit of status within democracy and the collective ideals of the polis" (2000: 45), an interplay which is mirrored in the relation of hero and chorus on stage. Put differently: "the combination of the pre-play rituals and the performances of fifth-century theatre – which together make up the Dionysia – offer a … complex dialectic between the proclamation of social norms and their possibility of transgression" (Goldhill 1992: 127).

This general line of argument has for the most part been well-received, although some reasonably take issue with the vague notion of democracy that Goldhill utilises (Rhodes 2003; Gibert 2009; cf. Griffin 1998). David Carter and David Rosenbloom, for example, argue convincingly that the rituals of the Dionysia have as much to do with an ideology of chauvinistic imperialism as they do with any specifically democratic ideology (Carter 2004; Rosenbloom 2011). John Winkler takes a similar position: if "the tribute and the presence of the city's friends represent its active military alliances," he writes, "the war orphans who are ready to become soldiers in their fathers' places inevitably bring to mind the city's battles, both past and future" (1992: 41).

Despite these quibbles, however, scholars broadly agree that "dramatic perform-ances at Athens question [official] *polis* ideology and practice within the context of their simultaneous realization and relaxation at civic festivals" (Rosenbloom 2006: 245; cf. Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1990; Segal 1997). The plays, in other words, tend to throw the very civic norms and values that are displayed in the political rituals surrounding the festival into a state of confusion and ambiguity; the dramas place traditional ideas about what constitutes the good under inter-rogation, and at times even subject them to reversal.

I do not wish to, nor really can I, add much to this discussion. I take the broad consensus regarding tragedy as a fundamentally political (and politically pro-paedeutic) art for granted. I concur that questions relating to the respective roles of individualism, communitarianism and imperialism were important themes in tragic drama. These questions obviously link back to the discussion of the pre-ceding section; indeed, they run parallel with the individualistic, communitarian and tyrannical strands of *eros* we considered there. Seen in light of the last chapter's discussion, the abundance of erotic terminology that we have noted ex-ists in tragedy – "practically as a requirement of [the] genre," according to Paul Ludwig (2002: 136) – becomes much easier to understand.

"The themes of tragedy," Pericles Georges notes, "surely must have reflected the atmosphere of the overthrow of the Pisistratid tyranny and the foundation of the cult of the Tyrannicides, at a time of increasing danger from Persia culminating in the brutal suppression of the Ionians" (1994: 79). At least, this seems to be the case if we accept the argument that the ritual context of tragedy provided a normative structure that the dramas themselves explore and interrogated. Con-sider, firstly, the tradition of awarding honours to tyrant-killers (in particular, those who managed to kill any surviving Pisistratids). This ritual unambiguously refers to Athens' experience of domestic tyrants and, as we have seen, it was part

of a broader set of institutions and rituals that together with the tyrannicide cult helped constitute Athenian democratic ideology.

The display of allied tribute implicitly referred to another a tyrannicide legend, namely, the Athenian claim to have led the Greeks to victory against the Persian invaders. The Delian League – from whence the tribute came – was explicitly created, and ostensibly maintained, to counter despotic aggression in Greece. The ritual libations offered by the *strategoi* and the parade of war orphans, with their emphasis on military valour and success, complement and consolidate the image of Athens as heroic and warlike democratic community and in this regard can be said to contribute to the overall civic aims of the festival (namely, the fostering of shared democratic norms and consciousness). Furthermore, the parade of war orphans (as we will see in more depth in the following chapter) was conceptually linked with the awards granted to conspicuous benefactors to the city in another sense, insofar as both rituals publicly exalted those individuals who had made great sacrifices on behalf of the city.

It was, then, partially through these pre-play rituals that the ideological discourse of democratic Athens, saturated as it was with erotic metaphors and concepts, became the focus of many tragedians' scrutiny. Democratic norms and the rituals that reflected them provided a foil for the transgressive drama that was at the heart of the Great Dionysia. This being so, we are left with the questions as to why, and exactly how, tragic drama interrogated and sometimes undermined the democratic norms that were fostered by the pre-play rituals.

This leads me to discuss one set of rituals, embedded in the festival's very name, which Goldhill and many of his interlocutors strangely overlook in their discussion of the Dionysia's ritual context. Doing so helps us to more clearly understand *why* much tragedy explores taboo subjects, confuses conceptual boundaries, transforms identities, and paradoxically undermines the norms that are in-

culcated by the pre-play rituals. It also helps us to understand why Plato should have believed that the poets appeared to "eulogize tyranny as godlike and say lots of other such things about it" (*Rep.* 8.568c).

(ii) Something to Do with Dionysus (and Eros)

Tragedy, satyr-drama and comedy all were, to some extent, religious as well as political events (as if religion and politics could be separated in ancient Greece). They were performed in Dionysus's honour "and, as it were, in his presence" (Henrichs 1990: 257). Both the cult statue of Dionysus and his high priest were given privileged seats in the theatre throughout the entire festival, and this "shows that a strong dimension in the perception of the festival was that the dramatic and dithyrambic competitions were entertainment for Dionysus" (Sourvinou-Inwood 2003: 73).

This fact is reflected also in the opening set of rituals of the Great Dionysia, which concerned the advent of Dionysus into Athens and its annual re-enactment in his worship (and, hence, for his pleasure). These rituals were rooted in the 'priestly doings' that Goldhill mentions but, likely for fear of attracting criticisms like those levelled at the likes of Murray and Cornford, fails to explore (cf. Seaford 1981). The rituals began with a sacrifice at an altar near the Academy, which was followed by a torchlight procession (led by *ephebes*) that escorted the god's statue into town, and the sacrificial dedication of a bull to Dionysus on behalf of the entire city. The daylight parade was likewise a loud, lavish but nonetheless deeply pious affair – twenty dithyrambic choruses, of fifty men each, in full costume making merry, metics draped in bright red robes, honoured citizens sporting golden crowns and flashy garments, priests singing religious hymns, and holy men hoisting giant phalluses, gifted to the god by the city and its allies and colonies, high into the air (Winkler 1992: 37-8).

The last element of these rituals is particularly important in the context of this discussion. The display of phalluses in the parade explicitly rested upon the foundational myth of the Dionysia – that is, the aetiological reason for the whole elaborate and expensive festival. The *scholia* (ancient marginalia) to Aristophanes' *Archanians* relates why:

> The phallus came to be part of the worship of Dionysus by some secret rite. About the phallus itself the following is said. Pegasos took the image of Dionysus from Eleutherae … and brought it to Attica. The Athenians, however, did not receive the god with reverence, but they did not get away with this resolve unpunished, because, since the god was angry, a disease attacked the men's genitals and the calamity was incurable. When they found themselves succumbing to the disease, which was beyond all human magic and science, envoys were hastily dispatched to the divine oracles. When they returned, they reported that the sole cure was for them to hold the god in all reverence. Therefore, in obedience to these pronouncements, the Athenians privately and publicly constructed phalli, and with these they paid homage to the god, making them a memorial to their own suffering. (Quoted in Csapo 1997: 266)

Using evidence collected from other scholiasts and similar stories throughout Greece, Eric Csapo shows that this 'disease' was ithyphallicism, or constant penile erection. The scholiast's myth, Csapo says, likely conflated two medical problems referred to by ancient writers as 'satyriasis' and 'priapism': the first being defined by obsessive sexual over-excitation, which could lead to exhaustion and death; the second, a permanent erection that permitted neither pleasure nor orgasm (1997: 266-7). From his reading of the tragic texts themselves, Claude Calame arrives at the same general conclusion: "Dionysus," he says, "is

capable not only of arousing love but also of curing those stricken by it" (1999: 132).

Whatever shape the genital disease was thought to have taken (and, as is the case with myths, it likely took a few), it is clear that the aetiology of the ritual, and of the Dionysia as a whole, concerns the ability of the god to affect, both negatively and positively, the sexual (and hence political) well-being of Athenian men (cf. Nillson 1998: 35-6). The Great Dionysia was, among other things, a festival both to commemorate the suffering (specifically the sexual suffering) of Athenian men at the hands of Dionysus and to celebrate their release from this same suffering through pious worship of the god. During this festival, furthermore, worship of Dionysus included not only the provision of animal sacrifices, parades and phallic totems but also the dramatic entertainment itself. The question that arises in light of all this is: if the more obviously 'political' ritual context of the Dionysia affected the entertainment in important and discernible ways, did the 'religious' context do so, too?

Dionysus and the rituals conducted in his honour are not, by any means, the central concern of every tragedy, and there is no tidy formula by which we can understand the influence of the god and the myths surrounding him on Attic drama. The precise origins of drama remain unknown and it is true that the question regarding the extent to which tragedy was a religious phenomenon remains controversial (Sullion 2005). Nevertheless, "in ancient pre-Christian Greece the religious and the political were fabrics of thought and behaviour were woven from the same threads" (Cartledge 1997: 6), and there do seem to be certain vestiges of Dionysian cult practice and belief that remained significant in the festival itself and in the plays performed there. Before discussing these, it must again be stressed that the claim here is not that tragedy, or even the Great Dionysia, was essentially 'Dionysian' or 'all about Dionysus,' any more than Easter festivities are all about the (after-)life and gospel of Jesus Christ. The claim,

rather, is that crucial parts of the festival – including but by no means limited to the parade – are inextricably connected to Dionysus and his worship, and these connections, together with the rest of the festival's context, help us better understand its content (Easterling 1997). For reasons of space and relevance, not all of these connections can be considered here; hence only those two most important to our discussion will be examined. These elements of Dionysian worship concern the relation of Dionysus to personal transformation and to sexuality – or, more specifically, to *eros*.

One the most important elements of Dionysian worship that is manifest in all dramatic performance is the transformation of personal identity (Seaford 2006: 11). As Charles Segal observes: "the actor, wearing the mask that has close associations with the Dionysiac cult from early times, fuses to some extent with the personage he represents in the theatre. The spectator, watching the performance, at some point loses his separateness and identifies with the masked figure before him" (1997: 13).

This transformational element of Dionysian cult was intimately and inextricably related to the central place therein of wine and intoxication. Ingesting what Timotheus called 'the blood of Dionysus' meant that one literally came to possess the god within one's own mortal body– or, in the case of excess and abuse, one's body became possessed by him. This, according to myth, was what happened to the Athenians who first encountered Dionysus; after becoming drunk and insulting the god, they were struck with incurable erections. Even without wine, the subject under the sway of Dionysus could become radically and simultaneously other: the old became young (like Cadmus and Teiresias in the *Bacchae*); mortal man could even become godly. But so too could man become woman, human beast, citizen satyr, and Greek barbarian.

Under the sign of Dionysus, opposites could be united and the boundaries between individuals dissolved; and at the Great Dionysia, enough divine blood was consumed to make this happen. There, the principles of order and anti-order, of civilization and nature, of limit and transgression, and of self and other merged (Dodds 1951; Bremmer 1994). For the Athenians, it seems clear that "the whole point of Dionysism, which brings man into immediate contact with the otherness of the divine, [was] to become other oneself" (Vernant and Vidal-Naquet: 204).

This was, of course, one of the reasons why tragedy had such didactic power. As many scholars have noted, 'becoming other' allows for the experience of true compassion, which contributes to a broader understanding of the common lot of humanity (Clapp 2005). But tragic compassion, and the understanding it brings, presupposes identification with, and sympathy for, characters usually considered sub- or super-human: with Aeschylus's tyrannical 'lion-cub' thirsting with an *eros* for blood, for example, or with the headstrong Sophoclean king who marries his mother and sires his siblings, or with Euripides' barbaric wife as she butchers her own children. For it could well be argued that these figures are more mistaken than truly malevolent; "even the worst tragic perpetrators of tyrannical practices, who thereby endanger and damage the *polis*, nevertheless sincerely claim to champion it" (Seaford 2011: 89).

Tragic heroism, furthermore, concerns not only the frailties and failures of humanity but also its strengths and triumphs, and the strange and terrible potency of tragic characters is often incorporated and utilised, in drama, by the *polis* in the form of hero cult (Seaford 1994). The Furies in Aeschylus's *Eumenides* are an example of this trend, as is the blind and beggarly old man in *Oedipus at Colonus*; cult worship in both circumstances concerns not the moral value of these characters but the value they possess in terms of their power to benefit the city, particularly in times of war (Adkins 1970: 69-73).

In sum, by transcending the self to identify with others, actors in and empathetic spectators of tragedy can simultaneously both transcend the democratic city's norms and affirm them, depending on the characters with whom they identify.[4] Moreover, the participants of tragedy – actors and spectators – collaborate with each another in this exercise; in the theatre, the entire *polis* comes together and turns its eyes upon itself and its values. This, it seems, is one of the reasons Plato believed tragedians 'led their constitutions to tyranny and democracy.' As Mary Whitlock Blundell notes, "Plato mistrusts the poets not merely as 'teachers' of a rival brand of categorical wisdom, but as purveyors of a plurality of viewpoints with which the performer and audience are induced to sympathise" (1989: 15).

We are now led to consider a second aspect in which Dionysian cult and ritual is reflected in tragedy, and that is in its relationship to *eros*. Richard Seaford writes that because of the transformational effects of wine, "the overwhelming power to inspire communality, whether in the whole polis or in a small group [such as the symposium], was ascribed in particular to Dionysos … [For the god] liberates psychologically through wine … and wine tends to dissolve boundaries between people" (2006: 26). Furthermore, Seaford adds, "because communality breaks down individual self-containment and may replace it with a sense of wholeness, Dionysos is – more than any other Greek deity – imagined as actually *present*" (*ibid*: 29).

Seaford's comments are valid, but he forgets to mention another important effect of wine: namely, its encouragement of *eros*. In Anacreon's sympotic poems, for example, we are told that Dionysus and Eros are "team-mates"; they work together in order to ensure that men become "intoxicated by love" (Cyrino 1996).

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[4] Thus Ned Lebow, to his own annoyance, finds it "harder to hate" (2003: 22) the figure of Nixon he depicts in the short story that opens *The Tragic Vision of Politics*.

This partnership is also reflected in Dionysian religion and tragedy; in the theatre, for instance, where stood, on both sides of the chair of State (set apart for the high priest of Dionysus), a bas-relief of Eros holding a fighting cock (Seltman 1925: 93), and also in drama itself – for example, when Euripides has the chorus in his *Bacchae* (233) tell us that "without wine, there is no love."

Moreover, many scholars have documented the role Dionysus played as a god of animal, human and especially vegetative fertility (Bieber 1949; Keller 1998; Nillson 1998), and in this role the functions of Dionysus and *eros* are hard to disentangle (as the opening ritual of the Great Dionysia, the ending of Aeschylus's Danaid trilogy and other tragic passages suggest) (Calame 1999; Ludwig 2002). We also find hints of this in the *Symposium*, a dialogue of Plato's which has "an explicit tragic connection" (Cartledge 1997: 9). In the hangover inherited from the Great Dionysia, a number of men gather toast the victorious tragedian, Agathon, and propose a group encomium on Eros – to Socrates' delight, given that "the only subject I can claim to know about is love, and the same is true I rather think of Agathon and Pausanias, and certainly true of Aristophanes, whose whole time is taken up with Dionysus and Aphrodite" (*Symp.* 177d-e). Having earlier declared that of each man's claim to wisdom about love "Dionysus will be the judge" (175e), Agathon concludes his own encomium (to loud applause) with the statement that "it is Eros who takes from us our sense of estrangement and fills us with a sense of kinship; who causes us to associate with one another as on this occasion, and at festivals, dances and sacrifices is the guiding spirit" (197d). Together with Socrates, Agathon is in the end awarded a prize by Dionysus, in the guise of Alcibiades (Sider 1980) – and justly so, for the tragic poet was not wrong. As Bruce Thornton notes, "girls getting pregnant at festivals, when the normal social inhibitions would be relaxed and the celebration of fertility would act as an inducement, seem to have been a common occurrence" (1997: 22). Indeed, in the *Symposium*, at the symposium, it was Socrates himself who famously became 'pregnant.'

The partnership between *eros* and Dionysus during the Great Dionysia thus helped to erase, if only temporarily, the many divisions that normally existed in Athenian society and threatened its cohesion. This partnership was not genital, but it was nevertheless rooted in the *philia* aspects of *eros* that characterised the love of Harmodius and Aristogeiton (which, as we have seen, was central to democratic ideology) (cf. Dover 1974: 215). It was in this vein that Aeschylus, in the *Agamemnon*, could refer to the citizens' mutual *eros* as a form of patriotism. We see it also in Pericles' metaphor of the 'lover of the city' and in Aristotle's definition of the unanimity of citizens (*homonoia*) as political *philia*. Through the mutual esteem and homosocial bonding the equality of the Dionysia encouraged, the festival helped to unify a citizenry that despite its official pronouncements was still in many ways profoundly divided.

This bonding experience was an intrinsic and inescapable part of the festival, given the amount of citizen participation that was required. Jasper Griffin notes that everybody in the city "must have either performed in a dithyrambic contest or known someone who did" (Griffin 1998: 44), and while the same was not true of tragic or comic drama, the fact remains that the Dionysia – with all of its elaborate religious and political rituals – involved a large proportion of the city's male population; almost everyone, from the priests of Dionysus to Pericles to phallus-toting peasants, took part. Indeed, "the play's *spectators*, arranged in the auditorium according to tribal order (no different from what happened on the field of battle or in the burial of the war dead), was not distinct from the community of *citizens*" (Longo 1992: 16, original emphasis).

The entire Dionysian spectacle, then, deliberately aimed at reinforcing the cohesion of Athens' men: by financing, posing, acting out, watching, and talking about issues of concern to the *polis* in drama (many of which, as we have seen, were framed in the discourse of erotic politics) the Athenians, in spite of any

disagreements about the dramatic competition they may have had, were united in a larger collective self. At the Dionysia, with its tragedy, satyr play, comedy and all its other rituals, the individual men of Athens – noble and common, rich and poor, strong and weak – came together as the *demos*s, singing together, dancing together, drinking together, crying together, laughing together. What differentiated the Dionysia from other democratic institutions in this regard were two things: first, the sheer scale of citizen participation, and second, the fact that, through its drama, the *demos* dared to explore and test its political values and masculine identity (Cartledge 1997; Zeitlin 1992). A large number of Athenian citizens, in other words, were dressing up as (and acting like) women, tyrants, satyrs and buffoons. This was a risky enterprise, as Plato never tired of pointing out.

For Plato knew well that the collaboration between Dionysus and *eros* was not always benign; his playful yet sinister portrayal of Alcibiades in the *Symposium* testifies to this claim (Sider 1980: 55). Plato must have known full well that in satyr-plays, for example, it was "a common topos that drink enhances ithyphallicism" (Hall 1998: 18), and he surely recognized that the entire Theban cycle of plays turns on the fact that King Laius, despite being warned by an oracle that his son would destroy him, begets a male child while drunk and lustful. A similar point could made regarding the Greek expedition against Troy; the casus belli for this conflict was Helen's abduction by Paris, and the disastrous dispute between Achilles and Agamemnon we read about in the *Iliad* begins over the distribution of concubines (Thornton 1997: 22-4).

Tyrannical and transgressive *eros* was indeed a favourite theme of the classical tragedians whose plays Plato grew up watching (and, to some extent, imitated); the poets use it very often as "a catalyst for wider conflicts and ethical issues, as well as an image for the dangers posed to the self by external challenges" (Thumiger 2013: 27-8). In the tragedies in which it figures, *eros* is almost always as-

sociated with madness, unreason, and reversal of fortune in (and through) the transformation of self. It is these associations, which other tragic emotions do not display to anywhere near the same extent, that makes *eros* so relevant to tragic action and which is one of the features distinguishing tragic *eros* from the *eros* of other poetic genres.

> [The] association between madness and *eros* that tragedy offers is a re-elaboration of a poetic cliché, especially that of lyric poetry. This re-elaboration is most notable in the fact that the assimilation of topoi and language of madness to erotic exchanges applies to both predators and victims, and is ultimately objectified in a disastrous outcome. Madness and destruction appear to be inseparable from the action of *eros* in the objectivity of facts, as well as in the subjectivity of the individuals involved. (Thumiger 2013: 31)

In other words, the violence and madness that are identifying tropes of *eros* in lyric poetry are distinguishable from the same in tragedy insofar as in lyric it is the confessional subject alone who suffers from these maladies. The madness and violence of tragic *eros*, on the other hand, has catastrophic consequences not only for the subject experiencing it but also for the wider community. Another distinguishing feature of tragic *eros* is the fact that, compared to lyrical poetry (which tends to focus on other *people* as love-objects), it is far broader in terms of its application. As Paul Ludwig notes, "the tragedians tend to 'eroticize' everything, practically as a result of their genre" (2002: 136). Tragic *eros*, then, is defined not only by the fact that it is almost univocally associated with madness, unreason, and reversal of fortune through the transformation of self, but also by the fact that it fundamentally and unavoidably concerns the *polis*.

This kind of *eros* is clearly visible in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*, when Clytemnestra, speaking "wisely as a prudent man" (351), declares her hope that "no

eros should fall upon the Greeks at Troy for violating what they shouldn't" (340-341) – despite having already fallen prey to such *eros* herself. Again we see it in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, where the hyper-sexual Heracles is, through the suffering and death accidentally inflicted on him by his lovelorn wife, in his own words transformed into a woman; and in the *Antigone*, where the heroine, "in love with death" (246), lies down in her tomb-cum-marriage-cum-birthing bed to help contribute to "the great growing family of our dead" (977-81). We find it also in Euripides' *Bacchae*, where Pentheus's great lust – his *erota mega* (813) – to witness what he supposes are the sexual debaucheries of the maenads encourages him to engage in transvestitism and then leads him to his own sacrificial death at the hands of his frenzied mother. The list is practically endless.

It must be stated, however, that while *eros* in tragic action is almost always destructive, it also often figures as a reference point in its latent potential as a positive force that provides for civic harmony, fertility and marriage, and agricultural productivity (Kaimio 2002; Thumiger 2013). This is most clearly visible in the speech given by Aphrodite at the conclusion of Aeschylus's *Danaids*, a play which concerns women's flight from, murder of and eventual reconciliation with men. Here, the goddess says that "the sacred Sky feels a desire [*erai*] to penetrate the Earth, and the Earth is possessed by the desire [*eros*] to enjoy marriage. A shower comes to fertilize the Earth from her husband Sky. And this is how she brings forth for mortals the pastures of flocks, the living [*bios*] of Demeter and the mature fruit [*opora*] of the trees … I am the cause of all that" (quoted in Pirenne-Delforge 2010: 314). Claude Calame concludes that

> the ritual of the Dionysia and the means that masked ritual drama
> provided made it possible to represent not only the extremes of
> madness into which the onslaught of erotic desires drives us, along
> with all its dire consequences, but also the affinities that the Greeks
> of the archaic and classical periods perceived between the states of

love and death. At the same time, the chorus is generally there to remind us of the constructive and civic effects that the interventions of Eros and Aphrodite may produce … Even as it comments upon the plot, deploring all the violence wreaked by love, the voice of the chorus addresses the public composed of citizens, exhorting them to practice moderation. (1999: 149-50)

Most of Calame's commentary is fair enough. One point stands open to criticism, however. *Eros* is by its very nature immoderate; as Aristotle says in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, "*eros* is like an excess of *philia*" (1171a10-13). The question is then begged as to how citizens are supposed to practice moderation in respect to it; 'erotic moderation' seems to be a contradiction in terms. Furthermore, the condemnation of excess and concomitant encouragement of moderation – whilst certainly present in tragedy and as ethical pillars of the *polis* – in many instances does not constitute a particularly complex lesson and as such it is one which would, after a while, likely become stale for an audience that sat and watched these plays for hours on end, year after year. Indeed, the ubiquity of Apollo's wisdom that one should have 'nothing to excess' raises the question as to why the Athenians needed a festival as elaborate, expensive and ultimately excessive as the Dionysia to remind themselves of this.

In light of this, I suggest that, aside from the somewhat oxymoronic exhortation to practice moderation, three other possible alternatives for dealing with *eros* are identifiable in the genre. It should be stressed that none of these, nor the call for moderation, can be said to constitute '*the* tragic response' to the problem of *eros*, for the point is that they all do. These various perspectives reflect not only the differences between individual plays (and playwrights) but also the fact that tragedy problematises political issues more often than it solves them.

Section Two: Eros in Tragedy

(i) Tragic Responses to Eros

The first of the alternatives I have just mentioned includes ethical exculpation and (self-)pity. The words of Deianara in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* summarise this position: "Whoever stands opposed to Eros, with fists clenched like a boxer, does not understand him; for he rules over gods as he desires, and over me. Why not another like me? So if I blamed my husband for the passion which has afflicted him, I would be mad" (441-446).

As we saw in the previous chapter, this logic is embedded in Aristotle's advice to tyrants regarding their commission of *hubris*, and it evidently reflects a popular moral evaluation of erotic 'crimes of passion.' It is also implicit in Euripides' *Bacchae*. Froma Zeitlin notes that in this play Dionysus turns Pentheus "from the one who acts to the one who is acted upon, from the one who would inflict pain and suffering, even death, on the other, to the one who will undergo these experiences himself" (1992: 64). The apparent potency of Pentheus's kingship, manifest in his impious *hubris* and demand to control maenadic ritual, in the end actually reduces him to impotence; "feminization is the emblem of Pentheus's defeat" (*ibid.*). What seals the tyrant's fate, however, is his *erota mega* to see for himself the rites of the maenads, his lust to overstep the bounds that define a man – the bounds that distinguish between man and woman and mortal and god. This is closely related to his inability to understand the fertilising, rather than simply the destructive, power of Dionysus. For Pentheus does, in fact, recognise the potency of the androgynous interloper, in the form of the god's sway over the women (and indeed the men) of his city, but he interprets this power as sexually threatening, immoral, base, and all-too-human (223-4; 354-5). He interprets it as a mortal's *hubris* rather than as a legitimate, divine power. Through his fear

and loathing of such *hubris*, he develops the fatal *eros* that brings about his feminisation and death.

When considering the character of Pentheus, the words of Pausanias in Plato's *Symposium* spring to mind: "It is no good for rulers if the people they rule cherish ambitions for themselves or form strong bonds of friendship with one another. That these are precisely the effects of philosophy, sport and especially of Eros is a lesson the tyrants of Athens learned directly from their own experience" (182c-d). Pentheus certainly seems tyrannical in his desire to stamp out what he considers the erotic excesses of Dionysus and the bonds that the god creates between his citizens. He is, to be sure, a foolish and arrogant character. However, when considered in the context of the foundational myth and opening ritual of the Dionysia, the king's transgressive desire should be viewed in a less critical light. In this context, the king's lust would likely have appeared understandable, even pitiable; watching (and thus identifying with) the disastrous fall of a mistaken man concerned to save his city, many Athenians must have been reminded of the foregoing ritual of the festival and of their mythical forebears, who had suffered a similar fate (erotic over-excitation, pain, infertility, death) as a result of their own misunderstanding of Dionysus.

Exculpation and pity, however, seem to provide an inroad for the second alternative to erotic moderation: openly capitulating to the god. There are two forms such capitulation could take. The first would produce a kind of resigned fatalism that accepted the destructive chaos of *eros* as a necessary and unavoidable element of its creative power. To quote Charles Segal: "In this conjoined polarity … stands the deeply rooted ancient recognition that nothing comes into being without the destruction of something else, without loss, sacrifice, violence … In the waste of something inestimably precious there is a hopeless sadness but also the recognition that that essence cannot be confined and possessed within the

familiar continuities and prosaic durability of the everyday, the predictable, the rationally known and knowable" (1997: 16-7).

Such unhappy fatalism points to its inversed mirror image: namely, embracing *eros* and its power. If, as Euripides suggested, tyranny is godlike and beautiful, and if tyranny had many lovers – and if, furthermore, becoming such a lover was no fault of one's own – was there not an incentive to consider whether one-self was an *erastes* of tyranny and, if one was found to be so, to embrace the fact so as to get a head start on one's many competitors in the race for the beloved's hand? As the Nurse of Euripides' *Hippolytus* somewhat cryptically remarks (357-8), "the chaste lust for vile things [*kakon erosi*]."

Granted, the fate of tyrants and transgressive characters more generally in tragedy is almost always a horrible one, and despite their dignified language and heroic bearing it would be foolish to argue that Pentheus or Clytemnestra, for example, present models of behaviour that any self-respecting Athenian would want to follow. The figure of Oedipus the Tyrant, however, is much more complex and ambivalent, as many scholars have pointed out; he is both a pollution *and* a sacrament to the city of Thebes. The same is true of the horrifying Furies, who seek to avenge the slaying of the tyrant-like Clytemnestra; as will soon be discussed, they are eventually transformed into the *Eumenides*, the 'friendly ones.' Antigone, Ajax and Orestes could also be mentioned.

But focusing on tragic characters as role models obscures the fact that watching them meant much more than abstractly analysing their behaviour. Observing tragic heroes in action surely also raised such questions as: What does it feel like to possess a tyrant's power? What does it feel like to challenge the laws of the city or even the gods? How would I feel if I found out I had murdered my father and married my mother? What would it take for me to kill my own kith and kin? What is the value of my life compared to the life of the hero? Is his immortality

in communal memory worth such terrible suffering? The *eros* of tragic figures opens up a realm of dark fantasy and troubling questions that can altogether excite, disgust, terrify and deeply sadden. Perhaps, as Plato suggested, this realm could even motivate.

This brings us to the third and final possible alternative to erotic moderation that we see presented in tragedy: a communal cooption of *eros* and its power. Unlike Pentheus, Clytemnestra, Oedipus and other tragic heroes, the mythical Athenians managed to escape from their suffering, and they did so by institutionalizing a festival in honour of the god who had punished them. The power of Dionysus, in other words, was properly acknowledged and made profitable to the *polis* by the community's worship of the god. The formation of an alliance between the city and Dionysus was the implicit goal of the festival's opening religious rituals and, to some extent at least, of its dramas; these were all performed as *worship* of Dionysus, a gift to the god that was expected to be reciprocated by the return of his favour. We must then ask whether the power of *eros* could be harnessed in a similar fashion.

A number of plays suggest that indeed it could be. Of these, the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus is most relevant for our discussion. Before proceeding to corroborate this claim, a caveat must be given. As David Porter writes, the *Oresteia* is "a megadrama which, as in the great fugues of J. S. Bach, owes much of its power to the way in which a multiplicity of subjects and counter-subjects pull against each other even as they mesh" (2005: 304). The trilogy is rich, complex and morally confusing, and it would be naïve to try to reduce its importance to any particular theme or issue or to suggest that it expresses one and only one 'message.' Continuing Porter's musical analogy, to perform or appreciate a Bach fugue, one must try to hear and keep in balance its various thematic lines; but to reach this point, "one must focus on, and probably sound too loudly, one theme at a time, especially those themes one has previously overlooked" (*ibid.*). The following

discussion, therefore, is not meant to downplay other interpretations of the *Oresteia* or to suggest that the proper role of political *eros* is the trilogy's sole concern, only to note that it is an important theme that often goes overlooked (an exception is Thumiger 2014).

In the foregoing discussion, we have seen in fleeting the various references to *eros* that exist in the *Oresteia*. It was noted, for example, that Clytemnestra warns against an *eros* to violate that which one should not. This theme of transgressive *eros* threads throughout the *Agamemnon*. We see it, first of all, in the behaviour of the namesake of the play, who is depicted upon his return to Argos as glorying in having "destroyed the altars and shrines of Troy's gods and wasting the seed of her whole land," in having "cast such a yoke upon the neck of Troy" (525-530). When considered alongside Aeschylus's representation of Xerxes in the *Persians*, as well as the lines regarding *eros* that are spoken by Clytemnestra, it is clear that Agamemnon is being compared here to a tyrant, and that the *eros* against which Queen Clytemnestra warned was his (Edwards 1977: 34). This is further hinted at in Agamemnon's capitulation to his wife's insistence that he step on to the purple tapestries in the manner of the barbarian potentate Priam – the action that immediately precipitates his death.

The link between *eros* and tyranny in the person of Agamemnon is confirmed by Clytemnestra in her bitter accusation against the gruesome ancestor of Agamemnon, the infamous Tantalus – he was the one, she says, who through the butchering of his child first fostered the "love of lapping blood" (*eros haimatoloichos*, 1479) that now haunts the House of Argos. The chorus seems to agree (1481-2): "An old Hubris," they say, "tends to bring forth … a young Hubris and that irresistible, unconquerable, unholy spirit, Daring [*tolma*], and for the household black Furies, which resemble their parents" (764-771).

Singing of Clytemnestra's terribly beautiful sister, Helen – "that vengeful Fury who brought tears to brides" (750; 1455-1461) – the chorus relate the story of how

> a man once fostered in his house a lion cub, from the mother's milk torn, craving the breast given. In the first steps of its young life mild, it played with children and delighted the old. Caught in the arm's cradle they pampered it like a newborn child, shining eyed and broken to the hand to stay the stress of its hunger. But it grew with time, and the lion in the blood strain came out; it paid grace to those who had fostered it in blood and death for the sheep flocks, a grim feast forbidden. The house reeked with blood run, nor could its people beat down the bane, the giant murderer's onslaught. This thing they raised in their house was blessed by God to be priest of destruction (716-736).

This, they say, was the fate of Priam and his city when they took Helen from the Greeks. In this picture, we can see a dark family resemblance between Helen and Clytemnestra. Cassandra, fated for misunderstanding and death, tries in vain to bring this to the attention to the chorus:

> There is one that plots for vengeance, the strengthless lion rolling in his master's bed, who keeps the house against his lord's return, my lord too, now that I wear the slave's yoke on my neck. King of the ships, who tore up Ilium by the roots, what does he know of this accursed bitch, who licks his hand, who fawns on him with lifted ears, who like a secret death shall strike the coward's stroke, nor fail? No, this is *tolma* when the female shall strike down the male. (1123-32)

And sure enough, soon after Cassandra's lament, Clytemnestra sinks her dagger into both the King and his sorrowful concubine – the latter's death "a delicate excitement to [her] bed's delight" (1447). This double murder places the city under the yoke of a sexually-charged "tyranny" (1355, 1365) to be managed by both Clytemnestra and her lover, Aegisthus. The latter's behaviour, the Chorus adds in disgust, is a display as ugly as that of a "cock beside his hen" (1671).

The transgressive *eros* that we have seen is typical of tyrants, and of much tragedy in general, saturates the *Agamemnon* (cf. Thumiger 2013; McGlew 1993: 190-206). The cycle of violence and vengeance that it breeds continues into the *Libation Bearers*, where Orestes takes a bloody revenge against his mother, throwing the questions of divine and civic justice, of family ties and obligations, of fate and necessity, and of manliness and femininity high into the air. In the *Eumenides*, they will finally come crashing down, amid a dark cloud of hostility and danger, at the spectator's doorstep – the city of Athens.

For after his act of matricide, the avenging Furies pursue Orestes all the way to this city, where he seeks refuge in the sanctuary of Athena. The goddess offers to act as an adjudicator to the dispute, with the citizens of Athens acting as a jury in the trial. Both the Furies and Orestes (and his patron Apollo) agree to this solution. After the two sides have each made their cases, the jury is hung. This seems to reflect the collision of values that is reflected throughout the trilogy; the Athenians simply cannot decide who is right, in much the same way as the Argive chorus is stumped by Clytemnestra's eloquent speech in defence of her murder of Agamemnon.

It is therefore left to Athena to decide the young man's fate, and she votes that he should be spared. She does so, she says, because she was born without a mother, fully-formed from Zeus's head, which means that she is for the male

principle and entirely on the father's side; she cannot award greater honour to the death of a woman who killed her husband, the master of the house.

As thanks, Orestes offers the eternal allegiance of Argos to Athens and his powers as a hero from beyond the grave. The Furies, on the other hand, remain true to their name; feeling gravely dishonoured, they threaten to let loose on the land of Attica a vindictive poison that will blight the crops and leave everything barren. But, as "Furies which resemble their parents" (*Ag.* 771), the avengers of Clytemnestra also threaten Athens with a transgressive political *eros* – the tyrannical bloodlust that leads to civil war. Athena worries that, "as if plucking the heart from fighting cocks," the Furies will plant among her citizens "that spirit of war that turns their battle fury inward on themselves" (*Eum.* 861-5).

Athena has no place for "the bird that fights at home," and she therefore tries to persuade the Furies (in starkly erotic language) that they can have a place of great honour in the city as guarantors of the city's fertility, civic harmony and martial success (Buxton 1982). If they hold Persuasion in her rightful place, and give in "to the sweet beguilement of [Athena's] voice," they will "be honoured as the good are honoured" (*Eum.* 885-6; 868-9) by the goddess's city. If they do not do so, they will come to lust for the city of Athens "like lovers" (852).

Eventually the Furies relent; they submit to the beautiful voice of Athena and her persuasive sense of honour and justice, and promise to take a home beneath the city as *eumenides*. In this capacity, they will unleash a spell upon the land of Attica that will ensure "the seed and stream of the soil's yield and of the grazing beasts will be strong and never fail" and which will "keep the human seed alive" (906-909). Not only this: "In the terror upon the faces of these," Athena says of the former Furies, "I see great good for our citizens" – for these dark creatures, the daughters of Night, will grant her wish that the city's wars will rage "outward hard against the man who has fallen horribly in love with high

renown" (990-1; 864-5). And, sure enough, before they go to their home under the earth amidst a joyful and pompous procession, the Eumenides offer one final prayer: "Civil War, fattening on men's ruin, shall not thunder in our city. Let not the dry dust that drinks the black blood of citizens through passion for revenge and bloodshed for bloodshed be given our state to prey upon. Let them render grace for grace. Let love [*philia*] be their common will; let them hate with single hearts. Much wrong in the world is thereby healed" (976-987).

The prayer of the Eumenides seems to link back to the *Agamemnon*, in which the Argive soldiers and citizens express a mutual *eros* for one another and for the fatherland. A similar sort of patriotism seems to be present in the *Eumenides*, but here we see a definite model, a positive state of being for the citizens to aspire to. It is true that in the *Agamemnon*, communal *eros* is figured as "a pleasant kind of sickness" (545), throwing some doubt as to its value, whereas in the *Eumenides* the bond between citizens is described as *philia*, perhaps suggesting a more tempered love that might be compared to that felt for family and friends. But this does not seem to be the case; the erotic overtones of *philia* in the *Eumenides* are very clear. The transgressive power of the Furies to incite bloodlust and war – a power that we have seen is associated strongly with *eros* and fertility – is by no means annulled here; rather, it is appropriated and communalised and directed outward against the city's enemies. In particular, it is directed against those who have a terrible *eros* for fame (e.g., aspiring tyrants). Athena accomplishes this in a thoroughly eroticised example of persuasion; her use of *peitho* to coopt the Furies eliminates the need for internal violence within the city, and adds legitimacy to the erotic union (Rynearson 2013; Buxton 1982). Thus, if the citizens of the drama are united in *philia* – just as they are in the theatre itself – they are also united in *eros*: in the generation of children, in the productivity of the fields and, more importantly for our purposes, in the fight against potential tyrants.

But the happy ending of the trilogy leaves two important questions unresolved. First, what effects will the co-opted spirit of the Furies have on Athens' international politics? Given that this spirit will let loose on the land of its enemies "the vindictive poison dripping deadly … [which] from itself shall breed cancer" (780-5) there is good reason to believe that the erotic fury that has been harnessed by the city will be prone to engage in its usual excesses when it enters the field of inter-state politics. Second, what will happen if the honours and piety promised to the Eumenides in return for their good-will are discontinued? It seems likely that they will return from their homes under the earth with a vengeance more furious than ever, and set apart tearing the city to pieces from within.

Conclusion

To conclude, we have seen that the various political rituals conducted before the dramatic performances began suggest that the Great Dionysia was, in part, an attempt on behalf of the city to mediate the competing demands of individual power-seeking, empire and communal stability; this concern was reflected in the plays themselves, for example in the interplay between the hero and the chorus. I argued that this dynamic can be interpreted in terms of the erotic discourse that characterised democratic politics in Athens after the end of the Pisistratids and the Persian invasion. Tyranny, at the heart of which was believed to lie a transgressive and very dangerous species of *eros*, is central to democratic self-definition and as such a favourite topos of the tragedians. Tragic *eros*, I argued, is defined not only by the fact that it is almost univocally associated with madness, unreason, and reversal of fortune through the transformation of self, but also by the fact that it fundamentally and unavoidably concerns the *polis*.

I then suggested that the opening rituals of the Dionysia can help to frame tragic drama, although they do so in a general rather than a formulaic manner. I ar-

gued, first, that the transformation of self that is associated with the mask and with wine in Dionysian cult is crucial to understanding the didactic power of tragedy, insofar as it encourages actors and spectators to identify with a range of perspectives, including those normally considered beyond the pale. Second, I argued that the close relationship between *eros* and Dionysus in terms of the roles they play in promoting political potency (and impotence) is reflected in the context of the festival itself, where the dissolution of boundaries between individuals that was encouraged by the performances helped to consolidate the identity of the *demos*. This collective identity – this political unity – was essential to the war-making capacity of the city. I also showed that the transgressive *eros* that we see reflected in so many tragedies reflects the Athenians' concern about and flirtation with tyrannical power. The exploration of this theme problematises the civic unity that the festival's context encourages. The blurring of boundaries, in other words, had the paradoxical potential not only for uniting the citizens of Athens but also for dividing them; the creativity of Dionysus and his playmate Eros was matched only by their potential for havoc and destruction.

Part Two

The Erotics of Empire

CHAPTER FOUR

Introduction

As a model of democratic citizenship at Athens, Pericles' ideal of the 'lover of the city' plays a crucial role in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*.[5] In this chapter, I argue that the relationship between an *erastes* and his *eromenos* and the behaviour it gives rise to can be identified, within the context of Funeral Oration itself as well as various other speeches in the *History*, as the foundations not only of Pericles' vision of patriotism but of Athens' characteristic dynamism also. In light of Thucydides' explicit statement that this dynamism – and Sparta's fear of it – were the concurrent causes of the war, the importance for Thucydides of the 'national character' or 'constitution' in the shaping of political destiny becomes clear. This point is reinforced by the disastrous Sicilian expedition (to be considered in the next chapter), which ultimately leads Athens towards its tragic fate: self-destruction through *stasis* (civil conflict). In other words, Thucydides suggests that to properly understand the causes and, indeed, the dynamics of the war, we must understand the causes of Athenian imperialism; yet to properly understand Athenian imperialism, we must understand the social constitution of Athens; and, finally, to understand the constitution of Athens, we must understand the ideal that guides Athenian political behaviour – an ideal I dub 'erotic citizenship.'

This chapter is structured around a number of questions. First, how does Pericles' metaphor map onto politics (that is, what are the metaphor's ideational parameters)? Second, what is the connection of erotic citizenship to the 'national character' of Athens? And, finally, third: how does this ideal relate to tragedy? Once we have the answers to these questions, we will be better placed to understand what role Pericles' speech plays in the structure of the *History* as a whole.

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[5] All references to ancient books in this part of the dissertation are to Thucydides unless otherwise indicated.

The chapter is divided into two sections: Section One answers the first two questions; Section Two tackles the third.

Section One: *Eros* and the Athenian Ideal

(i) 'The Lover of the City'

Reading Thucydides 2.43.1, we can well imagine the scene. As he addresses the men of Athens, under a grey sky in the first winter of the war, Pericles slowly sweeps his arm across the Attic landscape. From his podium, he directs the eyes of his audience over the most beautiful monuments in the public cemetery before them, to linger on the glorious Acropolis, the Areopagus, and the Pnyx, plus the mansions and the markets all safe beyond the city walls, before pointing to the country farms and olive groves and the silver sea far off in the distance. He returns to the remains of Athens' war-dead and finally to the city's men themselves, as he exhorts them all "to gaze, day after day, upon the power (*dynamis*) of the *polis* and become her lovers (*erastai*)."

Socrates, despite his usual irony, captures the mood of the audience in Plato's *Menexenus*: "every time I listen to this kind of speech," Socrates says there of the funeral oration, "I am exalted and imagine myself to have become all at once taller and nobler and more handsome" (235a-b). In this instance, however, Pericles does not merely ask the men of Athens to feel passionately about the city (or, as Socrates implies, about themselves); rather, as Paul Ludwig notes, "he asks them on the basis of that passion to play, in relation to the city, the social role that lovers play toward a beloved" (2002: 148). For when they have taken the city's greatness to heart, Pericles proclaims, the citizens of Athens must not forget that what made her so powerful were those men they are now mourning; they must remember that it is for them to live up to the example of the dead.

As we have seen in Chapter Two, the role of the *erastes* was defined by a number of complex norms. In this part of the chapter we will be concerned with sol-

ving the difficult question of how the interpersonal relationship of the *erastes* and the *eromenos* can be understood to function on a more purely political level.

We begin with a discussion of the city-as-*eromenos*. In this regard, we must first consider the issue of the city's *dynamis*, which is the quality that for Pericles makes the *polis* so attractive. The exact meaning of *dynamis* is not fully captured by the common English translations of 'power' or 'empire.' Dora C. Pozzi (1983: 222) argues that the German word *Macht*, with all the resonances that this word evokes, perhaps does *dynamis* more justice. However we finally decide to translate the word, this quality is seen – in the literal sense – to be the beauty of Athens, for *eros* is inspired by beauty, and beauty is perceived by the eyes.

But an abstract, relational (and highly contested) concept such as 'power' seems difficult, if not impossible, to grasp visually. What the Athenians *could* see, apart from the power inherent to their own bodies, was the exercise of power that had been built into the city and woven into the very fabric of their lives as imperial masters. It is in this sense, it seems, that some commentators have considered the word *dynamis* to translate into 'empire' (Monoson 1994; Balot 2001). Such a reading fits well with Thucydides' description of the public cemetery as "the *most beautiful* quarter outside the city walls" (2.34.5, emphasis added), with Pericles' mention of the comeliness and elegance of the Athenians' private homes (2.38.1), with his belief that what he describes in his encomium delivers 'visible proof' of the city's greatness (2.42.2), and also with Plutarch's story that the massive public building program initiated by Pericles in 447, undertaken with funds procured from the Delian League (that is, with resources extracted from the empire), led his enemies to accuse him of treating the city "like a wanton woman, [adding] to her wardrobe precious stones and costly statues and temples worth their millions" (*Per*. 12.2).

Furthermore, this view seems implicit in the lessons of the 'political physiognomy'[6] in which Pericles instructs his audience: having contemplated the beauty of the city and, in the process, having become her lovers, the men of Athens are to reflect on the kind of character that made such beauty possible; they should recognise the inherent relation between the daring spirit of the dead, their knowledge of their duty and their sense of honour, and "the mighty markers and monuments of their empire [*dynamin*]" (2.41.4; cf. Immerwahr 1960). Indeed, it could be argued that in Pericles' view "praise of Athens is really praise of the achievements of brave men" (Pearson 1943: 407). However, Pericles also stresses that the institutions and way of life at Athens are just as worthy of affection as these monuments: its democratic governance and independence, equality before the law, love of wisdom and the arts, games and festivals, generosity and self-control, openness to aliens and foreign produce, and its private freedom and public-spiritedness are all good – if not 'beautiful' – things to be desired.

In its metaphorical significance as *eromenos*, then, it appears that the *polis* is marked by its physical splendour, by its wonderful way of life, and by the daring spirit of the men that is reflected by such magnificence; its loveliness is expressive of the noble courage of those who suffered in its name, and of the institutions that gave them the wisdom to know the reasons why they *should* suffer. In short, the city is a shining example of what is *kalos k'agathos* ('fair and noble') – the ancient catchphrase of the aristocracy, a class of men to which the young Harmodius belonged.

But there is more to it than this. For the specifically martial dimension of *dynamis* that Pozzi wants to flesh out that, until now, has remained somewhat hazy becomes especially stark when we consider Thucydides' use of the word in the 'Archaeology' (his introduction to the larger work). Here, Thucydides asks the reader to imagine what future ages might think of Sparta should the city all of a

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[6] My own coinage, and an idea that warrants further exploration (cf. Tsouna 1998; Cochrane 1929; Thuc. 2.65.5).

sudden become bereft of its people: on the basis of its mere appearance, with its lack of majesty or major monuments, those visitors from the future would never believe that Sparta's *dynamis* allowed it not only to occupy two-fifths of the Peloponnese but to stand at the head of the whole and to command a number of allies elsewhere as well. If the same fate were to befall Athens, Thucydides writes, "any inference from the appearance presented to the eye would make her [*dynamin*] to have been twice as great as it is" (1.10.2). It is clear that *dynamis* is in large part the military might of a *polis*; it follows that we would be very unwise to gauge the power of a city *simply* from its architectural appearance (although this is, Thucydides implicitly suggests, still a factor in the estimation of political *dynamis*). We can thus clearly perceive the strong sense in which Pericles intimates that it is not just the resplendence and balanced way of life at Athens that make her beauty so pronounced; it is, he suggests, as much the battle steeds, spears and billowed sails of the city at war that will set the hearts of her men all aflame.

The city, as *eromenos*, is a complex and abstracted amalgam of elements animate and inanimate, mental and physical, living and dead, present and past, near and far. Its beauty is to be found in empire, homeland, and military force; in democracy, philosophy and liberality; in boldness, honour, and manly courage. As Nicole Loraux writes, "the political consequences of this amalgam, which enables the living to identify with the *andres agathoi* [noble men] whose funeral the city is celebrating, are serious, since, like Socrates, every Athenian takes the praise to apply to himself and immediately transforms himself into an epic character" (1986: 265). For what appears to be a kind of instability in the significance of the *polis* is balanced and even resolved in Pericles' speech by final reference to the eyes: everything beautiful (that is, all that is powerful) about Athens can be *seen*. It is no exaggeration to say that the beauty of the city really comes down to the feats of its citizens – everything, from the empire's pickled

imports to its politics to the friezes of the Parthenon, is *done*. In a word, the city's beauty comes down to its deeds, to its *drama* ('action', 'doing').

We are thus lead to consider the political *erastes* in his role as the hero of this civic 'drama.'[7] What does the best of the Athenians actually do for his beloved? Simply put, he sacrifices himself – he dies. Of course, there are many opportunities for men to serve the city and to win its favour in ways that do not involve risking their lives; and indeed Pericles admits that, although they must resolve no less to keep the same daring spirit against the enemy, those "who remain behind may hope to be spared the fate of the dead" (2.43.1). The desire for honour and standing among citizens resulted in the commission of great monuments and temples, the payment of liturgies, and the funding of lavish festivals and contests, along with many other fine contributions to the community, and in the Funeral Oration all of these avenues for the satisfaction of *philotimia* ('love of honour') remain open. However, Pericles makes clear to the men of Athens that it is in the act of fighting for their city and, in particular, in the act of dying for her, that the greatest valour can be found – and so it is that bloodied corpses, as the finest gifts of all, secure what is most desired from the beloved.

But what, exactly, does death in battle metaphorically signify here? The relationship of the *erastes* and the *eromenos* was a form of loving, friendly barter, characterised by norm-bound gift exchange in which one kind of good (primarily education and mentoring) was traded for another (gratitude, friendly company and eventually sexual favours). In short, the primary value that an *erastes* had in the eyes of a potential *eromenos* was in his capacity as an educator; the primary value of an *eromenos* for his *erastes* lay in his suitability as the quarry of a sexual pursuit. Over time, these exchanges built up trust, developed goodwill

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[7] "Pericles is expressing a truth about patriotism … in terms that echo an ancient aristocratic code. The free compulsion of the Greek hero to follow his own *aretē*, even at the cost of self-destruction, is transferred here to a new object, the city, the corporate creation and reflection of every man who is capable of feeling as he does. Here the democratic citizen is invited – and enabled – to be a hero" (Else 1954: 154).

and communal solidarity, fostered genuine emotional bonds that were mostly lacking in the family lives of Athenian men, and, perhaps most importantly, transmitted the kind of values and skills that nourished all of the above and which were necessary for youths to function successfully as citizens.

S. Sara Monoson therefore quite rightly postulates that Pericles' metaphor, and indeed his entire speech, presents a view of citizenship "that prizes reciprocal mutual exchange between city and citizens and not, as an anachronistic and romantic reading of the metaphor in translation might suggest, the selfless devotion of the individual citizens to the good of the city" (1994: 254). For the dead men have not given their lives for nothing; the favours that the city grants them in exchange for the standard they have set include a pompous state funeral, public support for their sons until the age of their majority, and "the most splendid of sepulchres – not the sepulchre in which their bodies are laid, but where their glory remains eternal in men's minds, always there on the right occasion to stir others to speech or to action" (2.43.3).

The last of these favours, the promise of immortality in memory, is inherited from the heroic tradition. It is nevertheless also closely and quite clearly tied to pedagogy, a central component of Greek pederastic relationships. As Pericles says, on account of their deeds, the dead men will always be remembered by their beloved city in the function they played and will continue to play as role models. Through the standard of courage set by their deaths in battle, that is, the city-lovers have provided Athens with "instruction in virtue, with *paideia* [education]" (Monoson 1994: 268; cf. Loraux 1986). The city, it follows, must make a return on this gift in order for the relationship to reach final consummation; and thus it honours the dead men in perpetuity. It is only once the *erastes* has proved his true worth that the *eromenos* should grant him favour; by granting him such the city displays its exemplary treatment of its citizens; in sum, the two reinforce each other's honour in a physical and spiritual embrace. Nevertheless, most commentators on the speech pay little heed to the nature of the eroticism

inherent to ancient pedagogy, and this is problematic insofar as it passes over the translation of violent death in Pericles' metaphor and neglects the implications this has for understanding the reproduction of the civic virtues celebrated by Pericles.

It has been argued that, in some forms of pederasty in ancient Greece, homosexual intercourse between an *erastes* and his *eromenos* was thought to embed the virtue of the former in the latter through the transfer of semen. Homosexual relations thus formed a central element of the youth's education and played an important role in his initiation into the community of free adult males (Percy III 1996). Athenian pederasty, on the other hand, idealised the physical integrity of the *eromenos* and officially frowned upon physical penetration. Nevertheless, the idea of semen as the vehicle of civic virtue and its correlate masculinity was always implicit in Athenian homoeroticism and the pedagogical practices to which it gave rise. As Werner Jaeger writes, with particular reference to the Greeks in general:

> Education, as practiced by man, is inspired by the same creative and directive vital force which impels every natural species to maintain and preserve its own type; but it is raised to a far higher power by the deliberate effort of human knowledge and will to attain a known end … As man becomes increasingly aware of his own powers, he strives by learning more of the two worlds, the world without him and the world within, to create for himself the best kind of life. His peculiar nature, a combination of body and mind, creates special conditions governing the maintenance and transmission of his type, and imposes on him a special set of formative processes, physical and mental, which we denote as a whole by the name of education. (1967: xiii)

Taken in the context of the Funeral Oration, where death in battle is presented to the audience as the supreme lesson in patriotism, Jaeger's insights raise impor-

tant issues for us. For as Pozzi writes, "in this heroic offering of the men's lives, the full circle of giving and receiving is accomplished" (1983: 228). But in classical Athens, the return which an honourable *eromenos* was expected to make on his relationship included putting his thighs at the service of his lover and thus indulging his genital desire. If Pericles' metaphor is to be complete, therefore, just as the *erastes-eromenos* relationship culminates in the sexual release of the *erastes* as the reward for his educative labours, so must the lover of the city's erotic longing be 'relieved' by his own death. Indeed, the lover who was never intimate with his beloved would find it hard to believe Pericles' assertion that for the dead citizens "death and happiness went in hand" (2.44.1). It follows, then, that the moment of an erotic citizen's violent death is simultaneously his greatest joy, his spiritual 'orgasm' as it were.

Put differently, the relationship of the erotic citizen with his beloved city can only be consummated in the context of war; it is only through combat that the city receives a full and proper education. In Pericles' metaphor, it is only through death in battle that one can teach the full meaning of manliness. Aristotle continued this tradition when he wrote that "in the proper sense of the term" *andreia* is expressed by the man "who fearlessly confronts a noble death, or some sudden peril that threatens death, and the perils of war answer this description most fully" (*Nic. Eth.* 1115a). In Pericles' vision, it is only when he is found out by the enemy's blade that the erotic citizen finds true happiness; at the moment of his death, the consummation of his love in eternity is assured, and he enters a state of erotic ecstasy.

Martha Nussbaum rightly concludes that, in Pericles' city, "*eros*, not law or fear, guides action," and "this reliance on *eros* puts democracy … very much at the mercy of fortune, and of the irrational passions" (1979: 163). But there is an even more troubling aspect of Pericles' metaphor that many scholars, including Nussbaum, have overlooked. This concerns the resemblances that the Periclean

'lover of the city' has with the figure of the tyrant in the democratic imagination.

James McGlew argues that Pericles' figure of the '*erastes* of the city' engages with "an established metaphor [for tyranny] that dates back at least to Archilochus and was still very much current in his own time" (1993: 188). At first glance, this statement is problematic; as we have seen in previous chapters, erotic political discourse was ubiquitous in classical Athens, and one *erastes* in particular – namely, Aristogeiton – served as an officially-sanctioned model for all democratic Athenian men. Pericles is obviously alluding to these images in his speech, which Thucydides confirms when, in the context of his digression on the tyrannicides, he tells us that 'the Athenians' falsely believed that 'they and Harmodius' had destroyed the Pisistratid tyranny. In light of this it seems rather difficult to disentangle democratic from tyrannical allusions in this instance.

Nevertheless, it does seem unlikely that Herodotus's famous saying that 'tyranny has many *erastai*' was made after Pericles' funeral oration, and this lends credence to McGlew's argument; Herodotus was well-received at Athens, was acquainted with members of the Alcmaeonid clan to which Pericles belonged, is known to have recited his *Histories* there, and was culturally very influential. Political metaphors that involved '*erastai*,' it follows, would likely have carried distinct overtones of despotic desire. Moreover, as we have seen, the image of the tyrant as a perverse and brutal *erastes* was long-standing and widespread. Most importantly, however, Pericles would soon describe the empire, which best reflects the city's power (itself the quality he suggests will inspire the *eros* of its men), as being "like a tyranny" (2.63.2). If the power of the city is reflected in the empire and its riches, and if that empire is tyrannical and its riches unjustly gained, it stands to reason that to call upon one's fellow citizens "to gaze, day after day, upon the city and its power" so that they might become its lovers is, effectively, to exhort one's citizens to fall in love with a kind of tyranny.

It would be false to conclude that "the *erastes*' desire is the passion of the aspiring tyrant, not the loyalty of the honest citizen" (McGlew: 188) because Pericles' vision is clearly still deeply rooted in democratic discourse. But there is a definite engagement with the image of tyranny here, and it seems strange that a responsible leader like Pericles would want to flirt with the democracy's avowed ideological enemy in a time of danger and instability. The question becomes especially acute in light of the Spartan's siege of Archanae, one of the larger settlements of Attica. At this time, the anger and frustration of an important segment of disenchanted country-dwellers (who had, as a result of Pericles' 'islander strategy', been forced from the country and now lived in uncomfortable, overcrowded and unsanitary camps along the city walls) reached their boiling point. This was precisely the sort of reaction that the Spartan king Archidamus desired. As Thucydides notes, Archidamus "thought it likely that the Acharnians, who, with their 3,000 hoplites, were an important element in the state, would not allow their own property to be destroyed, but would force the others as well to come out and fight for it" (2.20.4). Watching impotently from behind the parapets of the Long Walls as their homes went up in smoke, the people of Acharnae and the other demes laid waste by the Spartans would surely have experienced strong feelings of resentment – not only towards the Spartan foe but also toward an urban elite whose assets had been hardly touched by the war. By playing upon the feelings of the Archanians in this way, Archidamus sought to introduce *stasis* into the counsel at Athens (Bosworth 2000).

To add to all this, Pericles offered a model of citizenship in which the *erastai* of the city are encouraged to "rival one another to show who is most worthy" (Ludwig 2002: 148). Doing so appears counterproductive to the goal of civic unity; given the fierce competition and antagonism that arose between *erastai* for the hand of good-looking youths, it seems inevitable, on the face of it, that similar conflicts would emerge as a by-product of Pericles' erotic model

of citizenship (cf. Yates 2005). In the wake of Sparta's actions in Acharnae, it would seem that this kind of social division was the last thing Athens needed.

On closer inspection, however, Pericles' vision reconciles the divergent interests of the individual and the community and fosters a far more complicated – if ultimately very competitive – sense of *homonoia*. In Pericles' model, the highest good of the individual is achieved at the moment that he gives away his life for his beloved city; at the moment that he dies, the erotic citizen is granted the honour he most craves, eternal honours from the city. This is a glory that befits not only heroes but tyrants also, insofar as great honour places one far above one's peers, and eternal honours places one above one's peers forever.

But this is not the final stop of the citizen-lover; as he outcompetes his rivals and dies *for* the city, he also *becomes* 'the city and its power', the object of his affection. For it is his dramatic example that those who remain must fall in love with; this is the link that unifies the dead with the living, and the living with each other in their shared honouring and love of the dead. As we have noted, for Pericles the power and beauty of the city ultimately lies in its men, and what is most beautiful about them is reflected in their deeds (the greatest deeds of all being those of the war-dead). In short, it is in death that Athens' men most fully represent the city's *dynamis* and its nobility, its existence as 'Harmodius.'

By constructing his politics in this way, Pericles does three things. First, he transforms (or attempts to transform) virulent self-interest into liberal generosity; his model citizen receives everything at the same time as he gives it all away. This, of course, provides enormous benefits to the *polis* in terms of the honour and riches won through the empire, which itself depends upon the sacrifices of the city's men.

Second, Pericles' erotic model of citizenship suggests the possibility "of an individual having an attachment to the polis that is not mediated by membership in a particular family or faction" (Monoson 1994: 258). This was necessary in the

light of the civil discord that was brewing in Athens as a result of his strategy and Archidamus's actions in Attica. By asking those unhappy men looking out at Archanae from behind the Long Wall to turn their gaze "upon the city and her power," Pericles tried to replace their own particular rustic affections with his vision of the city as its men; he redirected their aggression away from the urban centre, toward the enemy and, only slightly paradoxically, toward one another in each man's potential as a rival suitor in the race for the city's heart.

Finally, in order to achieve both of these goals, Pericles taps into the tragic discourse of tyranny in which the tyrant's power is often presented in ambiguous terms, and sometimes as an object of (illicit) desire. Just as Athens' "daring spirit has forced an entry into every sea and every land," and everywhere left behind it "everlasting memorials of good and evil" (2.41.4), the erotic citizens who die for their beloved city will have "the whole earth for their tomb" (2.43.3). Here, Pericles seems to be invoking a similar sort of patriotism to that we have seen exists in the *Eumenides*; like the Furies, he urges the people of his city to unite in a spirit of love, to form a common will, and to hate with single hearts – the reason being, as Aeschylus would say, that "much wrong in the world is thereby healed" (*Eum.* 987). This is not surprising, insofar as at the time of Pericles' speech there was quite a lot wrong in Athens.

But the extraordinary energies that are harnessed by Pericles' model of citizenship are balanced on the tip of a pin – or, to be metaphorically precise, on the tip of a spear. As we have seen, he who loves the city so passionately that he longs to die for it is, on reflection, also the man who longs to possess the city's 'heart' forever, and for himself. The citizen-lover therefore resembles both democrat and tyrant, both Aristogeiton and Hipparchus. Thus he goes to war happily and whole-heartedly, whether to defend his imperial power or to expand it – the true democrat and the true tyrant will find their end on the battlefield in both cases, and enrich the life of the democracy by their demise. What survives, in the community that lives on, is 'Harmodius,' the eternally youthful, eternally beau-

tiful set of aristocratic ideals that undergirds the *polis* and is reflected it its *dynamis*.

When located in the context of inter-state war the political passion of the citizen-*erastai* finds its own antidote, and the dangers posed by political *eros* are thereby partially neutralised. Pericles' model of citizenship deliberately directs the terrible and tyrannical energy of *eros* outward, where it consumes itself in battle as the fuel for Athens' imperial war machine. Yoking the power of love in this way brings great benefits to the broader community; not only in the form of the empire and the riches it brings, but also in the fact that those citizens who (by the intensity of their political *eros* for the city and its power) pose the most danger to the city are destroyed at the same moment the city falls into their hands. War and the public honours for those killed thereby constitute the safety valve of Pericles' vision of erotic citizenship.

Thucydides, it seems, had a great deal of respect for Pericles' vision; it was, he says, under Pericles that Athens was "at her greatest. And when the war broke out, here, too, he appears to have accurately estimated what the power [*dynamis*] of Athens was" (2.65.5-6). Nevertheless, as we shall see, he also understood this vision's limitations – or more precisely, its lack of them. For *eros* was by its nature immoderate, and when the normative structures on which Pericles' metaphor rested broke down, as they were to do during the plague, the power of political passion was liable to turn inwards, upon the city itself. In response to this impiety, we might say, the Eumenides became the Furies once again; when private interest became uncoupled from public honour, the tragedy of Athens became inevitable.

(ii) The Nature of Athenian Man

We now come to consider the question as to what it is exactly that constitutes 'Athenian man' and how central to the content of his character Thucydides himself considers *eros* to be. Doing so will place us in a better position to unders-

tand the overarching structure of Thucydides' work as well as the important debt it owes to tragic drama, both of which will be discussed in the following parts of the chapter.

According to Steven Forde, if we "bring all that is said about the Athenian character in the course of Thucydides' History, whether by Thucydides himself or by his speakers, we get what is in fact a remarkably consistent portrait of the Athenians, revolving around certain commonly acknowledged core traits" (1986: 434). Daring (*tolma*) is identified "by all who broach the subject" (*ibid*) as the most important of these characteristics, as it is indeed this quality that most profoundly marks out the men of Athens from those of other cities. It is the connection of *tolma* to *eros* that we will explore in this part of the chapter.

Pericles places daring at the centre of his account of the city: according to him, it is the daring of Athens that made this into the most splendid of Greek cities. The virtue (*arete*, 2.43.1) that he sees manifested in the current generation of erotic citizens, and which is traced by him to their fathers and from them to generations of a more distant past, is first and foremost defined by *tolma*.

Ryan Balot points out that "the empire had been won through the toil of several generations, all of whom tried, to the extent that they were able, to conform to a standard of honour and excellence, and they were ashamed to compromise that standard" (2001: 513). In fact, Pericles says that the dead men "fled from shame" (2.42.4) – an apparently paradoxical and specifically democratic kind of courage, which according to Pericles is peculiar to the Athenians. Whilst being terrified of shame, then, the Athenians lack the fear of danger. Indeed, they possess a positive appetite for risk – an appetite attested to even by Athens' enemies (Taylor 2009).

And while this much is clear, in his Funeral Oration Pericles says "nothing about the warlike deeds by which we acquired our power or the battles in which we or

our fathers gallantly resisted our enemies, whether Greek of foreign" (2.36.4). He therefore he leaves us with little knowledge of how the Athenian character was historically produced. Fortunately for us, however, Thucydides himself provides a partial explanation.

After outlining the primary reason why the Spartans decided to go to war with Athens – namely, their fear of Athens' growing power – Thucydides immediately begins an account "of how Athens came to be in the position to gain such strength" (1.89.1). He informs us that after having turned back the barbarian tide at Salamis, the Athenians, who had abandoned their city in the face of Xerxes' invasion, returned to their devastated homes and at once began to rebuild their broken city walls (going so far as to use stone taken from tombs and statues to do so). Sparta, and particularly its allies, opposed this act; they were startled "by the sudden growth of Athenian sea-power and by the daring the Athenians had shown in the war against the Persians" (1.90.1).

The Peloponnesians were in this regard at least not unduly cautious. The radical decision of the Athenians to abandon their city and 'become men of the sea' in their fight against the Persians was unprecedented in the history of Hellas. In fact, from the point of view of other Greek cities, "the unexampled zeal exhibited by the Athenians in the Persian Wars […ᅟhad] not only an admirable, but a terrible or shocking quality as well" (Forde 1986: 436-7).

To understand how this may be so, we should consider the fact that the most significant elements in the life of the *polis* were geographically bounded. Civic identity was in large part intrinsically embedded in the land of Attica; apart from the obvious attachment, knowledge, and stability that the long-term residents of an area generate through daily interaction with their physical and social environments, most of the cults and rituals that shaped and defined personal identity at Athens required a fixed abode for their enactment. Take, for example, the Great Dionysia, at which many important civic rituals (such as the initiation into

citizenship of war orphans who had come of age) were performed; this festival could never be reproduced at sea, as its connection to the land rooted it firmly in the Attic countryside as much as the city proper, and its elaborate ceremonies and plays, intended for the entire *polis* as they were, relied on the enormous space of the theatre for their performance.

As Josiah Ober notes, "standard Athenian convictions about piety and patriotism clearly regarded it as proper for every Athenian to participate in the ritual life of the polis" (2006: 227). As such, and in light of the fact that at least 120 and as many as 170 days of the Athenian calendar featured one or another state-sponsored ritual (*ibid*), it does not appear unreasonable to conclude that, for other Greeks, "[the] astonishing deed of the Athenians, which seems to display the greatest courage, seems also to bear a certain tincture of impiety as well" (Forde 1986: 437).

The Athenians, in short, had lost everything they owned, only to find something strange and disturbingly strong within themselves – a discovery which their rivals in Corinth were quick to notice. Thucydides appears to "validate the Corinthian assessment of the intangible nature of Athens' strength and the Athenians' rejection of traditional boundaries" (Taylor 2009: 21). At least this seems to be the case when he relates the tale, not without some relish, of the Peloponnesians' attempt to put a stop to Athens' post-war reconstruction efforts.

Following the war with Persia, the brilliant Athenian general responsible for the victory at Salamis, Themistocles, hatched and executed a bold plan in response to the Spartan complaints. He himself would venture forth to Sparta to hold embassy, in order to distract the attention of its leaders until his compatriots, all the while working post-haste on the city walls, had completed the fortifications on which they had shortly before begun to work. The plan succeeded, and when the walls were finally completed, Themistocles spoke openly (and one might even say brazenly) to his unhappy hosts:

He said that Athens was now fortified, and fortified sufficiently well to be able to protect her people; that if the Spartans or their allies wanted to send embassies to Athens on any subject, they should in future go there prepared to recognize that the Athenians were capable of making up their own minds both about their own interests and about the interest of Hellas. He pointed out that when the Athenians decided to abandon their city and take to their ships, it was not in consultation with Sparta that they adopted that daring [*tolmesai*] resolution, and that whenever they had joined in counsel with the Spartans it was clear that no one else had offered better advice. And now they thought it better that their city should be fortified; it was better for their own citizens and also would be an advantage for the whole alliance; for it was only on the basis of equal strength that equal and fair discussions on the common interest could be held (1.91.5-7).

Not content with fortifying the city, Themistocles advised the Athenians to wall the natural harbour at Piraeus, which they did, on the grounds that as a naval power maintaining this position on the sea would give them great advantages over their foes in future conflicts. Thucydides, winding the clock back on his narrative, then reminds us that it was Themistocles who "first dared" (*protos etolmesen*) to suggest that the Athenians should become people of the sea as the forces of Xerxes approached, and that it was he who thereby set in stone "the foundations of the *arche*" and began the "acquisition of power [*dynamin*]" (1.93.4).

This daring was not, however, confined to Themistocles. Although the decision to become sea-men during the war with Persia may have been urged on the city by Themistocles, it was ultimately taken democratically; the options were discussed freely and openly and the decision was made by the community. And this was to be most fateful, for if the community had not decided on such a bold

course of action all of Greece would now be subject to the Persians (or so the Athenians argue); without the help of the Athenian *demos* and their ships, neither Themistocles nor even the combined strength of the Spartans and their allies could have defeated a foe as mighty as the Persians (1.74.4). But if, as this story seems to suggest, daring is ultimately dependent on democracy, and if democracy is ultimately dependent on daring (as Pericles argues), the question inevitably arises: which of these came first – not-chicken character or constitutional egg?

With this question, we come full circle to the *erastes-eromenos* relationship that forms the nucleus of Pericles' vision of patriotism. Outside of the Funeral Oration, there are only two references to pederasty in the *History*, and both involve the same legendary figures: Aristogeiton and Harmodius. As we have seen in Chapter Two, these two Athenians, the one aristocratic and the other middle class, were credited in the popular imagination with having slain the city's reigning tyrant in an act of great self-sacrifice, winning freedom for the people at the cost of their own lives. For their deed the two tyrannicides were hailed as heroes by the city and touted as model 'erotic citizens'.

Inherent to this kind of erotic citizenship is the quality of daring, or at least this is what Thucydides' would have us believe. In Book Six, he says in no uncertain words that the "daring" action that defines the story of Aristogeiton and Harmodius was the child of a private love affair. Thucydides ends his digression on the tyrannicides on a telling note: after fleeing Athens and enjoying refuge with the Persians for many years, he says, Hippias finally returned to face his former subjects – alongside the barbarian army massed at Marathon. This, as Forde astutely observes, quite clearly suggests that for the Athenians "the fight against Hippias and tyranny was transformed … into the fight against the Persians and its aftermath" (Forde 1986: 442). The struggle initiated by Aristogeiton and Harmodius against barbaric despotism was, quite literally, inherited by their democratic son, the Athenian 'Everyman' – just as the next generation would carry the fight

forward against the Spartans in order to maintain, and then tragically expand, the empire they had built in the struggle against the Persians.

It is worth briefly recalling the discussion in Chapter Three. Here we saw in passing that Aeschylus, in the *Agamemnon*, associates *hubris* with *tolma* – "that irresistible, unconquerable, unholy spirit, Daring" (770). This same daring is what Cassandra claims inspires Clytemnestra to strike down Agamemnon and institute a 'tyranny' over Argos. Tyranny, as we know, was bound up with *eros* both in Aeschylus's drama and in Athenian discourse more generally. As we will see in the following chapter, in his discussion of the tyrannicides and their relation to Athenians' treatment of Alcibiades, Thucydides picks up on this theme. Before moving on, however, it is worthwhile considering another, more indirect level on which this part of the *History* can be illuminated through the study of tragedy.

<u>Section Two: Erotic Citizenship and Tragedy</u>

(i) *Euripides and the* Suppliants

The similarities – and dissimilarities – between various funeral rituals in Athens and its various tragedies have been investigated often, in depth, by scholars much more competent than I (e.g. de Romilly 1963; Loraux 1986; Goldhill 1988; Bennet and Tyrell 1990; Ebott 2000; Tzanetou 2005). It is impossible to discuss all of the literature in one small section of a chapter, and even to the drama that is subject to analysis here some violence must be done. As such, I must make clear that this is inevitably a partial reading, and one which does not purport to speak the whole truth about either tragedy or funeral oratory as genres (if ever that could be done). Therefore, in this chapter, whenever I extract elements from tragedy to support my claims regarding Pericles' funeral oration, I do so without the pretension that mine is the only manner in which such lines can or should be read; nor do I mean to suggest that Pericles and the tragedians held the very same beliefs on all subjects under discussion. This was obviously

not the case.

What I *will* argue is that Pericles' oration and the *Suppliants* of Euripides both draw on a common but evolving stock of cultural references, myths, and ideas related to Athenian democratic ideology. Although Thucydides' Pericles and Euripides engage with ideas and arguments in different ways, one primary effect of both performances is to encourage similar patriotic sentiment in their audience through the presentation of positive (and negative) models of behaviour. The *Suppliants*, however, shines a subtle critical light on many of the themes we see presented in the Funeral Oration. As such, it provides insights into the broader context in which Pericles made his oration, especially the function that tragedy played in this context. A consideration of this play alongside the ritual and ideological links between the funeral oration and the Great Dionysia as civic institutions allows for a better understanding of the continuity in the didactic content of both Pericles' Funeral Oration and (at least this particular) tragedy.

Furthermore, as John H. Finley, Jr. long ago pointed out, if certain ideas or arguments that Thucydides puts into the mouths of his speakers appear also in Euripides' tragedies, it is likely that Thucydides, who was writing at the end of the fifth century, "is not entirely rephrasing in his own way what he conceived to be the issues of the past, but that he does in fact keep the echo of ideas and arguments once used" (1938: 26). This is important insofar as the intellectual environment of Athens changed radically over the course of the war – sophism, for example, made enormous philosophical headway, particularly among the elite – and it has been argued that Thucydides was, when writing his *History*, heavily influenced by these trends and that the construction of his speeches reflect this fact. Were this the case, then Thucydides may not have fully reproduced what was said at the time of Pericles, and how; hence, it is argued, he is likely to have distorted, to some extent, the living reality which he purported to capture in his narrative. If, on the other hand, Thucydides can be shown to have faithfully reproduced the discourse that took place some thirty years before he wrote, we can

feel secure that the behaviour he suggests was the outcome of these speeches was indeed related to their content. On this hangs the question of whether discourse and practice in Thucydides are mutually constitutive.

We should begin with what Pericles, in his oration, declines to expound but for that very reason implicitly invokes. Twice when addressing his audience Pericles refuses to touch on those "subjects familiar to you all" – namely, the many battles in which Athenians have proved their gallantry and increased their power (2.36.4, 2.43.1). What Pericles is hiding here is the fact that while these battles to which he alludes include those fought against the Persians, there is a much richer and no less legitimate store of heroic examples to be found in myth (Loraux 1986). These were used time and again in generic funeral oratory – indeed, they were its staple:

> Four major myths were used as paradigms in the Attic funeral oration. In each, specific themes were repeated that illustrated the typically claimed Athenian virtues and that proleptically anticipated similar acts and attitudes in Athenian history. The basic structure is as follows. Either a foreign force has invaded Greece or a Greek state has committed an injustice in violation of the Hellenic cultural code (*nomos Hellenikos*). Athens intervenes, either driving out the foreign invaders or else crushing the offending Greek state militarily, thereby succouring the oppressed, upholding justice and Hellenic *nomos*, and punishing the wicked. In each case she must act alone, because other Greek states are either afraid to help or spiteful. (Walters 1980: 10)

Although Pericles does not invoke these myths directly, he nevertheless does not find himself in breach of his duty to follow the tradition in which the audience was regaled with legendary tales. For the myths *are* in fact brought to light, albeit in the manner of a photographic negative: by explicitly excluding these co-

lourful legends, Pericles' speech makes space for other foci but nevertheless implicitly includes them as subtle hues and shadings. The other, older part of the traditional funeral oration is so entrenched in memory, Pericles' speech suggests, that it can afford to be hinted at; the long story can be cut short without incurring any damage as an artefact of common knowledge (cf. Ober 2006: 227). But a strange question then arises: how does the (non-)existence of mythical exemplars in Pericles' oration embody a connection to tragedy?

The answer to this question is can be found in one of Euripides' dramas, namely, the *Suppliants*. Produced in 423, eight years after the real funeral oration was actually made and some twenty before Thucydides penned his own version of it, this play takes as its theme one prominent mythical paradigm of the generic funeral oration: the Athenians' adventure to retrieve the bodies of the seven Argive chiefs who died fighting against Thebes and whose burial had been forbidden by the tyrant Creon.

The *Suppliants* takes place in the shadow of the altar of Demeter and Persephone at Eleusis, home of the Mysteries of Athenian state cult, where Aethra, mother of Theseus, is praying. King Adrastus of Argos, who led the disastrous expedition to Thebes, weeps with the mothers and sons of the seven chiefs killed in action. Together, they supplicate for the return of their relatives' bodies.

When Theseus arrives from Athens, having been called to Eleusis by his mother, Adrastus begs the king for help to recover the corpses. Theseus chides him for having "favoured courage [*eupsychia*] instead of discretion" (161) and refuses to help. At the insistence of his mother and in response to the suppliants' pleas for pity, however, the young Athenian king reverses his decision – but only, he insists, on the ground that "it ill suits [his] character to shun dangers" (335). As a 'democratic king,' he then puts the question to his people, who elect to ask the Thebans for the corpses or, if Creon is found to be obstinate, to take the bodies by force. This latter response is the one they expected; Creon is a despot, and for

the Athenians "nothing is more hostile to a city than a tyrant … [it is he who] cuts down daring like an ear of corn in spring and plucks many a flowering youth from out their meadow" (429, 448-9).

A herald sent forth from Thebes suddenly arrives and, relaying the message that Creon will never allow the bodies' burial, advises Theseus that going to battle against Thebes and its enemies will bring him only ruin. "Hope," he says, "is not to be trusted; it has involved many a state in strife, by leading them into excessive rage" (479-480). If thoughtless men were to place death before their eyes when voting upon war, which they rarely tend to do, "Hellas would never rush to her doom in mad desire [*pothe*] for battle" (485). Peace, he says, brings the greatest blessings to mankind, which men cast away when they "wickedly embark on war, man enslaving his weaker brother, and cities following suit" (491-93).

Theseus responds by rejecting the idea that Creon is his "lord and master" (518). He thinks it right "to bury the fallen dead, not injuring any state nor yet introducing murderous strife, but preserving the law of all Hellas" (524-27). He seems to agree with the herald that hope can be a treacherous friend, for he suggests that "fortune" (*tuche*) lives a fickle life; "to her the wretched pays his court and homage to win her smile; her likewise the prosperous man extols, for fear the favouring gale may leave him" (550-55). Nevertheless, he accepts the "danger" (572) inherent to war, declaring that the Athenians' many labours have won them just as many blessings, and dismisses the herald's warning. Refusing to give in to "rage" (581), he calmly rallies his army with a rousing speech and leads them forth against the Thebans. The Athenians are victorious, of course, and carry the bodies of the Seven back for burial.

On seeing the bodies of their loved ones, Adrastus and the chorus begin to wail and seek to tend the dead, as was the custom of women in archaic times (cf. Hohlst-Warhaft 1992). Theseus upbraids the Argive king and encourages him to

exchange his lamentations for a speech that praises the dead instead of simply mourning them; doing so, he says, will be of benefit to "our younger citizens" (840-45). Adrastus obliges, waxing lyrical on the various virtues of the seven dead men and telling his women folk to quieten down. He concludes with the Sophistic thought that "courage [*euandria*] can be learned" and exhorts his audience to "educate [their] children well" (913-917).

Our attention is then directed to Evadne, wife of one of the seven slain chiefs, as she climbs a rock with the intention to leap onto her husband's blazing funeral pyre. Before she makes the fateful jump, however, Evadne declares to her father and a horrified chorus that what she seeks to win through her actions is a "great victory" (1059) over women everywhere; she wants to impart a lesson that should be learned by all the Argives. Her confused and frantic father asks whether this victory she speaks of is Athena's doing or else of prudent counsel. Evadne enigmatically (*ainigma*, 1064) replies that it is with courage (*aretē*, 1063) that she shall perish with together with her husband. With great joy, she says, she will die "the sweetest death" (1005-6) in pursuit of union with her lost lover, their bodies forever fused together in a marriage bed of fire.

After these disturbing scenes, the play winds to an end. We are presented with a grim procession led by the dead men's children, who are carrying the funeral urns of their fathers in their hands. While the mothers of the slain shed their final tears, the children cry out: "The weight of grief I have to bear has crushed me utterly … Father, do you hear your children's lamentation? Shall I ever, arrayed as a warrior, avenge your slaughter – if it may be so – and beget children? Some day, if the god is willing, shall the avenging of my father be my task" (1159, 1143-1150). Athena suddenly appears *deus ex machina* and directs Theseus to extract an oath from these sons of Argos that, when they come of age, they will agree to assist Athens in her future endeavours and go to war with her enemies. Their exploits in league with Athens "shall be a theme for minstrels' songs in days to come" (1225).

(ii) *Tragedy and Patriotism*

As Jacqueline De Romilly notes, "both in the general ideas and in the detail of the argumentation, almost all the views put into Pericles' mouth by Thucydides are repeated by Euripides" (1963: 136; cf. Loraux 1989). For example, the guiding principle of Pericles' vision of patriotism –which declares that "both for cities and individuals it is from the greatest dangers that the greatest glory is to be won" (Thuc. 1.144.3; cf. 2.42.2, 64.3) – is basically reproduced in Theseus' comment that Athens' "many labours," including but not limited to the "dangers" of war, "have brought her many blessings" (*Supp.* 572, 576). De Romilly argues that the speech made by Pericles in the cemetery (as reported by Thucydides) and the words spoken by Euripides' heroes in the theatre appear to "express the exact tradition of contemporary patriotism, which was incarnated in Pericles himself" (de Romilly: 136). Nicole Loraux expounds on the logic of this tradition: the aim of Pericles' oration and of Adrastus' speech in the *Suppliants*, she says, "is to urge the survivors to accept the same fate as the citizens whose eulogy [they are] delivering. This amounts to exhorting the citizens to die for the city, whatever euphemisms are used to disguise the appeal" (1989: 98).

Furthermore, the play's concluding remarks that the deeds of the young Argives will become a theme for later poets is an obvious reference to the theatre itself (Easterling 1995: 6). The sons of the dead in the audience, this line suggests, will one day in the future also be sung about for their heroism, like the boys of myth they see before them. Tearful lamentation is transformed into a funeral oration, into an exhortation to the young on stage and in the audience alike to live and die like the heroes they see mourned and praised. Appropriately, Athens is presented as the political embodiment of heroic virtue just as its intervention in the affairs of other Greeks is a righteous defence of the moral law on behalf of the weak and oppressed; in this play, the city's generosity leads to "a sort of perpetual military activity, and [its] militant compassion becomes belligerency" (Loraux 1989: 68).

This becomes disturbingly clear when we place the play within the broader ritual context of tragedy and funeral oratory. We have seen in Chapter Three that at the Great Dionysia, one of the more solemn ceremonies that took place before the tragedies were performed was the parade of the sons of men slain in battle. The *ephebes* would march before the entire city as a herald read aloud: "These young men, whose fathers showed themselves brave men and died in war, have been supported by the state until they have come of age and now, clad thus in full armour by their fellow citizens, they are sent out with the prayers of the city, to go each his way and they are invited to seats of honour in the theatre" (Aeschin. *Against Ctesiphon* 154). Pericles makes explicit reference to this ritual in his funeral oration: it is, he says, one of the jewels of the crown that the city will award to those of its lovers who win the race of valour in its pursuit.

With all this in mind, let us, for a moment, once more exercise our imaginations. It is 423, eight years after Pericles delivered his Funeral Oration. Imagine that among the orphans given special seats in the orchestra is one *ephebe* (let us call him 'Eucrates') whose father was killed by the Boeotians in the cavalry battle at Phrygia in 431. Eucrates remembers listening with awe and affection, as a ten year old, to the great statesman Pericles, taking comfort from his public words of praise after having struggled with his own private grief. The memory of his father lingers in his mind's eye as he is called before the city in full battle dress, and he feels the pride swell up in his breast as his patronymic is called out by the herald.

It seems fairly obvious as to what Eucrates might be feeling and with whom he would likely empathise when Euripides' play was finally performed. For him especially there must have been particular emotional poignancy at the end of the play in the young boys' declaration of their wish to exact vengeance on the despotic Thebans (who, we must recall, are the kinsmen of the Boeotians with whom Athens is currently at war, and who only a few years before had refused to return Athens' own war dead).

It seems clear also that the sympathy of the larger community would lie with the newly minted citizens whose fathers gave their lives in battle, and that the desire to destroy the hated tyrant was being encouraged not just in these young men but in every spectator. Finally, it seems clear that the despot is equated with Athens' enemies abroad, not with the city itself. According to Nicole Loraux, there is little self-doubt in this play; when Thucydides' contemporaries wanted reassurance about their power, she suggests, they turned to tragedies such as this (1989: 285).

There are, however, reasons to believe that the issue is not as simple of this. There is, for instance, a significant difference between the Funeral Oration of Pericles and Euripides' drama. Whereas Adrastus eulogises the dead as individuals, and this never occurred at Athens' public cemetery. At the funeral oration in Athens, on the other hand, the city's egalitarianism required a eulogy that addressed the dead as a group of men; the funeral orator spoke of a type of man, rather than of any man as an individual (Michelini 1994: 242).

Furthermore, Euripides' tragedy critically interrogates the ideology of the Funeral Oration. The Theban herald, for instance, seems to associate Athenian imperialism with an erotic desire for war (465-491). A *pothos* for battle, it is true, is not precisely an *eros* for it. Yet *pothos* was, in fact, "the special name for the desire of what is distant" (Cornford 1965: 215); like *eros*, it was associated with the eye, the channel through which the image of the desired object was believed to enter the soul and inspire love. It is therefore not a stretch to say that Euripides was thinking in erotic terms (and in Pericles' terms in particular) when he had his Theban herald say that if men were to hold death before their "eyes" (*omma*) instead of hoping that this "misfortune" (*dystuchia*) would strike somebody else, then "Hellas would not rush to her doom in mad desire [*pothos*] for battle" (479-85; cf. Thuc. 2.43.1). The leadership styles of Theseus and Pericles, after all, are not dramatically different (cf. *Supp.* 515-595; Thuc. 2.65; Hölscher 1998).

This is especially true in light of Evadne's self-immolation, before which she declares her intention to teach the Argives a lesson in courage by dying the "sweetest death" with her beloved spouse. As we have seen in the foregoing parts of this chapter, the vision of erotic citizenship that Pericles presented alleged that "death and happiness [went] hand in hand" for the lovers who died for the city and that their deaths were a lesson in courage. Evadne's death, however, is presented in a rather more negative light; it achieves nothing but further grief for her family, and reminds us of the lines in Sophocles' *Antigone* that describe how *eros* 'leads the minds of just men astray and drags them to their ruin.'

The end of the play, with its assertion that 'courage can be learned,' points back to the 'lesson' Evadne seeks to provide; but if her kind of courage is rash and reckless, is her lesson a good one to learn? Her father certainly thinks that it is not, and blames Athena. In line with tragedy's general tendency to problematise rather than solve political issues, in these instances the *Suppliants* appears to prod Pericles' Oration for more answers: is it right to eulogise men who have attacked another city unjustly, like the Argives (and, indeed, like the Athenian imperialists) have? Should the communalised dead of the Funeral Oration be granted individualised praise? To what extent does a construction of citizenship in which death and happiness go hand in hand really benefit the city? Are Athens' enemies really so unwise and unjust when they claim that war, and the hope that encourages it, is a bane for all involved? Euripides' subtle interrogation of the ideas expressed in the Funeral Oration suggests that the relation between this tragedy and the *History* is more nuanced than scholars such as Loraux allow for.

One link between tragedy and the funeral oration, however, remains clear and indisputable: the one begins where the other leaves off. The institutions of funeral oratory and tragedy are intrinsically linked, in other words, because (to put it somewhat simply and grotesquely) without the war-dead there could be no orphans for the city to put on display on the Great Dionysia. The celebration of the

deaths of Athens' men at the funeral oration is, in other words, ritually paired with the celebration of the 'birth' of new citizens during the Dionysia. Thucydides was undoubtedly aware of this fact; before he was forced into exile, he had likely attended both the Funeral Oration and the Dionysia more than a dozen times each.

We should spell this connection out a little more, for it illuminates some of the more troubling aspects of Pericles' Funeral Oration. The parade of the war orphans in the Theatre of Dionysus was, as has been mentioned, the culmination of the favour granted by the city to its 'lovers.' Within the erotic metaphor, the ritual can be seen as symbolic of the city giving birth to manly virtue, embodied in a new crop of erotic citizens prepared to give their lives for the city. Those men who have died in pursuit of their beloved are born anew: by giving their lives in battle they have attained an eternal, if collective, existence in civic memory in which they serve as role models for others still living and those yet to come. They live on, however, also through their progeny, who at the moment of their majority (until which point they have been supported by the state) "were more than ever declared the sons of their fathers, since they owed these signal honours to their father's fine death" (Loraux 1989: 116). As such, the *ephebes*' dead father, who had been subsumed in a collective in the funeral oration, was at the Dionysia recalled as an individual lover of the city who, along with others, holds eternal possession of the city.

Through this ritual, then, the cycle of destruction and creation is completed, and the homoerotic relationship at the heart of Pericles' vision of citizenship reaches its logical conclusion. The male seed of the dead men praised in the Funeral Oration have been nourished and raised by those men's beloved, the city, to the point at which they are 'born again' as full citizens at the Great Dionysia. The burial of erotic citizens, metaphorically speaking, has 'impregnated' the land of Athens with masculine virtue; the city in its turn has raised their sons and 'given birth' to them as courageous men. These young men, in turn, clad as they are in

full battle dress, are ready to begin the cycle anew. In the paradoxical world of tragic Athens, then, love is war and war is love, life is death and Hades, to borrow Heraclitus's maxim, is Dionysus.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that one of the central problems occupying Pericles in the *History* is the proper place of political *eros* in the city. According to Thucydides, Pericles' daring patriotic vision based on *eros* was a brilliant one; like tragedy, it incarnated and encouraged the human power released by love – to be precise, homoerotic love – that was the basic foundation of both Athens' democracy and its empire. It harnessed the dynamism born of self-interest which, in its expression through *eros* and *tolma*, was what defined democratic Athens from its beginning, and yoked it to the community, promising to the individual for the sacrifice of his bodily existence the most glorious of earthly rewards and the closest thing to eternal life – eternal fame. Through death in battle, the citizen-lover became one with the *polis* as the embodiment of its collective ideal; 'Aristogeiton', as it were, became one with 'Harmodius.' Indeed, it was only through the destruction of life that true *community* could be born; the city required the sacrifice of men to actualise Pericles' model of citizenship and to reach its full potential. But despite its uses for creating solidarity through war and death – a solidarity reflected in the institution of the Great Dionysia – Pericles' ideal was also a vision that was extremely vulnerable to collapse, on account of the delicate balance between individual and group interest upon which it rested and the tremendous violence upon which it relied for expression. Indeed, in the end it would succumb to the pressures and contradictions inherent to it. The causes and consequences of this implosion are the subject of the next chapter, to which I now turn.

CHAPTER FIVE

Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections, which are structured as follows. In the first section I argue that although both Nicias and Alcibiades are implicated in the catastrophe that unfolds in Sicily, the common attempt to find in either of them a clear locus of responsibility is inappropriate. In this drama, if we can call it that, all alike are afflicted by human weakness; their follies combine with unfortunate circumstance to produce complete disaster, and in this sense both positions outlined above are – at least partially – false. For despite refusing to apportion individual blame for the disaster in Sicily, Thucydides finally appears to conclude that Alcibiades was indeed Athens' best hope in the war, and he suggests that by following unnamed demagogues in recalling Alcibiades for trial on trumped up charges the Athenians proved themselves their own arch-enemies. In other words, if anybody was to blame for the disaster, it was the Athenian *demos*.

In the second section I consider Alcibiades and his fate in terms of the 'erotic politics' described in the first part of this dissertation. In large part, this discussion must revolve around Alcibiades' relationship to the Athenian ideal discussed in the previous chapter. Hence, we must consider the relationship between Alcibiades and Pericles; the politics of the former, I argue, are rooted in the patriotic vision of the latter. This connection is suggested by Thucydides' implied comparison of the two men and, more importantly, by the actual manifestation of Pericles' vision of erotic citizenship during the departure of the fleet to Sicily, a departure which in itself is symbolic of the (temporary) triumph of Alcibiades' policies at Athens.

I then argue that Alcibiades is comparable and was compared to 'the tyrant' as this figure was imagined at Athens; his excesses and transgressions, while disturbing and dangerous to the law and order of the city and the gods, are never-

theless also a source of great political power for Athens. In light of the insights raised in Chapter Four, a consideration of Alcibiades' character – especially its tyrannical aspects – reveals him to be less despotic than Dionysian: the benefits that he can confer upon the city are great, if only he is handled in the right way. The tragedy of Athens, I will conclude, lies more in the repetition of the behaviour manifest in the community's mythical treatment of the god Dionysus than in the personalities and leadership of either Alcibiades or Nicias.

Section One: The Tragedy of Athens

(i) The Roles of Alcibiades and Nicias

It is generally accepted that reading the *History* – especially those parts of it that concern the destruction of the Sicilian expedition – from a 'tragic perspective' is legitimate (if not warranted).[8] Indeed, the emotional poignancy of these episodes is palpable to any and all readers; if we are seeking tragic pathos in the *History*, it is surely here that we will find it. According to Thucydides, the men of Athens "suffered evils too great for tears" in Sicily (7.75.5); it was here, he says, that they "were utterly and entirely defeated …; their losses were, as they say, total; army, navy, everything was destroyed and, out of many, only few returned" (7.87.6).

However, as we know, there is a great deal of disagreement over what exactly constitutes the 'tragedy of Athens' and how tragic drama may have affected Thucydides' historiography. Cornford, whose controversial work is still "the

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[8] Finley (1967), de Romilly (1963) and most of all Cornford (1965) deserve special mention for their impact in this regard; Harry C. Avery suggests that with these authors "the harvest is in" on Thucydides and tragedy (1973: 1). While Avery might perhaps be speaking with extra haste, it is entirely true that the scholars he mentions have set the agenda for those who have come after; no work on this subject can be complete without reference to their arguments. Even W. P. Wallace, who disagrees with so much of Cornford's thesis, admits that "it is hard to read the *History of the Peloponnesian War* without feeling that one is reading the Tragedy of Athens" (1964: 256).

most comprehensive study of Thucydides' debt to the literary tradition" (Ludwig 2002: 154), writes that the resemblances of the *History* to tragedy can be reduced to two main points: "The first is an analogy of technical construction, seen in the use and correlation of different parts of the work. The second is a community of psychological conceptions: a mode of presenting character, and also a theory of the passions which has a place not only in psychology, but in ethics" (1965: 139). This view, shared by many others, posits a dual emphasis on the tragic 'scaffolding' of the narrative (in its emphasis on suffering, delusion and catastrophic reversal) and on the representation of human beings and political groups as *types* that reproduce unethical and destructive patterns of behaviour (to use Aristotle's terms, the text is poetic insofar as it pays attention to both the particular and the general). The prime example of the tragic cycle that Thucydides seeks to describe in the *History* is the city of Athens; the democratic *polis* is the real hero of his historical 'drama' (cf. Knox 1957; Morrison 1994; Lebow 2003).

Most IR scholars reading the *History* through a tragic lens are influenced by this thesis, and view the disaster in Sicily as the culmination of the tragic narrative and the essence of the Athenian tragedy. They suggest that the destruction of the Sicilian expedition is a kind of *nemesis* or 'divine punishment' for Athens' *hubris* at Melos and elsewhere – a *hubris* personified by Alcibiades and doomed by the inherent *hamartia* of the ambitious expedition that he is instrumental in bringing about. Had the Athenians respected the cautious advice of Nicias and resisted the lure of Alcibiades, they suggest, Athens would have been spared the destruction wrought by the expedition to Sicily. On this reading Thucydides essentially "turned against Athens the tremendous moral which his countrymen delighted to read in the *Persians* of Aeschylus; … Athens, tempted by Fortune, deluded by Hope, and blinded by covetous Insolence, was attempting an enterprise comparable with that with which it was her boast to have repulsed and

broken at Salamis" (Cornford 1965: 201; cf. Bedford and Workman 2001). This enterprise, however, brought about the city's ruin.

Many of these authors are highly critical of Alcibiades and find in his rambunctious personality and limitless ambition the enablers of the hubristic expedition and, hence, they point to him as the man most responsible for the *nemesis* that destroys the city. B. Jordan, for example, condemns Alcibiades as reckless and deceitful for his portrayal of the Sicilians and the Peloponnesians as paper tigers. He also condemns Alcibiades for his emotional appeal to the "cupidity and rapacity" of his countrymen (2000: 72). David Smith finds in the young general's speech before the assembly a number of references to epinician poetry celebrating tyranny, which, he suggests, is the goal that Alcibiades is less than covertly aiming at (2009). In a similar vein, Virginia Hunter points out the rhetorical continuities between the Melian Dialogue and Alcibiades' speech at Athens, which are suggestive, she says, of the newfound *hubris* that pervades both episodes (1973: 143-4).

And it is indeed the case that (knowingly or not) Alcibiades seriously underestimates the abilities of the Sicilians. His claim that because of their mixed population the Sicilians lacked "the feeling that they are fighting for their own fatherland" (6.17.3) and that they are militarily inferior as a result is contradicted by Thucydides' own statement that in battle the Syracusans never showed "any lack of enthusiasm or daring; within the limits of their military experience they were not inferior in courage" (6.69.1; cf. 8.96.5). Alcibiades' boasts about his successes against the Spartans are also overblown (Bloedow 1990). Perhaps most importantly for this argument, however, is the fact that Thucydides himself attests to the validity of the main charge levelled by Nicias against Alcibiades – namely, that the latter hoped to profit greatly out of his appointment to the command – by repeating it almost word for word in his commentary following Nicias's speech (6.12, 6.15). Most people, he adds, would later become frightened by the unconventional qualities of Alcibiades, which showed themselves

"both in the lawlessness of his private life and habits and in the spirit in which he acted on all occasions" (6.15.4).

Strauss notes that "both the distrust of Alcibiades and popular fear are in harmony with Nicias' way of thinking" (Strauss 1964: 205). This fact in itself seems to lend legitimacy to the feelings of the *demos*: the warnings uttered by Nicias in 6.9-14 and 6.20-23 are later confirmed by events just as events turn out to mock Alcibiades' flagrant contempt for the capacities of the Sicilians. And when Nicias' death is recounted at the end of Book Seven, Thucydides himself mourns the demise of "a man who, of all the Hellenes in [his] time, least deserved to come to so miserable an end, since the whole of his life had been devoted to the study and the practice of virtue" (7.86.5).

Events and Thucydides both therefore seem to vindicate the wisdom and virtue of Nicias: "the account of his death arouses pity and horror in an intense – and tragic – way" (Rood 1998: 198-9; cf. Marinatos 1980), and it is clear that Thucydides liked Nicias – "as we all do, as all Athens did" (Gomme 1951: 79).

Opposed to this portrait of Nicias, Thucydides portrays Alcibiades as man who is disturbingly eager to aid Sparta in its prosecution of the war, a perversely greedy individual happy to bring about the utter ruin of his native city in order to satisfy his own narcissism. Thucydides' Alcibiades is made to confess that his actions are calculated to destroy "both the present power and the future prospects of Athens" (6.92.5) even though, somewhat grotesquely, he claims that his deeds are all carried out in the name of love (6.92.3).

Thus Lebow, Bedford and Workman and others seem entirely justified in concluding that while Nicias, as "the voice of reason" in the debate over the expedition to Sicily, is a commendable leader who is both "sensible and cautious" (Lebow 2003: 264-5). Alcibiades is a talented but traitorous wretch whose selfishness infects the Athenian population like the plague. In Bloedow's words, "Alcibiades, the cynical, Sophistic imperialist, ruthlessly exploited the

now essentially irrational Athenians, and this for purely selfish personal reasons as he pursued his grand scheme of conquering the entire Western Mediterranean" (1990: 17). Not only this: when prevented from indulging his megalomania by a more circumspect citizenry, Alcibiades turned against his people and enthusiastically contributed to their humiliating defeat (Bedford and Workman 2001: 65-7). On this reading, a more despicable statesman than Alcibiades is hard to find in the *History*.

While perhaps attractive for those who, like us, "live in an age of excess" (*ibid*: 67), such a view is nevertheless a symptom of the times. For while Thucydides may have found Alcibiades *the man* quite unbearable, the author of the *History* was explicitly fond of Alcibiades *the general*. While Thucydides may well have considered Nicias to have been a decent and honourable human being, who did nothing to deserve the wretched fate that befell him, in his account of the leadership of the Sicilian expedition Thucydides quite clearly paints Nicias as a failure. That this escapes the notice of so many is due to the fact that they tend to confuse two things: "Thucydides' likes and dislikes of *persons* (Pericles, Nicias, Cleon, and Alcibiades) and his approval or disapproval of their policies, from time to time, which do not necessarily coincide" (Gomme 1951: 79, original emphasis).

To substantiate this claim, we must consider Nicias' misjudgements during his debate with Alcibiades – misjudgements that are often whitewashed by many scholars. Lebow, for example, simply notes that while "Nicias does his best to dissuade the assembly [from undertaking the expedition] … by insisting on a much larger force and more extensive provisions than were originally planned … [yet t]o his surprise, the more he demands, the more eager the assembly becomes to support the expedition, convinced that a force of such magnitude will be invincible" (2003: 135) Bedford and Workman, taking another tack, argue that it is not Nicias' speech but the excessive hope whipped up by Alcibiades that lures the Athenians on; there is, on their reading, nothing wrong with Ni-

cias' conduct, and consequently they exculpate him from any involvement in the disaster (2001: 67).

But on closer inspection of the text, it is clearly the apparent certainty of success, inadvertently fostered by Nicias, which is responsible for stoking the lust of the Athenians. It is only as a result of his second speech that "*eros* fell upon all alike to sail" (6.24.3). As Clifford Orwin writes, "Nicias, who in his first speech has called on his fellow elders to join him in quenching the mad longing for the absent (i.e. for conquests) (*dyserotes aponton*) of their younger compatriots succeeds only in fanning the eros of all, young and old alike. Persuading them that the augmented project is perfectly safe, he renders it perfectly irresistible" (1994: 12).

While Nicias obviously does not intend this outcome, he is nevertheless responsible for it; aware of both his inadequacies as a speaker and of the intransigent nature of his countrymen, he presses on with his agenda regardless. Rather than "accepting the character and institutions which [the Athenians] actually have, even if they are not perfect, and … living as nearly as possible in accordance with them" – as does Alcibiades (6.18.7) – Nicias prefers to dupe his people with what Thucydides himself calls an "exaggerated estimate of the forces required" (6.19.2). This Nicias does on the misplaced assumption that the Athenians may, in the end, be quite like him (that is, reserved and cautious); when faced with the enormity of the expedition the Athenians will, he hopes, come to recognise the extreme danger of betting almost all of their remaining resources on this one 'roll of the dice.'

"I wish," Nicias says, "to make myself independent of fortune before sailing, and when I do sail, to be as safe as a strong force can make me. This I believe to be surest for the country at large, and safest for us who are to go on the expedition" (6.23.3). With these words, Nicias deliberately distorts the facts of the matter in a way that wrongly presents the chances of success as high. As Pericles in

his Funeral Oration made clear, and as Nicias should well know, the Athenians are prone to great gambles and feats of daring when the odds seem good. Here, with their "great preponderance of strength over those against whom they set out" (6.31.6), they believe they can afford to indulge in "the expensive commodity of hope," as the delegates to Melos would have put it (5.103.1; cf. Kallet 2001; Stahl 2003). Nicias completely ignores the advice of Diodotus, the guardian of Mytilene, who had argued that "it is impossible to prevent, and only great simplicity can hope to prevent, human nature doing what it has once set its mind upon" (Thuc. 3.45.7), and unsurprisingly his plan backfires. As a result, the stakes are raised much higher than they had been in the plan of Alcibiades (the original expedition was just over half of what Nicias argues is necessary). Although they do not quite realise it, the Athenians are really now playing for keeps.

There are other elements of Thucydides' description of Nicias' leadership that portray his command of the expedition in an unmistakably negative light. For example, at the beginning of the expedition, Nicias fails to act decisively, despite possessing ample resources, momentum and the element of surprise; indeed, he hardly employs the navy, the most effective arm of Athens' military, offensively at all. By the time of his dispatch to Athens in 414 describing the situation in Sicily, Nicias has led the expeditionary force into extraordinary difficulties. "Though solely responsible for the gigantism of the expedition," Orwin concludes, "Nicias never turns it to strategic advantage: without pressing for great gains, he exposes Athens to terrible losses" (1994: 121).

Westlake, too, is damning in his critique of Nicias on this point. The wording of Nicias's dispatch to the Athenians, Westlake points out, was chosen by Thucydides, "and it is scarcely credible that even Nicias can in the original report have allowed his incapacity to stand out so glaringly" (1941: 62). And it is true that in the letter (as it stands in the *History*), Nicias admits to having surrendered the initiative to the enemy, to being unable to check subordination among his troops,

and to have kept his own safety as his top priority throughout. Westlake concludes, not without reason, that although the mention of Nicias's illness may arouse sympathy in readers, his own defence of his actions is "so lame as almost to amount to self-condemnation" (*ibid*.).

Thucydides' implicit criticism does not stop there. He represents Nicias' decision to remain in Sicily rather than return to Athens without the blessing of the assembly (Nicias and Demosthenes fear that they will face the charge of treason on their arrival back home) as effectively sealing the fate of the Athenian soldiers under his command; in this case, Nicias' personal interest in dying with dignity, at the hands of the enemy, rather than dishonourably at the hands of Athenian demagogues who would wrongly try him for treason, self-consciously trumps his understanding of the public interest to return home. By making the decision to stay in Sicily Nicias commits an act that is effectively tantamount to treason (Orwin 1994: 122).

To add insult to injury, when it becomes clear that evacuation is the only practical course of action, Nicias delays decampment twice: once, somewhat understandably, on account of information coming from Syracusan traitors inside the city, and again on the advice of soothsayers who are frightened by a lunar eclipse and the portent they believe it holds. These delays do untold damage to the expeditionary force, whose position, Thucydides says, is "getting worse every day in every respect" (7.50); the Syracusans and Peloponnesians get wind of the holdups, and become "more determined than ever not to relax their pressure on the Athenians" (7.51.1). In an ensuing naval engagement, Eurymedon, one of the expedition's three commanders, is killed, and a great number of ships are destroyed as well.

Thucydides clearly holds Nicias responsible for these terrible losses, and remonstrates with him for being "over-inclined to divination" (7.49-50). His mistakes are represented as being very much like those of the Melians, who "miss

the chance of saving themselves in a human and practical way, and, when every clear and distinct hope has left them in their adversity, turn to what is blind and vague, to prophecies and oracles and such things which by encouraging hope lead to ruin" (5.103). Ironically, then, Nicias' faith in the power of the divine and the possibility of salvation by the gods leads to his own destruction and, more importantly, to the deaths of untold numbers of his men.

Westlake concludes that Thucydides "ignores opportunities of defending or commending Nicias, attributes discreditable motives to him, disagrees with his opinions, underlines his strategic errors, and, most frequently of all, allows his failures to speak for themselves … There is no reason to believe that he rescued Nicias from the stigma of being held responsible for the ultimate loss of the Athenian empire" (1941: 64). While this conclusion may be formulated with exaggerated bluntness (indeed, when read in the light of 7.86.5, it is not entirely true), it is nevertheless not without its merits. Thucydides clearly believes that Nicias's tenure as commander produced some horrific consequences for the city.

It seems fair to conclude that the picture painted by those who would hold Alcibiades solely responsible for the Athenian tragedy is one-dimensional and does not acknowledge the nuance of Thucydides' representation of the facts. The text itself seems to implicate in the disaster both Alcibiades *and* Nicias, as well as the politics they stand for. As Tim Rood puts it, Nicias' "counter-productive caution is in harmony with his insight into Athens' best policy" while "the man with some feeling for the grandeur of the Periclean legacy, Alcibiades, is reckless in his application of it" (1998: 163; cf. Liebeschuetz 1968; Dover 1981).[9]

Neither of the two men, however, can really be blamed through faults of their own for the Athenian tragedy. The catastrophe, as Thucydides presents it, is ra-

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[9] Lebow recognises this argument and claims to agree with it, but the general thrust of his later argument clearly exculpates Nicias and condemns Alcibiades for the disaster in Sicily (2003: 265-6).

ther a sum of 'follies,' which, when balanced by one another, cannot be truly considered flaws. If the two men had been united at the helm of the state the city could have made best use of what each of them had to offer (6.17.1). At least, this is what Alcibiades alone suggests and (apparently) desires, and Thucydides seems to support him: in his authorial voice he states that the persecution of Alcibiades was disastrous, and – as we shall see in the third section of this chapter – that the factional division of which it was symptom and cause effectively doomed the expedition (6.15.4, 6.28.2-29.3).

In sum, Nicias and Alcibiades are for the city of Athens at once both boon and bane: each man embodies, but also lacks, certain aspects of Pericles' ideal citizen. Returning briefly to the Funeral Oration helps to illuminate the point:

> The freedom which we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life. There, far from exercising a jealous surveillance over each other, we do not feel called upon to be angry with our neighbour for doing what he likes, or even to indulge in those injurious looks which cannot fail to be offensive, although they inflict no real harm. But all this ease in our private relations does not make us lawless as citizens. Against this fear is our chief safeguard, teaching us to obey the magistrates and the laws, particularly such as regard the protection of the injured, whether they are actually on the statute book, or belong to that code which, although unwritten, yet cannot be broken without acknowledged disgrace (2.37.2-3).

Nicias, a god-fearing man, obeyed without question all the laws – both unwritten and inscribed – but in his speech he gives Alcibiades many an injurious look and encourages the *demos* to do so, too. Alcibiades, who had neither compunction nor right to judge the private lives of others, still really ought to have exercised more restraint in his own. Had he done so, he would have engendered fewer suspicions about his political intentions and would thereby have blunted the

hostility of people like Nicias against him (Woodhead 1970; Palmer 1982). As Thucydides says, the position of power that Alcibiades held among the people "led him to indulge his tastes beyond what his real means would bear and in the rest of his expenditure; and this later on had not a little to do with the ruin of the Athenian state" (6.15.3).

But although Thucydides' words here regarding Alcibiades are undoubtedly critical, they are not the final ones on the matter (nor are they the ones that really *matter* in regards to it). Immediately after this statement Thucydides tells us that the lawlessness Alcibiades showed in regards to his own body and private life, together with the extent of his ambition, "gave offence to everyone, and caused them before long to commit affairs *to other hands, and thus before long to ruin the city*" (6.15.4; emphasis added). In other words, in Thucydides' opinion it was in fact the Athenians – not Alcibiades – who finally brought the city to ruin, by rejecting Alcibiades' leadership (as Nicias had urged them to do) and placing it in the hands of others (2.65.11).

That factionalism – or more precisely, the *stasis* ('civil discord/war') that factionalism leads to – is considered a terrible evil by Thucydides is clearly demonstrated by his famed analysis of civil war in Corcyra (cf. Fuks 1971; Edmunds 1975; Orwin 1988; Price 2001). More importantly for our consideration of the tragedy of Athens, however, it is also demonstrated by his representation of the Herms' mutilation and the profanation of the Eleusinian mysteries and how these events affected the war. It is to this affair that our discussion now turns.

(ii) *The Problem of* Stasis *and Erotic Citizenship*

One morning, as the Athenians prepared for the expedition to Sicily, the city woke to find many of its stone herm figures defaced and disfigured. The herms were simple stone figures that depicted a man with a beard and a phallus; meant to ward off evil spirits, promote fertility and act as boundary markers, they usually stood at the entrance to private houses or temples. The herm's phallus

was an important political symbol insofar as it was representative of "the citizen's power, not in a violent sense, but with the implications of potency, authority and maturity – and, crucially, the successful reproduction of the democratic citizen body" (Quinn 2007: 90).

Herms were religiously associated with the god Hermes, from whom their name was derived, but also with Dionysus (Goldman 1942). Given that Hermes (besides his function as the guide of the dead in Hades) was the patron god of travellers, and that Dionysus was tied up with the city's drama, the unity of the citizenry, and political and personal fertility, it is hardly surprising that the people took up the matter with deadly seriousness; "it was thought to be ominous for the expedition, and part of a conspiracy to bring about a revolution and to upset the democracy" (6.27.3).

In the ensuing investigation into the affair, some individuals came forward – not with information about the mutilation of the herms, but with news of yet more iconoclasm and profanation – this time of the Eleusinian mysteries – in which Alcibiades was implicated (6.61.1; cf. McGlew 1999). The city's politics fell into a swamp of distrust and rumour, in which the personal vendettas spawned by private interests were free to surface. Thus the enemies of Alcibiades manipulated these outbursts of "hubris," Thucydides says, because Alcibiades "stood in the way of their obtaining the undisturbed direction of the people" and because they believed that, if Alcibiades were gone, they would become "first men" at Athens (6.28.1-2; cf. 2.65.11). These unnamed demagogues therefore "magnified the matter" and lumped the mutilation of the Herms and the desecration of the mysteries together in an attempt to provide evidence of a plot to overthrow the democracy, behind which stood Alcibiades. The alleged proofs for this conspiracy, Thucydides tells us, were "the general and undemocratic license of [Alcibiades' private] life and habits" (6.28.2).

Alcibiades denied the charges, and offered to stand trial before leaving for Sicily. Quite reasonably he argued that, were he found guilty of plotting revolution, he could be executed immediately; were he innocent, he could lead the expedition without having to worry about such grave charges hanging over his head. He pointed out to the people how unwise and divisive it would be to send him off with such a state of uncertainty surrounding him. But his enemies feared the sympathy of the army for him (on account of his success in recruiting allies for the expedition), and distrusted the people's resolve in his presence; hence they did their utmost to postpone the decision to try him, and via subterfuge succeeded in doing so. Once Alcibiades was safely away in Sicily, Thucydides tells us, these unnamed parties dredged up enough slander to convince the people to form an absentee trial in which to try him; unsurprisingly, the *demos* was then led to the conclusion that Alcibiades was guilty and should be executed. Alcibiades got wind of this judgement and managed to escape to Sparta. The assistance he then offered his city's enemies was instrumental in bringing about the ruin of the Sicilian expedition and contributed to the eventual downfall of Athens.

Thucydides' account makes clear the inevitability of the Athenians' dislike of Alcibiades on account of his general licentiousness. But did Thucydides believe that the charge of aiming at tyranny, levelled by Alcibiades' enemies and later by the people against him, was justified? Was Alcibiades a closet despot, cuckolding his countrymen with fine phrases and foreign adventures? Or was he, rather, the closest thing to Pericles' heir, a true democratic patriot in the vein of Aristogeiton? Or was he something else entirely? The question of Alcibiades' relationship to Pericles' vision of citizenship is an important one, because an adequate understanding of it helps to appreciate some aspects of the tragic in Thucydides' work that have not yet been explored. As such, it helps to understand the *History* and the political philosophy that undergirds it more fully.

The 'tyrant-city' certainly met a dismal fate in Sicily – but what are we to make of Alcibiades, on whose personality the city at the point of its momentous decision is apparently modelled? Alcibiades ended his life – at an advanced middle age – in self-imposed exile, but this was not before he had returned to a hero's welcome in the city whose imperial power he had helped to destroy. Indeed, Alcibiades lived a great deal longer and a great deal happier than many of his fellow countrymen – particularly those who had followed him to Sicily. While perhaps not finally triumphant, the fate of Alcibiades is anything but tragic.

Given this, how can it be that the primary lesson of Thucydides' *History* – 'the tremendous moral which his countrymen delighted to read in the *Persians* of Aeschylus' – does not have as its primary example the one Athenian who, apparently, most acts like a tyrant in his personal life and who is most responsible for the slaughter at Melos, the attempted rape of Sicily, and the terrible suffering of the Athenians themselves? If Alcibiades as a character is representative of Athens' 'fatal flaw,' why is he not utterly ruined like the rest of his countrymen? Why is he not ignominiously butchered in Sicily, like the pious Nicias? Why are the charges of impiety levelled against him at Athens eventually dismissed, his treachery forgiven, and his property restored to him? Perhaps it was simply that facts got in the way – or perhaps there is more to the Athenian tragedy than just Alcibiades' *eros*.

It is true that the picture of Alcibiades that has been handed down by antiquity conforms to the democratic portrait of the tyrant. Plutarch tells us that, when going off to the war in Sicily, Alcibiades took with him a shield depicting a thunderbolt-wielding Eros, and a number of modern scholars have argued that this image may have already been used by dramatists at the time of Alcibiades (Plut. *Alc*. 16.1-18; cf. Littman 1970). He was alleged to have imprisoned a famous painter in his house and forced him to paint it, struck a rival for having bested him in a dramatic competition, and won his Olympic victories in a chariot stolen from a fellow Athenian. Most importantly for our purposes, however,

is the fact that of all the outrages and extravagances that had Alcibiades accosted as undemocratic and lawless, "pride of place goes to his sex life" (Wohl 2002: 352).

Alcibiades was, by all accounts, a man of many charms; and he was attractive not only to women but also to a great number of adult men in a way that, for them, he really should not have been. As a youth, he boasted among his countless suitors Socrates, a man whose appreciation of beauty was renowned; much later Plutarch compared him to Helen, the loveliest of all the Greeks (and, it hardly needs mention, a woman). Stories of the throngs of women he had debauched, of his perverse activity as an *eromenos,* of the cold-hearted mistreatment of his lovers and later of his wife, and of his strange habits as a cross-dresser, were plentiful and malicious in their detail. While the details of these stories were, of course, mostly gossip, there can be no doubt that Alcibiades' sexual appetite was enormous and that he tended to stray from the Athenian masculine ideal in many important respects.

Thucydides' narrative reinforces the traditional portrayal of Alcibiades as a tyrannical kind of man (Seager 1967). Thucydides appears to suggest that Alcibiades' indulgence of a litany of luxuries (especially horseracing) in his private life, together with his twin goals of conquering Sicily and Carthage, smacked of tyrannical ambition (6.15.2-4). Nicias accuses Alcibiades and his sycophants of suffering from a "sick desire" (*dyserotas*, 6.13.1) for far-off things, an accusation with which the historian himself seems to agree (6.24.3). Indeed, in his own words, Thucydides describes Alcibiades' bodily perversity and lawlessness (*paranomia*, 6.15.4).

The Athenians, in Thucydides' narrative, clearly recognise Alcibiades' capacity for dominance and his desire for power over them, of which Alcibiades himself dispels any doubts. In his speech before the Assembly regarding Sicily, he recounts his incredible triumph and expenditure of wealth at the Olympia and de-

clares that "it is not unfair that he who prides himself on his position [as he does] should refuse to be upon an equality with the rest" (6.16.4). Unless they want to befriend all the unfortunate wretches of the world and wallow with them their misery, Alcibiades says, on like principle the Athenians must extinguish their envy of him and "accept the insolence of prosperity" (6.16.4).

This is precisely what the Athenians do. The Athenians agree with Alcibiades' argument that they cannot rest content with the empire; they agree that they must scheme to extend it. They accept, that is, the insolence of empire. By doing so, they place themselves above not only barbarians but above all other Greeks as well. Thus the men of Athens, at this point, become just like Alcibiades; unsurprisingly, an "*eros*" for the expedition then "fell upon them" (*eros enepese*, 6.24.3) all alike. It is important to note that the phrase Thucydides uses here is identical to the one used by Aeschylus's Clytaemnestra to describe the *eros* for pillaging Troy that would "fall upon" Agamemnon and his army (*eros empiptei*, *Ag.* 341).

Many commentators have seen in Thucydides' portrayal of the expedition – and Alcibiades' leadership of it –the tyrannical culmination of Athens' political development (e.g. Cornford 1965; Hunter 1973; Forde 1989; Gribble 2012). And, indeed, the aim of the enterprise as Alcibiades conceives of it – complete mastery of the Hellenic world through the subjugation of Sicily, Carthage, Italy and after these the Peloponnese – is very much in line with Pericles' earlier admission that the city's empire is held like a tyranny, and certainly of a piece with Cleon's claim that Athens' *arche* does not differ from despotism at all. But the issue of whether this *eros* for empire is purely tyrannical is in fact not so clearly cut.

Echoing Pericles, Alcibiades tells the Athenians that if they cease to rule others, they will be in danger of being ruled themselves (6.18.3). The surest way for them to lose control of their empire, he suggests, is to turn away from "the good

old fashion by which our fathers, old and young together, by their united counsels brought our affairs to their present height" (6.18.6). The most effective way to keep the empire is to act as Alcibiades himself does and every Athenian's ancestors did – in accordance with their nature, however imperfect it may be. Accordingly, the expedition that Alcibiades helps to lead "is the most erotic, as it is the most daring, of all Athenian undertakings during the war" (Forde 1989: 58).

As we have seen in previous chapters, *eros* and *tolma* are fundamental characteristics of democratic Athens; these qualities are what defined the tyrannicides, Themistocles and the Athenians he led in their earliest drive to empire, and Pericles' 'lovers of the city.' In fact, there are a number of reasons to believe that Alcibiades' imperial vision, though certainly not the same as Pericles' vision, was nevertheless organically related to it.

The Athenians are, as they mostly were under Pericles, fully united in their cause: "an *eros* fell upon *all alike* for the enterprise" (6.24.3, emphasis added). As the fleet readied to sail, the entire city came out to watch "a sight worth looking at and passing all belief" (6.30.2-31.1). The expedition became just as "famous for its wonderful daring" as for its magnificent splendour, insofar as it was "the longest passage from home hitherto attempted, and the most ambitious in its objectives considering the resources of those who undertook it" (6.31.6):

> The fleet had been elaborately equipped at great cost to the captains and the state; the treasury giving a *drachma* a day to each seaman, and providing empty ships, sixty warships and forty transports, and manning these with the best crews obtainable; while the captains gave a bounty in addition to the pay from the treasury to the ... crews generally, besides spending lavishly upon figureheads and equipment, and one and all making the most exertions to enable their own ships to excel in beauty and fast sailing. Meanwhile, the land forces had been picked from the best muster-rolls, and vied

with each other in paying great attention to their arms and personal accoutrements (6.31.3).

As Ludwig points out, this intense rivalry between the citizens, which sees them "preening themselves on the beauty of their equipment and their heraldry, and fighting over such items …, resembles the actions of rival lovers vying for the hand of a beloved. Like the suitors whom Pericles exhorted them to become, the Athenians pay their courtship to the city of Athens, wooing her in a contest in which each strives to show himself worthiest" (2002: 167). When seen from this perspective, the Sicilian expedition seems a decidedly democratic adventure, and an organic if monstrous outgrowth of Pericles' vision of erotic citizenship, insofar as it was here that it was first fully realised. It should be noted, furthermore, that it was in this context that Thucydides tells us that Alcibiades' "conduct of the war was as good as could be desired" (6.15.4).

This is not to downplay the tyrannical attributes of either Alcibiades or the Sicilian expedition (although as the discussion in Chapter Four made clear, the relation of empire, tyranny and democracy is ambiguous even in the context of Pericles' Funeral Oration). Furthermore, there is a clear difference between the military strategies of Pericles and Alcibiades; the one is conservative and managerial, the other radical and expansionist. Nevertheless, there are unmistakable continuities between them, and both are in the final analysis whole-heartedly committed to empire.

How, then, are we to understand Alcibiades? Given the importance of his role in what is, undoubtedly, one of the most tragic elements of the *History* – the destruction of the Athenian forces in Sicily – it is important to answer the question that hangs over this character in Thucydides' text. We can best do so by turning to Thucydides' digressions on the Pisistratid tyranny and the cult of the tyrannicide, for "the entire Sicilian Expedition and its terrible ending, with its *eros* and

daring, its fears, its hopes, and its misapprehensions, all find their analogues in the excursus on Harmodius and Aristogeiton" (Meyer 2008: 25).

Thucydides believes that "the Athenians are not more accurate than the rest of the world in their accounts of their own tyrants and of the facts of their own history" (6.54.1). The common citizens of Athens "had heard how oppressive the tyranny of Pisistratus and his sons had become before it ended, and further that the tyranny had been put down at last, not by themselves and Harmodius, but by the Spartans, and so were always in fear and took everything suspiciously" (6.53.3). However, most people did not care for the details of the case: "so little pains [did] the vulgar take in the investigation of truth, accepting readily the first story that [came] to hand" (1.20.3). They did not know that Hipparchus was not, in fact, the reigning tyrant at the time of his death; that Hipparchus had been unwilling to use violence to win Harmodius; that in general the tyranny had been beneficial to Athens, and the tyrants' rule not hard to bear; that the murder of Hipparchus, rather than being an act of self-sacrifice and public spirit, was the outcome of a private love-affair; that the murder did not end the tyranny; or that the later (and much harsher) tyranny of Hippias was a direct result of the reckless daring of Harmodius and Aristogeiton (Palmer 1982: 115).

This ignorance had dire consequences. Having taken the tyrannicide myth to heart, and fancying themselves erotic patriots like Aristogeiton (6.53.3, 6.60.1), members of the *demos* began to grow "uneasy and suspicious of the persons charged in the affair of the Mysteries, … convinced that all that had taken place was part of an oligarchic and monarchical conspiracy" (6.60.4). Many of the best citizens were thrown into prison on the word of the lowest men, and, their guilt unproven, were put to death. This was done merely to satisfy the people's need to hold somebody accountable. Besides these gross injustices, "everywhere something was found to create suspicion against Alcibiades" (6.61.4). His enemies succeeded in setting up a show trial, which he was unsurprisingly found guilty; he was then recalled from Sicily to face execution. But, as we know, he

escaped to Sparta and helped orchestrate the complete destruction of his city's fortunes in Sicily.

As many scholars have noted, there are clear parallels between Thucydides' account of the treatment of Alcibiades by the *demos* and the digression on the tyrannicides that immediately follows it. Just as the attempt of Harmodius and Aristogeiton to rid Athens of the Pisistratids was born from private motives, so too were the motives of Alcibiades' persecutors anything public. Aristogeiton, feeling a lover's rage, plotted to destroy the tyranny so as to keep a hold of his beloved Harmodius; similarly, the anti-Alcibiades faction wanted to be rid of their rival so as to be first men in his place. Furthermore, in both instances the *demos* also suffers: "in the first because the tyranny becomes oppressive, Hippias fearing for his life; in the second because Alcibiades, the one Athenian leader who could have won this war for them, if any man could, defects from their side, fearing for his life" (Palmer 1982: 115). Because of their ignorance about the tyrannicides, Thucydides suggests, the Athenians repeated the same mistakes that Harmodius and Aristogeiton had made almost one hundred years before.

This is not the end of the matter, however. Although, as we have seen, there are parallels between the *demos* and the tyrannicides and between Alcibiades and the Pisistratids which Thucydides sees emerging as a result of the people's misunderstanding of their myth, there is also a transformation in the *demos* that does not fit neatly into the tyrannicide-tyrant schema. As Elizabeth Meyer observes: "that the Athenians, inspired by their distorted memories of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, are now inflicting violence on their own citizens is ... a significant and terrible shift, and associates the frenzied activities of 415 and those who inflict them with other observations about Athens and tyranny" (2008: 23). In other words, the *demos* is tyrant now not only over the empire but also over the city itself; Athenian citizens have become tyrannical over their fellow Athenian citizens. The ideology of *eros* and power that Pericles tried so hard to direct outwards has finally come home to roost; the *demos* which, while maintaining a

tyranny abroad, had nevertheless remained free from fear and plots in their daily relations with each other (3.37.1-2), has been fundamentally transformed. This, I want to argue, is what Thucydides considered the deepest layer of the Athenian tragedy.

Section Two: The Tragedy of Athens

(i) *Alcibiades and Dionysus*

I do not dispute the general view that the destruction of the Sicilian expedition is the culmination of a tragic movement in Thucyides' text. Indeed, this interpretation is crucial to my own understanding of 'the Athenian tragedy.' However, I differ from most other commentators by locating the root cause of the Athenian tragedy not so much in the outcome of the debate between Nicias and Alcibiades, that is, in the decision to sail, but in the actions that occurred thereafter, in response to the mutilation of the Herms and the affair of the Mysteries. Another point of difference is the fact that the primary reference point for my discussion of the link between Thucydides' Sicilian narrative and tragedy lies not so much in any individual play or dramatist as in the mythical context of the Great Dionysia – that is, in tragedy's ritual performance.

We recall from Chapter Three the foundational myth of the City Dioynsia, in which the Athenians, as punishment for their rejection of Dionysus, are all alike afflicted by a terrible genital disease that can be cured only by proper worship of the god. This worship was reflected in the various rituals that took place before the Great Dionysia, as well as in the dramas themselves. The phalli that the Athenians constructed in the god's worship, the scholiast to Aristophanes' *Archanians* tells us, were 'a memorial to their own suffering.' This suffering was of an erotic sort; it was the effect of ithyphallicism. In effect, it was a kind of erotic madness that was both caused and cured by Dionysus.

There can be no doubt that Thucydides, who was exiled from Athens at some point during his fourth decade of life, was intimately familiar with this myth and

with the rituals that re-enacted it at the Great Dionysia; he likely would have attended this festival a dozen times or more. He probably even participated in it. I submit that it is in this fact that we can possibly ascertain another influence of tragedy – or more precisely, of tragedy's ritual performance – on Thucydides that has not yet been considered in the literature.

When we compare the aetiological myth of the Dionysia with Thucydides' portrayal of the Athenians' treatment of Alcibiades and his revenge upon them, a number of striking similarities emerge. The first of these is the resemblances that Dionysus and Alcibiades share in terms of their position vis-a-vis the democratic citizen ideal; both figures deliberately undermine what it means to be 'normal,' and have the ability and will to do so. The second is the Athenians' misunderstanding of the power that both Dionysus and Alcibiades have to benefit the city; the Athenian rejection of the difference inherent to both figures leads to persecution of these characters and, eventually, to catastrophic punishment of the wrongdoers. The third parallel is the infliction of erotic madness upon the people; in the case of Dionysus, a dangerous ithyphallicism, and in the case of Alcibiades, what Nicias calls a *dyserotas* for that which is absent.

It is true that the *eros* Alcibiades inspires in his fellow citizens is not in any way described as a punishment of them. But it *is* represented as an *eros* that only Alcibiades, if anyone at all, can hope to manage; for Thucydides clearly suggests that it was only by including Alcibiades in the Sicilian expedition that the enterprise had any chance of succeeding. It was only when the Athenians *turn against* Alcibiades and rejected his leadership (which incites his defection to Sparta) that the *eros* for far off things truly became diseased, driving as it did the Athenians into the web that Alcibiades wove for them.

As we have seen, what characterises the Athenian *demos* most of all in both the affair of the Herms and in the tyrannicide myth is their ignorance. The Athenians do not really know the precise circumstances of these actions, and in their igno-

rance they are led, by a false understanding of their own history, to "magnify the matter" of the Herms and to wrongly see in it a dangerous tyrannical plot. They rely on the word of the basest men of society to imprison and execute the best of them. Not least, they accuse of sedition the one man who, of all men, can best lead them to victory and condemn him to death. As punishment, Alcibiades allies his formidable talent and knowledge with the military might of his city's enemies. Ignorance, then, is as much the undoing of the Athenians as is their *eros*.

This, I believe, is the crux of the Athenian tragedy. Like Oedipus, the Athenians are imprisoned by their own ignorance; attempting to break out of it, they entangle themselves in the fate they are fleeing from: tyranny and treachery. What makes this tragedy ironic is the fact that every year, at the Great Dionysia, the Athenians warned themselves of their propensity to misapprehend, misjudge and mistreat the Other who is at the same time 'one of us.' The quintessential figure in this regard was, of course, Dionysus. At the same time as they reminded themselves of the error of their ancestors, the Athenians expressed their worship of the god and, as such, their ability to transcend their mythical ignorance; the potency of Dionysus, closely bound up with his ability to intoxicate and fertilise, was celebrated and incorporated into the city. When it came to practical politics, however, the Athenians forgot the fundamental lessons of the Dionysia's aetiological myth: that the Other can be a source of great potency and creativity as much as it can emasculate and destroy. Ignorance of this fact will bring ruin.

By no means am I suggesting that Thucydides is here covertly divinising Alcibiades as Dionysus in some proto-Hellenistic manner, or indulging in occult fantasy like Herodotus. Religious themes and issues are, generally, conspicuously absent in the *History*; Thucydides seems to make a point of excluding or otherwise minimising their importance (Hornblower 1992). What I am arguing is that it is possible that the structure and language of Thucydides' digression on the tyrannicides and his discussion of the fates of Alcibiades and the Sicilian expe-

dition may have as an implicit 'tragic' model not any particular play but the ae-tiological myth of the Dionysia. For there are, as we have seen, some remarkable similarities between the myth and Thucydides' portrayal of the Athenians' treatment of Alcibiades and the subsequent disaster that befalls them in Sicily.

Apart from the structural similarities I have demonstrated above, one other line of argument lends some support for this interpretation. As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, comparing Euripides and Thucydides can help to shed light on the question as to how faithfully Thucydides represents the political thinking of the years about which he writes; if the ideas or arguments that Thucydides as-cribes to his speakers appear likewise in Euripides' tragedies, then "it is ap-parent, not of course that the speakers actually used those ideas and arguments, but that they could have" (Finley 1938: 25). Employing a similar logic, we might argue that if it can be shown that political leaders (ideally Alcibiades) were associated or, better yet, explicitly identified with Dionysus (ideally in a dramatic context) in Thucydides' lifetime, and in particular at the time at which he composed the *History* (that is, in his primary discursive setting), then it is ap-parent, not that Thucydides did see and develop parallels between the Athenians' mythical treatment of Dionysus and their actual treatment of Alcibiades, but that he very well could have.

Sure enough, political leaders were identified with Dionysus in dramatic contexts. Pericles, for instance, was satirically identified with Dionysus in a co-medy (*Dionysalexandros*) by Cratinus. It is likely that Thucydides watched this drama, as he was in Athens and a full citizen at the time it was produced. In a similar fashion, Plato would identify Alcibiades with Dionysus in the *Sympo-sium*, which the philosopher sets – with deliberate historical inaccuracy (Sider 1980) – in the shadow of the Great Dionysia of 415, just before the Sicilian ex-pedition was set to sail.

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But Pericles is not Alcibiades, a comedy is not a tragedy, and the *Symposium* was written long after Thucydides' death. Nevertheless, we find in Aristophanes' *Frogs* a more appropriate example which carries on the tradition of Cratinus and anticipates Plato's dialogue. The *Frogs* was produced in 405 and, on account of its popularity, restaged again in 404 – the year in which Thucydides returned to Athens to compose some, if not all, of his *History*. In this play, Alcibiades and Dionysus, while not explicitly identified, are clearly linked in a way that carries overtly tragic and didactic resonances (Arnott 1991).

The *Frogs* has as its plot the voyage of Dionysus into the underworld for the express purpose of resurrecting one tragic poet "to give the state some useful advice, so that the city might be saved" (1418-22). The immediate political concern of Dionysus in the *Frogs* is the problem of Alcibiades; he is, at the point in time at which the play was performed, in voluntary exile. Athens, we are told, is in a quandary, because she "longs for [Alcibiades], but hates him, and yet she wants him back" (1425).

As part of the contest of wisdom, the poets are asked what they think of the matter: should Alcibiades be encouraged to return to Athens, or should he not? Like Nicias in the Sicilian Debate, Euripides replies that he would give no quarter to a man who is so quick to do such damage; this sort of citizen seeks profit only for himself and is no good to the city. Aeschylus, in his turn, responds with the Alcibidean advice that "while it is best not to rear a lion in the city, if one *is* brought up its ways should be accommodated" (1431-32). After some deliberation on this advice and the poetic merits of both tragedians, the "soul" (*psyche*, 1469) of Dionysus decides the *agon* in favour of Aeschylus. The chorus then declares that intelligence (*sunesin*) "is refined not by Socrates … casting aside the pursuits of the Muses, and neglecting what's most important in the art of tragedy" (1491-95), and the play ends with the dead Aeschylus being escorted into the world of life and light amidst a choral procession made up of Eleusinian mystics; "grant bon voyage to the departing poet, as he rises to the light, ye spi-

rits of the earth," they sing, "and grant to the city good ideas for great gains" (1528-30).

The words Aristophanes puts in the mouths of his characters are noteworthy. In the context of the play, the metaphor of Alcibiades as a lion is clearly a nod toward Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*. As we have seen in our discussion of the *Oresteia* in Chapter Three, the metaphor of the lion-cub that grows into a beast is applied both to Helen (a beautiful traitor who sparks a massive military conflagration) and to Clytemnestra (a tyrannical usurper). Thucydides confirms that these are qualities that the general public at Athens ascribed to Alcibiades.

One of the *Oresteia*'s underlying political themes is the idea that tyrannical power, or, more properly, the *eros* that drives men toward power is, while no doubt a very volatile thing, nevertheless a potentially great benefit to the *polis* when yoked to its chariot of war. This theme is expressed most fully in the *Eumenides*; in that play, we recall, the Furies – whose immense power both for good and for ill is fully recognised by Athena – are 'seduced' into accepting a place of great honour beneath the city from where they will shower their erotically-charged blessings on the city, granting it fertility and potency.

It is therefore fitting that the setting and phrases of the *Frogs*' finale "recall the great conclusion of the *Eumenides* – that glorious triumph of a united Athens" (Sheppard and Verrall 1910: 258). This was the dream before Sicily, the dream of Pericles; and Aristophanes appears to suggest that it has not been completely broken, despite all the bloodshed and intrigue. Athens, should it accept the advice of 'Aeschylus,' can find its feet again by recalling Alcibiades and granting him the honour he deserves; for all his excesses, this 'lion' must be accommodated and rehabilitated. The inclusion of the Eleusinian mystics supports this claim.

The *Frogs* is, in sum, a dramatic engagement with the very same events that Thucydides describes in Book Six, and it is an important reference point because

of this. It helps us to answer the question as to what the Athenians were talking and thinking about at the time Thucydides composed (all or part of) his *History*. It also tells us a great deal about the ways in which many Athenians considered drama and Dionysus to be relevant to interpreting the disaster that unfolded in Sicily. Debates concerning the didactic value of tragedy, the role of Alcibiades in the Sicilian debacle and in Athenian politics in general, and the strategy the community had to choose in its prosecution of the war are at the heart of the *Frogs*, which was, we should remember, a play that won first prize and was re-produced due to popular demand. For two years running, Aristophanes had the entire city talking about these issues, and he did so through the figure of Dionysus, the play's literal and metaphorical guide to the underworld and to the tragic past – both of the genre and of the city. The posthumous performance in 404 of Euripides' *Bacchae* – which dramatises the disastrous attempt of the tyrant king Pentheus to capture and control Dionysus – can only have added further gravity to Aristophanes' efforts.

In sum, Aristophanes and the Athenians he entertained believed that the figure of Dionysus could serve as an appropriate tool with which to investigate and eva-luate the legacy of Alcibiades. Thucydides, who had participated over a dozen times in the Dionysia, likely watched the plays of Cratinus, and returned to write his *History* in the intellectual milieu in which the *Frogs* (and the *Bacchae*) would win first prize, likely agreed with his countrymen. Perhaps he even wat-ched the second performance of Aristophanes' play and heartily applauded. Book Eight of the *History*, at least, suggests that he would have sympathised with the political message of the *Frogs*. When discussing the destruction of de-mocracy and the rule of the Five Thousand, Thucydides writes that

> During the first period the Athenians appear to have enjoyed *the best go-vernment they ever had*, at least in my time, for there was a measured blending of the few and the many, and this it was that first caused the city

to recover from the wretched plight into which it had fallen. And they voted to recall Alcibiades (8.97.2-3, emphasis added) ...

As Michael Palmer points out, Thucydides makes a very significant admission here: the government of the Five Thousand, he says, was the best he had ever seen – which means that it was better than even that of the much vaunted Pericles. Following the blending of the many and the few, the first act that puts Athens back on its feet is the recall of Alcibiades. The last significant event of the *History* is the Athenian victory (orchestrated by Alcibiades) at Cynomessa. Thus it seems that:

> The last book of Thucydides appears to point to a regime in Athens that can accommodate the ambitions of both Alcibiades and the Athenians, that is, a regime in which Alcibiades holds sway in the city in the position of predominance once held by Pericles. In practical terms, this means the measured tyranny of Alcibiades. Thucydides' 'digression' on the Athenian tyrants teaches us that he does not share the Athenians' extreme fear of tyranny. His blame of the Athenian *demos*' treatment of its greatest benefactor consists in his demonstration that there is such a thing as a moderate and beneficent tyrant. (Palmer 1982: 121)

The hypothesis advanced here – that the most tragic element of the *History* rests upon the model of the Dionysia's aetiological myth – does not find explicit evidence in Thucydides' text, it is true. However, there is no explicit evidence in Thucydides for any other hypothesis regarding the influence of tragedy on his *History*, either. Thucydides never references tragedy as a genre nor mentions any specific tragic poets or dramas. He does not even discuss the Dionysia, which, with its various rituals (such as the display of allied tribute), had overt and very relevant political import. Even the strongest of cases for reading the *History* as a 'tragic text' have therefore been forced to rely on nothing more than *similarities* in language, themes and structure between the *History* and proper

tragedies. As we have seen, it is on exactly such similarities that my own argument rests. Thus, while the final judgement of this analysis may be 'Not Proven' – as it must also be of all others – I trust that the argument I have made will at least stimulate thought and inspire some reappraisal of common assumptions about how Thucydides was influenced by the performance of tragedy in Athens.

Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter that in Thucydides' narration of the Sicilian disaster, all alike are afflicted by human weakness; the follies of Alcibiades, Nicias and the Athenian *demos* combine with unfortunate circumstance to produce complete disaster. Nevertheless, Thucydides concludes that Alcibiades was indeed Athens' best hope in the war, and he suggests that by following unnamed demagogues in recalling Alcibiades for trial on trumped up charges the Athenians proved themselves their own arch-enemies; were it not for their historical blindness regarding the tyrannicides and consequent harshness, the Athenian tragedy may have been avoided.

I differ from most other interpreters of the Athenian tragedy by locating the root cause of it not so much in the outcome of the debate between Nicias and Alcibiades (that is, in the decision to sail) but in the actions that occurred thereafter, in response to the mutilation of the Herms and the affair of the Mysteries. Another point of difference is the fact that the primary reference point for my discussion of the link between Thucydides' Sicilian narrative and tragedy lies not so much in any individual play or dramatist as in the mythical context of the Great Dionysia – that is, in tragedy's ritual performance. I argued that the figure of Dionysus – and the rituals performed in his honour – may well have provided Thucydides (and certainly his countrymen) a tragic framework for analysing the disasters that befell them at the hands of Alcibiades.

CHAPTER SIX

Introduction

I begin this chapter by examining the 'erotic theory of politics' expounded by Diodotus in the Mytilenean Debate. In his speech, Diodotus presents a theory of human nature in which *eros* is the primary driver of political action. Diodotus claims that all men are led on by *eros*, hope and chance in the pursuit of political power; poverty and wealth aggravate this problem, insofar as the one gives rise to the reckless audacity inspired by necessity and the other to the greedy ambition born of insolence. Due to the vicissitudes of fate, these erotic adventures end all too often in disaster, and there is no law that will prevent this from happening. This is especially so in the case of communities and states, because when acting together individuals magnify their own capabilities and thereby tend to act irrationally. Following this, I argue that there are a number of points in the *History* which suggest that Thucydides implicitly lends authorial support to Diodotus's erotic theory of politics. Indeed, as I will endeavour to show, Diodotus's theory plays a central role in the tragic structure underlying the *History* as whole. This chapter will conclude the second part of this dissertation.

The Mytilene Debate

(i) *'A Massive Moral Hangover'*

In the summer of 428 B.C., one of the last non-tributary members of the Delian League, the city-state of Mytilene, staged an uprising against its ally, Athens, in an attempt to secure its independence from what was seen as this city's increasingly tyrannical leadership of the Hellenes. The Mytilenean elite had considered breaking away from the League even before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. Without Spartan assistance, however, which was not forthcoming at the time, its members felt the city would be unable to rebel successfully. In 428,

however, with Athens at war with Spartans and devastated by the plague, Mytilene's leaders felt that the moment for rebellion was as ripe as it would ever be.

Unfortunately for the oligarchy, news of their preparations – the construction of fortifications, stockpiling of grain, recruitment of archers and so on – soon reached the Athenians, who equipped a fleet to sail to Lesbos to investigate the reports. Despite being caught off-guard and underprepared by the Athenians, the Mytileneans refused to heed the Athenian order to halt the construction of their walls. Fighting consequently ensued, and hostilities continued into the summer of 427. By this time, Mytilenean resistance had been weakened by the Athenian blockade, the success of which was in large measure due to the fact that the naval support promised to the Mytileneans by the Spartans had failed to materialise. In a desperate bid to stave off defeat, Salaethus, the Spartan commander, equipped the Mytilenean *demos* with heavy armour. Unexpectedly, the starving people immediately turned against the oligarchy and demanded from them what was left of the city's grain with the threat that if their terms were not met they would surrender the city to the Athenians. The oligarchs, aware of the danger they would fall into if left out of negotiations (and aware of their inability to prevent such an outcome from eventually coming to pass), rejected the people's demands and themselves surrendered Mytilene to the enemy.

The capitulation of the city was not well received in Athens. From the standpoint of the Athenians, the rebellion was entirely unjustified. Compared to most other states in the Delian League the liberties enjoyed by Mytilene were great; they had kept their freedom, their independence, and even their navy. The Mytileneans themselves, in their appeal to the Spartans for assistance, are well aware that their actions smack of treason; it is the rule, they say, that those who abandon their allies in war despite "having been honoured by them in times of peace" are "thought less well of, through being considered traitors to their friends" (3.9.3). As such, they require substantial argument (much of which is based on Spartan interests) to win their hosts' support.

The Athenians, then, clearly had good reason to be upset. It was in this atmosphere of moral outrage that they executed Salaethus and immediately afterwards dispatched a trireme to the defeated city with the orders that the remaining men of Mytilene be put to death and their wives and children taken off to be sold into slavery. The day following these events, however, saw the Athenians suffering from what Clifford Orwin has memorably dubbed a "massive moral hangover" (Orwin 1984: 486). Nervous and unsure of a resolution they had made in haste and anger, the Athenians reassembled in the morning to reflect on what Thucydides calls "the horrid cruelty of a decree which condemned a whole city to the fate merited only by the guilty" (3.36.4). During this meeting, Thucydides tells us, a large number of Athenian citizens came forward and called for the decree in question to be rescinded. Many citizens opposed them, arguing that the decision was the right one and should remain in force. Of this plethora of speeches, Thucydides makes us privy to only two.

The first of these constitutes the initial appearance in the *History* of "the most violent man at Athens" (3.36.6), the infamous demagogue Cleon. Cleon begins by berating the Athenians and their democracy for their weakness and irresolution. He argues that the original decree, which he himself had carried, should be upheld; it reflects poorly on his audience that they have lost their nerve, and telling of their existence as democrats. The men of Athens, he says, seem not to have noticed that their empire is a "tyranny" and their subjects "disaffected conspirators" (3.37.2), whose obedience is guaranteed not by compassion or concessions but by brute strength and severity.

Cleon's argument in favour of the motion has two prongs, which concern justice on the one hand and interest on the other. Regarding justice, Cleon says that although he can make allowance "for those who revolt because they cannot bear our empire, or who have been forced to do so by the enemy" (3.39.2), the Mytileneans have obviously long premeditated their rebellion and undertook it voluntarily. This they did despite having enjoyed liberty and independence. As

such, Cleon seems to suggest, the Mytileneans have acted like aspiring tyrants: "their own prosperity could not dissuade them from affronting danger," he says, "and full of hopes beyond their power though not beyond their ambition, they declared war and made their decision to prefer might to right, their attack being determined not by provocation but by the moment which seemed propitious" (3.39.3).

Moreover, they did all this at a time when Athens was afflicted by the plague and at war with Sparta; the Mytileneans had turned on their long-time allies at a time when the Athenians were most in need of friends. "Mercy," Cleon concludes, "is only for unwilling offenders" (3.40.2), and this is one thing the Mytileneans are not. In their case, justice necessitates requiting harm for harm and given that "no one state has ever injured [the Athenians] as much as Mytilene" (3.39.1), the harm the Athenians should inflict on them must be very great.

Regarding interest, Cleon argues that if the Athenians refuse to punish all of the Mytileneans (not only the aristocrats in power but also the *demos* which, he claims, assisted the oligarchs) rebellion will cover the empire like a rash. Only the fear of death, he says, can hope to keep the many opponents of tyranny in check – for who will not revolt if the cost of treachery is small and its potential gains so great? The security of Athens' empire demands that Mytilene be destroyed; continued insurrection, which is inevitable if the Athenians recant, will risk the lives of Athenian men and will present a constant drain on the city's resources.

Cleon concludes that his advised course of action, though admittedly bloody and pitiless, will achieve both justice *and* advantage for the people of Athens. Compassion, pity, and sentimentality have no place in the hearts of men who run an empire, he says, and this is doubly true when such men have been gravely wronged by insolent subjects. Ruling the empire requires Athens to "teach the other allies by a striking example that the penalty of rebellion is death" (3.40.7);

justice, in any case, demands that the Athenians punish the Mytileneans as they deserve.

The second speech in the Mytilene debate is made by a man named Diodotus, a mysterious character who vanishes from the pages of the *History* almost as soon as he appears. Diodotus, who Thucydides tells us has in the previous assembly spoken most strongly against putting the Mytileneans to death, begins his speech in a manner similar to Cleon. Diodotus, too, berates the Athenians – albeit not for their weakness or irresolution, as does Cleon, but rather for allowing the standard of their political debate to deteriorate to the point that, on account of the Athenians' suspicion of and harshness towards their advisors, "plain good advice has come to be no less suspect than bad, and the advocate of the most monstrous measures is not more obliged to use deceit to gain the people, than the best counsellor is to lie in order to be believed" (3.43.2).

Diodotus, then, effectively admits that (all or some of) what he is about to say is not true. On first glance, his comments are perplexing, leading as they do to a paradox similar to Epimenides', the famous Cretan who claimed that all men from Crete were liars (Debnar 2000). But as many scholars have noted, Diodotus's statements are important to understanding why he later claims to reject the issue of justice and ostensibly restricts his argument to expediency alone. As we shall see, despite his professed anti-moralism and for all of his insistence on Athenian self-interest, Diodotus is "secretly in sympathy with the claims of justice" (Connor 1987b: 85; cf. Strauss 1964; Van der Ben 1987; Orwin 1994; Mara 2001). *Dike*, in fact, is on closer inspection as important to his speech as is expediency: perhaps the greatest distortion of truth that Diodotus feeds to his suspicious countrymen is the idea that the question under consideration "is not justice, but how to make the Mytileneans useful to Athens" (3.44.4).

Although Cleon's argument may appear more just than his own, Diodotus says, Cleon's estimation of Athens' interest is gravely mistaken. This is because his

confidence in the deterrent value of capital punishment is ill-placed. It is clear that communities throughout the ages have applied the death penalty to various offences (including offences much less grave than the one now under consideration) in order to deter potential criminals, but they have always failed to eradicate crime completely. This is because of the fact that so long as poverty exists to give men the *tolma* born of necessity and conditions of plenty (*exousia*) exist to encourage in them ambitious greed (*pleonexia*) that is the product of insolence (*phronemati*) and *hubris*, so too will the impulse to drive men into danger never be found wanting. This pattern of behaviour, Diodotus says, applies to states as much as it does to individuals (3.45.4).

Diodotus then goes on to argue that *eros* and hope (*elpis*) – "the one leading and the other following, the one conceiving the attempt [*epiboulen*], the other suggesting the facility of succeeding" – are the primary causes of ruin in human life. Although both *eros* and hope may be invisible to the naked eye, he adds, they are "far stronger than the dangers that are seen" (3.45.5). The influence of fortune (*tuche*) in human affairs adds to the danger of these two invisible phenomena; on account of the favours it sometimes grants to men, fortune tends to compound the delusions that hope and *eros* foster. Those graced by fate tend to venture into gambles for which they are woefully unprepared, on the irresponsible and usually incorrect belief that their run of good luck will continue unabated. Diodotus concludes that ultimately "it is impossible to prevent, and only great simplicity can hope to prevent, human nature doing what it has once set its mind upon, by force of law or by any other deterrent force whatsoever." This is especially so in the case of communities, he says, "because the stakes played for are the highest, freedom or empire, and, when all are acting together, each man irrationally [*alogismos*] magnifies his own capacity" (3.45.6-7). When men are acting politically – when they are fighting for power – ruin is well-nigh inevitable.

When dealing with freemen, Diodotus says, the right course of action is not to punish them rigorously when they do rebel, but to watch them rigorously before they rise. Better yet, he adds, one should prevent their ever entertaining the idea of doing so – but if it is inevitable, once the insurrection has been suppressed it is best to make as few responsible for it as possible. This is because any rebellious subject city which knows that complete annihilation is the price it must pay, should its grab at freedom meet with failure, will fight long and hard for victory. Should the Athenians make of the Mytilenean case an example for the other allies, Diodotus says, attempts at rebellion in the future will be much better prepared, and will last much longer, than has so far been the case.

In sum, given that the death penalty has consistently failed to deter crime in the past, it is unlikely to do so in the future and it follows that by maintaining a less severe policy against rebels, the inevitable resistance that the Athenians will encounter whilst ruling will be easier and less wasteful to overcome. In light of this, Diodotus implores his fellow Athenians to refuse to "sit as strict judges of the offenders to our own prejudice" and instead try to see how "by moderate chastisements we may be enabled to benefit in future by the revenue-producing powers of our dependencies" (3.46.4).

While Diodotus's theory of man may perhaps stand as a profession of his understanding of the truth, his claim that good policy is necessarily based in naked self-interest does not. The concern for justice that undergirds Diodotus's entire speech and which he claims to banish from it clearly shines through in his claim that the people of Mytiline "had nothing to do with the revolt." If the common people of Mytilene are executed, he says, the Athenians will not only alienate the *demos* in other cities by unfairly applying "the same punishment to those who are guilty and those who are not," but will also "commit the crime of killing [their] benefactors" (3.47.3). In the last analysis, therefore, Diodotus suggests that if the Athenians are to follow through with the decree that condemned Mytilene to oblivion they will prove themselves not only very un-

wise but also deeply unjust. Should they follow his advice, both justice *and* expediency are achievable.

(ii) *Diodotus and/as Thucydides*

H. P. Stahl writes that many scholars "have long realized that it is the historian's own voice which speaks through this analysis" (2003: 119; cf. Wasserman 1956; de Romilly 1963; Saxonhouse 1996; Ludwig 2003; Zumbrunnen 2008; Luginbill 2011). This claim – that Thucydides 'speaks through' one or another of the characters in the *History* – is a rather problematic one; technically, Thucydides speaks through all of the figures in his work by the very fact that he is its author (cf. 1.22.1). The question of Thucydides' relation to his speakers – and in particular the extent to which he expresses his own thoughts through them – is a difficult one, and an enormous amount of ink has been spilled in trying to answer it.

Nevertheless, Thucydides certainly sympathised with some historical persons and disliked others, and he very likely constructed his portraits of their characters accordingly. Pericles is a prime example of the first category of men (cf. 2.65), Cleon quite clearly of the second (cf. 3.36.6). The qualities ascribed to and descriptions of these two men leave no doubt as to Thucydides' personal estimation of them.

The standing of Diodotus in this respect is more difficult to gauge, however, insofar as the lack of interest Thucydides shows in this character and his refusal to detail the man's personal circumstances do not give the reader many leads to follow. Such neglect, when considered alongside the similarities in outlook that exist between Diodotus and Thucydides, have led many commentators to conclude that Diodotus is probably a figment of the historian's imagination and as such not more than a mouthpiece for him.

There are, in fact, a number of points in the *History* which suggest that Thucydides does indeed lend his authorial support to Diodotus's erotic theory of poli-

tics. However implicit such support may be, Diodotus's theory forms the backbone of the tragic narrative underlying the *History* as whole.

If we are to find proof for this claim we must read Diodotus's speech alongside the other sections of the *History* in which *eros* appears. These parallels, linking as they do the authorial voice and structuring hand of the *History* with the theoretical core of Diodotus's speech, provide sufficient evidence for the claim that Thucydides and Diodotus are, as it were, 'on the same page' in terms of their political theory. Book Two, with its Periclean speeches on *eros* and power and honour, is the best place to begin this task.

Book Two covers the first years of the war and is the location of two of Pericles' three speeches in the *History*. The first of these two speeches, the Funeral Oration, is a focal point of the *History* as a whole; this speech expresses "an entire philosophy of government" and offers a "rare declaration of the principles on which Athenian democracy was built" (Harris 1992: 157-8). As we have seen in depth in Chapter Four, these principles include a model of citizenship which requires war and the death of citizens in battle to reach its full potential. Imperial belligerence – the erotics of empire – is seeded in the Athenian constitution, despite the fact that the democracy's self-image is founded on the relationship of the tyrannicides and their hostility to tyrannical aggression.

The second speech of Pericles in Book Two is in large part an attempt on his behalf to lift the spirits of his countrymen, downcast as they are by the plague and lack of progress in the war against Sparta, and to direct their sights once more to the glorious heights of empire. He warns them not to place their trust in "hope" (*elpidi,* 2.62.5) during their struggle against the Spartans but to guide themselves in their actions by an accurate assessment of their resources. He counsels them against retreating from the empire, because what they now hold is "like a tyranny" (2.63.2) which it would be dangerous to relinquish. However, even if in the end they are forced to yield, the hatred that they have incurred by

their rule will be short-lived, and it is in any case worth incurring for those "highest goods" (2.64.5) – power and the eternal glory it promises – that are won through struggle and war. Pericles' final wish is precisely that the men of Athens remember that their city has the greatest name in all the world "because she has never bent before disaster, because she has expended more life and effort in war than any other city, and has won for herself a power greater than any seen before" (2.64.3).

Before moving on to relate the events of the third year of the war (which conclude Book Two) Thucydides takes a moment to analyse the leadership and legacy of Pericles. He remarks that it was under Pericles' rule that Athens was at her greatest, and that when the war broke out Pericles had rightly estimated the power of the city. Pericles' advice to the Athenians – to wait patiently, to take care of the navy, and to refrain from new conquests and new dangers – promised them a favourable outcome in the war. After Pericles' death, however, the Athenians undertook to do the very opposite of what Pericles had advised; they allowed "private ambitions and private interests, in matters quite foreign to the war, to lead them into projects unjust both to themselves and to their allies – projects whose success would conduce to the honour and advantage of private persons, and whose failure entailed certain disaster on the country in the war" (2.65.7). These projects expressly included the Sicilian Expedition, although Thucydides tells us that this failed "not so much through a miscalculation of the power of those against whom it was sent" as through a fault in those who sent it. The decision of second-rate politicians to "occupy themselves with private cabals for the leadership of the *demos*, by which they not only paralysed operations in the field, but also first introduced civil discord at home," set the city on a path that inevitably ended in civil war and final defeat (2.65.11-12). In short, Pericles' successors ignored his advice, abused his legacy and led the city into ruin.

With their references to the trial of Alcibiades, the Sicilian disaster, and the self-destruction of Athens through individual interest and factional conflict – taking

us out of the immediate context of the narrative to appreciate the broader meanings of the *History* – Thucydides' comments spring to mind when, in Book Three, the demagogue Cleon is introduced to us as "the most violent man at Athens, and at that time by far the most powerful with *demos*" (3.36.6). The speeches of Books Two and Three are in fact implicitly threaded together, as Cleon's numerous echoes of Pericles clearly suggest (Cairns 1982; Andrews 2000). For our purposes, the most important of these echoes occurs at 3.37.2: here, Cleon claims that the Athenian empire is no longer merely *like* a tyranny, as Pericles had earlier suggested it was; it is now a despot dyed in the wool. Apart from this occasion there are a number of other instances in which Cleon seems to ape the former "first citizen" (2.65.9) of Athens by taking up "for violent and (in comparison) trivial purposes the phrases in which Pericles had displayed his steady insight into the larger issues" (Andrewes 1962: 75).

In both structure and detail, the speeches of Cleon and Diodotus also correspond closely with each other (Debnar 2000: 162). In light of this it seems logical to take Diodotus's assertion that men can feel and act erotically in relation to abstractions such as *eleutheria* or *arche* as something more than random or coincidental rhetoric. It is, rather, better understood as a pointed and deliberate response to Cleon's reference to Pericles and his legacy. Thus Patrick Coby notes that "Diodotus imagines a city, the 'first city,' where citizens prove themselves better speakers not by frightening their opponents but by employing fair arguments (2.42.5)" (1991: 90; cf. Harris 2013). But Pericles' encomium of democracy is not all there is to it; Diodotus finds in the Funeral Oration, and in particular the vision of erotic citizenship at its heart, a set of rhetorical tools with which he can build the bridge of empathy necessary to prevent the Athenians from destroying the Mytileneans – a move he believes will prove a terrible mistake.

Diodotus, to recall, effectively argues that it is not "the ambition which belongs to *hubris* and pride" that animates the rebels, as Cleon maintains is the case (cf.

3.39.3), but rather "the daring [*tolma*] of necessity" (3.45.4). Free men, he says, naturally chafe under the rule of a tyrant. They rebel not for personal profit, but as a result of their *eros* for liberty, and because they are acting all together in their pursuit of freedom – which alongside rule is any free man's highest good – each individual has irrationally magnified his own capacity and hence made himself prone to poor judgment. The men of Mytilene, that is, were clearly bound to make mistakes such as the deluded venture under consideration. Given that such behaviour is the common lot of man, however, the Mytileneans should not be too harshly judged. Such mercy is especially appropriate in light of the compulsory nature of their love (Coby 1991).

Like Cleon, then, Diodotus echoes the great statesman of Book Two. Rule and the liberty with which it is equated are, as we have noted above, counted by Pericles as the 'highest goods' for free men (2.64.5), and in his view they are won not by stay-at-homes but by those who are prepared to dare and fight for them. *Tolma* is constantly associated with the Athenians in the *History*; daring not only defines Athens in the eyes of friends and foes alike but plays an important role in Pericles' vision of the city, particularly as it relates to the central place that Aristogeiton occupies in democratic ideology. With his references to *eros*, *tolma* and the ranking of freedom and rule (two sides of the same coin of power) as the 'highest goods' for communities of men, Diodotus clearly harks back to Pericles.

His reason for doing so, however, is diametrically opposed to Cleon's. Diodotus seeks to tap into the democratic sympathies of his countrymen – whose collective self-image is shaped by Pericles' vision of citizenship and the tyrannicide legend on which it is implicitly modelled – and hopes that by doing so he will lead them back toward these ideals instead of further away from them. By subtly reminding his audience of Pericles' ideal 'lover of the city' and its historical antecedents whilst making the case that other men (such as the Mytileneans) are

also capable of loving freedom, that is, Diodotus discretely builds a bridge of empathy between the men of Athens and their defeated subjects.

The logic of Diodotus's theory suggests that Cleon's tyrannical lust to destroy Mytilene is as primitively stupid as, for instance, a careless beekeeper smashing in a beehive after having been stung whilst harvesting its honey; the unfortunate bees, whose self-defence ultimately destroys them, are acting only as they and any other creature in their position would. Diodotus reminds the Athenians that, in their fallibility and in their aspirations, the Mytileneans are their mirror image, encourages in them a degree of sympathy for their weaker foes' resolve:

> Diodotus extends the compulsion to transgress to a tendency to err in so doing. This he does the more easily in that one Greek word which denotes both (*hamartanein*, "to miss one's mark," "to go astray"). He thus deepens the pathos of the lot of failed rebels, whose errors are to be assigned to the same overwhelming forces that drove them to venture. And by casting blundering not as contemptible but as a symptom of universal human weakness, he forges yet another bond of sympathy between victor and vanquished. (Orwin 1987: 155-6; cf. Ahrensdorf 1997: 252; Rose 1999: 23)

The outcome of the Mytilene Debate suggests that in these regards Diodotus's strategy was a successful one. But, as Diodotus himself briefly admits, there are innocent and there are guilty men at Mytilene; not all the Mytileneans were, so to speak, busy bees, and not all of them deserved clemency. Some of them deserved to die. Diodotus's strategy, in other words, was based on deception.

What, then, are we to make of Diodotus's erotic theory of politics? Is it simply a rhetorical sleight of hand, designed to trick his audience into softening their rage and accepting the claims of justice? Is it thus confined to the circumstances in which it appears? Or does it find wider application in the *History*, this self-proclaimed possession for all time? These questions are very important, espe-

cially insofar as it is Diodotus – not Thucydides in his authorial voice – who presents this theoretical model. Nowhere does Thucydides himself explicitly state that the motivation of the Mytilenean rebellion was an *eros* for freedom. Despite this fact, it can well be argued that, to the extent he was permitted by circumstances, Thucydides constructed the speeches and authorial narrative of the Mytilene episode so as to anticipate his later digression on the tyrannicides and, as such, at least some of the Mytileneans can be considered to have been motivated by a political *eros* (Scanlon 1987; Hunter 1974).

Consider, for example, that in their address to the Spartans the Mytileneans make much of the fear they felt as the liberty of the other allies was being encroached upon, particularly as the Athenians "daily grew more powerful" (3.11.1; cf. 3.10.4). The Mytileneans argue that their freedom would have inevitably been violently wrested from them by Athens at some point in the future and, given this, that their deeds should be considered self-defence (3.12.2-3). This claim, however, is conspicuously undercut by the Mytileneans' own assertion that if they "were left independent, it was only because [the Athenians] thought they saw their way to empire more clearly by specious language and by the paths of policy than by those of force" (3.11.3). The envoys to Sparta conclude their appeal by noting that the Mytilenean revolt "has taken place prematurely and without preparation – a fact which makes it all the more incumbent on you to receive us into alliance and to send us speedy relief" (3.13.2; cf. 3.2.1) – and by asking that the Spartans "respect the hopes placed in [them] by the Greeks and Olympian Zeus, in whose temple we stand as very suppliants" (3.14.1). But the Spartan assistance that was then promised the Mytileneans failed to materialise, and the city's leaders eventually felt compelled to surrender – not because they were decisively defeated, however, but because they feared that the recently armed *demos* would "themselves come to terms with the Athenians and deliver up the city" (3.27.3; cf. Gills 1971). As we have seen, after all this has occurred, at the debate in the Athenian *ekklesia* the empire

is semantically framed as a "tyranny" whose subjects, being "disaffected conspirators," form "daring" and "irrational" "plots" that are born from an "*eros*" for "freedom" which are led on to ruin by "hope" (3.37.2, 39.3, 40.5, 45.4-7).

For all of these passages there exist striking parallels in the tyrannicide digression. Following Hipparchus's advances toward Harmodius, Thucydides tells us, Aristogeiton became "afraid that the powerful Hipparchus might take Harmodius by force, and formed a plot … for overthrowing the tyranny" (6.54.3). But Hipparchus, we are told, was unwilling to use force to regain his honour, preferring instead to insult Harmodius in a more subtle and indirect manner (e.g. by humiliating his sister). Aristogeiton and Harmodius were nevertheless outraged and together with a few other men set about their conspiracy in earnest. Thucydides tells us that "the conspirators were not many, for better security, besides which they hoped that those not in the plot would be carried away by the example of a few daring spirits, and use the arms in their hands to recover their freedom" (6.56.3). On the day of the planned assassination, however, Aristogeiton and Harmodius saw one of their accomplices "talking familiarly" with Hippias, and concluded that they had been betrayed (6.57.2). In a fit of rage, sparked in the one case by *eros* and in the other by insult, they fell upon Hipparchus and struck him dead, thereby delivering themselves into the hands of Hippias's bodyguards. Upon hearing of the murder, Hippias cleverly gathered the crowd before him and, by picking out those men who carried daggers, sorted the guilty from the innocent and dispatched them there and then.

The rebellion at Mytilene, as Thucydides presents it through his speeches, is a turning point in the history of Athenian empire. Cleon and Diodotus both agree that the debate will decide policy regarding rebellion for the indefinite future, and it must be partly for this reason that their appeals to the assembly are so emphatic and the entire episode so dramatic (cf. Cogan 1981). But it is also highly important insofar as it proves the point of Diodotus's theory. Thucydides clearly suggests that, following the Mytilene revolt, the Athenian *demos* found itself in

a position curiously similar to that of Hippias in the immediate aftermath of his brother's murder. What is to be done, the *demos* is forced to ask itself, with these "disaffected conspirators," driven to irrational daring by their *eros* for liberty? What about the rest of the men subject to their rule? What is the best way to manage the "tyranny" from this point onward?

Diodotus urges on the Athenians a policy in accord with Thucydides' nostalgic picture of the general characteristics of the Pisistratid tyrants: moderate, frugal with force, and sympathetic to the needs and feelings of their subjects (especially those under the spell of the *eros*). The course of action that Cleon advises in response to the questions facing the *demos*, on the other hand, is essentially the same as that which Hippias would later choose for himself: indiscriminate violence which on the surface appears to thin the ranks of enemies and terrify everyone else into submission. Hippias came to believe that he might remain safe by condemning an entire city – his own – to suffer a fury that rightfully should have struck only those it did on the day of his brother's murder. As we know, and as Thucydides knew, this strategy failed him; because of his harshness, the tyrant transformed a relatively small body of discontent into a revolting hydra that eventually made his position at Athens untenable. This was, clearly, the outcome Thucydides – like Diodotus – foresaw for the Athenian empire had Cleon's "savage" and "excessive" decree been enacted, condemning as it would "a whole city to the fate merited only by the guilty" (3.36.4). History, as Diodotus presents it, repeats itself – and wise men, if they are aware of this, can sometimes steer clear of the ruin that the fatal combination of *eros*, hope and chance so often creates.

But, as I have hinted at, such foresight relies on a privileged understanding of Athens' past. As Thucydides says in both the Archeology and the tyrannicide digression, the Athenians in general are ignorant of their own history regarding the Pisistratids. The Athenians do not know, for instance, that the savagery of the tyrants was an effect not of the nature of the tyrants' rule but of the "irrational

daring" of Hipparchus's murderers. They do not know that the so-called tyranni-cides were not rescuing the *demos* from slavery, but were in fact guilty of dis-turbing a peace that was salutary to all (or at least most) of their fellow citizens. It follows that they themselves could not have fully appreciated the parallels to the tyrannicides that are inherent to Diodotus's speech; the Athenians cannot clearly see that they can avoid the fate of Hippias by choosing to execute the small number of men who are *actually responsible* for the revolt at Mytilene. They cannot see that both justice *and* expediency are possible outcomes of the debate, because in their rage they cannot help believing that, like "themselves and Harmodius," the entire community at Mytilene is 'guilty' of (attempted) ty-rannicide. To point out the Athenians' blindness in this regard is politically im-possible, however, because it contradicts everything they believe in. As such, the people must be lied to if good advice is to actually reach them. This is precisely what Diodotus does.

We may presume that he does so with Thucydides' blessing. As we have seen, Diodotus clearly shares Thucydides' privileged knowledge of Athenian history. His remarks on the plight of the responsible public servant subject to the whims and scapegoating techniques of an unstable and suspicious popular assembly, furthermore, recall Thucydides' own experience in the aftermath of Amphipolis (Wasserman 1956). Like Thucydides, Diodotus is deeply hostile to Cleon and explicitly agrees with the authorial judgment regarding the decree for which this violent demagogue agitates. This affinity is underlined by the dramatic ending of the Mytilenaean episode; the close of the debate is structured by Thucydides in a way that can only reinforce in the reader a feeling of revulsion towards the mo-ral turpitude that Diodotus accuses Cleon of indulging and which his speech ap-pears to prevent. As Connor notes, "[t]he race of the two ships, the vivid narra-tion, the hair-breadth escape, the sudden change to the present tense, draw us into the action and direct our responses. We want the Mytileneans to be spared and are relieved when the second trireme brings the reprieve" (Connor 1987b).

Thucydides, in short, sympathised with the figure of Diodotus and fully agreed with the statements that he put into his mouth.

A case can certainly be made against this argument. Diodotus, as we know, seriously misrepresents the facts of the revolt at Mytilene. His claims that the people of Mytilene "had nothing to do with the revolt" and, "as soon as they had arms, of their own motion surrendered the town" (3.47.3) to the Athenians are belied by Thucydides narrative at 3.27.3, which makes clear that "it was hunger, not loyalty, that moved the *demos*, and it was the oligarchic government, not the *demos*, that handed over the city" (Cawkwell 1997: 97). Some scholars reasonably argue that it seems unlikely that Thucydides – who placed so much emphasis on ascertaining the facts and finding the truth – would have looked kindly upon a man who distorts the truth in this way and believes that lies are an essential component of policy-making (Quinn 1964: 258; Connor 1987b: 88; Shanske 2007: 52-5). While Thucydides perhaps sympathised with Diodotus' opposition to Cleon, the argument goes, he likely disassociated himself from the deceptive speech with which Diodotus managed to achieve this. Thucydides' portrait of this character, it follows, represents less the author's own philosophical convictions regarding human nature than it does provide a natural complement to the image of Cleon in Thucydides' illustration of the general deterioration in Athenian leadership consequent to the death of Pericles (de Wet 1963; MacLeod 1978; Mara 2001; Shanske 2007).

This criticism is not without merit, but it is not compelling. The dishonesty that characterises Diodototus's speech is, as the speaker complains, necessitated by the fear that the *demos* inspires in its advisors (cf. 8.1.1). While fear is hardly characteristic of nobility – a quality that is very important to Thucydides – it should be remembered here that even Nicias, who is described by Thucydides as having "devoted the whole of his life to the study and practice of virtue" (7.86.5), felt compelled to do wrong on account of his fear of the people's wrath. As we have seen in Chapter Five, Nicias lied to his countrymen

during the Sicilian Debate, and by doing so unintentionally stoked their *eros* for an expedition which he foresaw would be disastrous. Much more seriously than this, however, he doomed the venture to failure by remaining in Sicily on account of his fear that, if he returned to Athens empty-handed, he would be condemned him to death by a vindictive *demos*. In comparison, Diodotus's dishonesty is self-confessed and publicly acknowledged as such; Diodotus warns his audience that not all that follows in his speech to them will be truthful, and this encourages them to think very carefully about what he says to them.

We cannot know if the outcome of the Sicilian Debate would have been any different had Nicias prefaced his speech with similar remarks, but it is clear that Thucydides does not hold Nicias's dishonesty too strongly against him. "Of all the Hellenes in my time," Thucydides says, it was Nicias who "least deserved to come to so miserable an end" (7.86.5). In the *History*, men who in all other respects are decent people can be forced by circumstances into doing wrong. As his comments on the fate of Nicias attest, in Thucydides' view such misfortune does not necessarily count against such men. The fact that Diodotus lies to the *demos* in order to convince them of the expediency (and justness) of his policy regarding the Mytileneans, it follows, seems less a reflection of his ignobility than it is a marker of the extent to which the standard of political debate at Athens has decayed under the weight of the people's harshness and ignorance and the brutality of the demagogues they cherish. In other words, the dangerous new tradition of insincerity in politics is something that Diodotus abhors but unfortunately must pander to on account of the dangers that being honest toward the *demos* poses. For unlike Pericles, who "enjoyed so high an estimation that he could afford to anger [the *demos*] by contradiction" (2.65.8), Diodotus is a political nonentity. As such, he has good reason to be afraid of a *demos* which, according to Thucydides, now holds Cleon in the highest regard (3.36.6). The fault for the deterioration of Athenian debate, therefore, lies more with the *demos* and men like Cleon than it does with Diodotus.

However self-exculpating for Diodotus it may appear to be, the core of his complaint – that bellicose and self-interested politicians like Cleon were leading a willing *demos* on a path of self-destruction – clearly echoes Thucydides' comments on Pericles' last speech in Book Two (2.65; cf. 5.16.1), and anticipates the Sicilian debacle. In this context, "the Mytilene debate has an intelligible purpose. Thucydides' own analysis, in terms of the less secure influence of Pericles' successors, their struggles for the people's favour, their quarrels and irresponsibility, has been given directly in 2.65: here we have a direct counterpart, one of the disruptive elements, the portrait of the demagogue in action" (Andrewes 1962: 76). We might add to this the fact that the Mytilene debate reveals within the narrative an erotic theory of politics which, while used in its immediate context as an argument against injustice and brutality, is validated by the author as politically salient in other instances beyond the revolt of Mytilene.

We have seen that Diodotus's erotic theory of politics applies on the individual level in the *History* (the prime example being Aristogeiton) and at the level of the community during the revolt at Mytilene. But, as Paul Ludwig notes, "it is difficult not to apply his conception of *eros* [also] to the … attempt of the Athenians themselves for western empire" (Ludwig 2002: 169).

To appreciate this point, we should recall the set of speeches that take place in the assembly before the Sicilian expedition is decided on. This is, apart from the contest between Cleon and Diodotus over the fate of Mytilene, the only instance in the *History* in which Thucydides presents "the clash of opposite positions and philosophies before the Athenian *ekklesia*" (Wasserman 1956: 27). During this momentous debate, Alcibiades encourages the men of Athens to accept the "insolence" (*hyperphronoumenos*, 6.16.4) of good fortune; Nicias's well-meaning lies backfire to completely undermine his stated wish to become as "independent of *tuche* as far as is possible" (6.23.3) by stoking what Thucydides calls an "*eros*" (6.24.3) for universal empire. Like the tyrannicides and the Mytileneans, the Athenians have now become engaged in act of "amazing daring" (6.31.6).

Thanks to Nicias's exaggerations, the resources for this enterprise are by no means neglible, but the fleet is more a demonstration of "power and wealth" (*dynameos kai exousias*, 6.31.4) than it is an armament against an enemy. It would become famous among the Greeks as an expedition for having had the "greatest hopes" (*megistei elpidi*) in history, "considering the resources of those who undertook it" (6.31.6).

Given that these "great hopes" (*megales elpidos*, 7.75.2) were, like Athens' great fleet, dashed against the rocky shoreline of Sicily amidst suffering "too great for tears" (7.75.4), it does not seem a stretch to say that Thucydides' structuring of the Sicilian narrative faithfully reproduces Diodotus's vision of an *eros*, led on by hope and fortune, which cuts a wide swathe of ruin amongst men. The similarities in the language and structure of the Mytilene and Sicilian episodes are too great to lead to any conclusion other than that the two are deliberately and fundamentally connected. This is especially true in light of the role that the digression on the tyrannicides plays in the context of the narration of events regarding Sicily.

Thucydides suggests that this pattern of behaviour applies not only to the characteristically daring and erotic Athenians, but to all of humanity, when he says in his authorial voice that "it is a habit of mankind to entrust to careless *elpidi* what they long for [*epithumousin*], and to use sovereign reason [*logismoi*] to thrust aside what they do not fancy" (4.108.4). While Thucydides here does not reproduce Diodotus's speech on *eros* word for word, and there is a slight difference in the role played (or not played) by reason, the sentiments in question are more or less identical (cf. Orwin 1984: 494). It may be concluded in light of this and the other parallels that exist in the *History* that the erotic theory of politics expounded by Diodotus extends well beyond the immediate circumstances of the Mytilene Debate; we might conclude that it represents the political theory of Thucydides himself.

Thucydides, in sum, implicitly endorses the erotic theory of politics that he puts into the mouth of Diodotus. In the *History*, all alike are subject to Diodotus's law of erotic politics: inspired by *eros*, and led on by hope and chance, both individual and states (and both tyrannicides and tyrants) are prone to suffering and self-destruction. According to their natural tendencies, poverty and powerless give rise to reckless ventures, while wealth and power birth greed, insolence and pride. This is especially so in the case of communities, because when acting collectively men tend to magnify their own capabilities and this undermines their ability to make reasonable decisions. Only the individual or state "acting in full knowledge of this law will be able to avoid the usual risks of unreasonable audacity or overly cruel arrogance" (Scanlon 1987: 297). Diodotus is aware of this fact, and therefore manages to avoid catastrophe at Mytilene (albeit not without manipulating his people). Thucydides, of course, also knows this very well. The question that we must now turn to concerns the influence of tragedy upon this erotic theory of politics.

(iii) *Tragedy and the Erotic Theory of Politics*

As we saw in Chapter Three, *eros* was a favourite theme of the classical tragedians. The poets used it often as a catalyst for social conflicts and ethical issues, as well as an ideal type of the dangers that powerful emotions posed to the rational self. In the tragedies in which it figures, *eros* is almost always associated with madness, personal transformation and reversal of fortune. It is this association – which other tragic emotions do not display to anywhere near the same extent – that makes *eros* so relevant to tragic action. The madness of tragic *eros* has catastrophic consequences both for the subject and for the wider community; indeed, tragic *eros* is distinguishable from the self-confession of lyric by the very fact that it fundamentally and unavoidably concerns the *polis*. The characteristic qualities and effects of this tragic *eros* are nowhere more neatly summarised than in Sophocles' *Antigone*:

Eros, the unconquered in battle, Eros, you who descend upon riches, and watch the night through on a girl's soft cheek, you roam over the sea and among the homes of men in the wilds. Neither can any mortal escape you, nor any man whose life lasts for a day. He who has known you is driven to madness. You seize the minds of just men and drag them to injustice, to their ruin. You it is who have incited this conflict of men whose flesh and blood are one. But victory belongs to radiant Desire swelling from the eyes of the sweet-bedded bride. Desire sits enthroned in power beside the mighty laws (780-800).

Many elements of the erotic theory of politics that Diodotus espouses (and Thucydides implicitly endorses) are quite clearly recognisable in this famous passage. The tragic *eros* described by Sophocles affects all men without distinction; it applies to abstract entities such as wealth and far-off things across the seas (such as, perhaps, Mediterranean empire) as much as it does to any human body; it is unconquerable, all-powerful, and contemptuous of human law; it falls upon men and drags them into bloody wars, moral outrage and their own disastrous ruin. As we have seen in the foregoing discussion, all of these themes are summarised in Diodotus's theory and are yet more broadly woven into the *History*'s narrative.

What is missing from Sophocles' tragic picture is the explicit emphasis on hope and chance as the enablers of lust-driven destruction that is central to the erotic theory of politics. Chance and hope, however, did indeed figure prominently in tragedy. In Euripides' *Suppliants*, as we have seen in Chapter 4, both *elpis* and *tuche* are described as collaborators with erotic desire in leading men into war and ruin. This play was, in part, a sympathetic yet critical commentary on the tradition of patriotism expounded and personified by Pericles, and in particular the vision of erotic citizenship that he offered. Nevertheless, despite these simil-

arities, it is the case that neither in this play nor in any other tragedy is *eros* welded so causally and so firmly to hope and chance (and to power) as it is in Thucydides' *History*.

How should we explain this divergence, we might then wonder? But this question hardly needs asking. Thucydides was a brilliant and original thinker who refused to submit to orthodoxy. If, in his opinion, certain aspects of popular knowledge – such as the Athenians' misunderstanding of their own history – required correction, he would passionately provide it. If the poets perceived the dangerous dynamics of *eros* but failed to adequately express the links between *eros*, hope, and chance, then Thucydides would do so himself. The real question that needs to be asked, therefore, is why Thucydides' erotic theory of politics still shares so much in common with tragic *eros*, as it can hardly be assumed that such similarities are purely coincidental.

Francis Cornford long ago pointed out that "Thucydides possessed, in common with his contemporaries at Athens, the cast of mind induced by an early education consisting almost exclusively in the study of the poets" (1965: ix-x). But this fact does not lead necessarily to the conclusion that "Thucydides never understood the origin of the war, because his mind was filled with preconceptions" that required him to "cut down poetry into prose" (*ibid*: 133).

As we have seen in the foregoing chapters, *eros* was an important tragic emotion because the Athenians considered *eros* to be an important *political* emotion. The experience and expression of *eros* lay at the heart of their self-identity as democrats and imperialists, and as such their poets believed that it deserved examination and interrogation on the tragic stage. The *eros* represented in tragedy, in short, was not confined to that art; in ancient Greece, the dynamics of tragic *eros* were actually *lived*.

In light of this fact, it would be mistaken to believe that Thucydides' thinking about politics was entangled in some religiously dramatic net, the existence of which the author himself was not – and could not be – aware. It seems more reasonable to believe, rather, that Thucydides was engaging with a political issue of deep and continual concern for the Athenians, a concern reflected not only in its ubiquity in Athenian political discourse but in the ritual performance of drama every spring at the Great Dionysia. For the Athenians, at least, *eros* was an important factor in their history, in their politics, in their tragedies – in their *drama*, with all of that term's meanings in the Greek. The death of Hipparchus and Athenian behaviour in the context of the Sicilian expedition all too tragically prove this.

Conclusion

During the Mytilene debate, the mysterious character of Diodotus presents a theory of human nature in which *eros* is the primary driver of political action. Diodotus claims that all men are led on by *eros*, hope and chance in the pursuit of political power; poverty and wealth are the conditions that most aggravate this problem, insofar as the one gives rise to the reckless audacity inspired by necessity and the other to the greedy ambition born of insolence. Due to the vicissitudes of fate, however, these erotic adventures end all too often in disaster, and there is no law that will prevent this from happening. This is especially so in the case of communities and states, because when acting together individuals magnify their own capabilities and thereby tend to act irrationally. Following this, I argued that Diodotus's theory is shared by Thucydides himself. There are a number of points in the *History* which suggest that Thucydides implicitly lends authorial support to Diodotus's erotic theory of politics. Similarities in expression between speeches and parallels in narrative development suggest that Diodotus's erotic theory – which draws so heavily on the *eros* of tragedy – plays a very important role in the underlying tragic structure of the *History* as a whole.

We have seen, furthermore, that Thucydides' *History* and the political theory that undergirds it provide an astute analysis of what once were living practices. Insofar as his work is 'possession for all time,' however, Thucydides obviously assumes that the basics of his political theory – *eros*, hope, and chance – and the conditions in which they thrive will remain generally constant over time. This is quite a troubling assumption; as we have seen in Chapter Two, the classical Greek concept of *eros* differs significantly from modern Western ideas of 'love,' 'lust,' and 'yearning.' Indeed, *eros* was fundamentally tied up with Greek constructions of masculinity and the honour system that defined classical Athenian society. All of this poses an interesting and important question, which the following part of this dissertation will attempt to answer, namely: does Thucydides' erotic political theory have any relevance in the present day?

Part Three

Love, Power, Tragedy: From the Ancients to the Modern World

CHAPTER SEVEN

Introduction

In this chapter I will compare some of the erotic elements of Thucydides' text that have formed the focus of the dissertation so far with similar ideas expressed in Plato's *Symposium*, and in particular, with the ideas expressed by Aristophanes in the speech attributed to him there.[10]

This discussion will be helpful in understanding the connections between the political *eros* found in Thucydides' *History* and the conception of power in the work of Hans Morgenthau, insofar as the *Symposium*, and in particular the speech of Aristophanes in it, acts as a kind of intellectual stepping-stone between the two. This is because Plato's dialogues – and the *Symposium* in particular – provided a bridge for Morgenthau to enter the ancient world of erotic politics, and from this world he took the insights that the longing for community and the longing for power are impossible to separate, that this hybrid longing was tragically destructive, and that it was the most powerful and most ancient animating force of human action. These insights are very similar to those we find in Thucydides, and they are central to Morgenthau's political philosophy, which we will consider in the following chapter.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I briefly summarize the speech of Aristophanes and the speeches preceding it in the dialogue, paying special attention to their political ramifications. There are three elements of the speeches that stand out in this regard: an emphasis on homoerotic love as the basis of virile democratic politics; the idea that *eros* as the means to reunite with 'what is our own' and to achieve a wholeness that is politically potent but at the same time linked to death; and the suggestion of a web of ambition, criminality, and violence in which *eros* finds itself inextricably caught. Following this, I examine those parts

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[10] In this chapter, all references to ancient books will be to Plato's *Symposium* unless otherwise indicated.

of Thucydides' *History* that have been the focus of the dissertation so far in light of the foregoing discussion. This comparison suggests a remarkable continuity and firmness to certain tragic themes within the constellation of ideas that we have called the 'erotic theory of politics.'

Eros and Dionysus in the *Symposium*

(i) *In Praise of Love: The Speeches of the* Symposium

The *Symposium* is set at the celebratory banquet in honour of the tragic poet Agathon, whose plays have recently won first prize at the City Dionysia. One of the participants of the festivities, Erixymachus, has suggested that for entertainment the group discuss the topic of love; everybody else agrees to this and commits to making a speech in praise of *Eros*. Aristophanes comes fourth in a line of speakers who address various aspects of the god and the emotional appetite he inspires, all the while threading together the common themes of politics and poetry. In order to fully understand Aristophanes' speech it is necessary to briefly consider the speakers who precede him.

Phaedrus, whose speech initiates the conversation, claims that *Eros* "brings to us the greatest goods", since he grants us a "sense of shame at acting shamefully, and a sense of pride in acting well. Without these, nothing fine or great can be accomplished, in public or private" (*Symp.* 178c-d). This is so, Phaedrus says, because being caught doing something shameful by a loved one is such a terrifying and humiliating prospect that the person in love will try with all their might to refrain from all bad behaviour. He then explicitly connects the power of love with politics, exclaiming: "If only there were a way to start a city or an army made up of lovers and the boys they love! Theirs would be the best possible system of society, for they would hold back from all that is shameful, and seek honour in each other's eyes. Even a few of them, in battle side by side, would conquer all the world" (178d-179a). Apparently oblivious to the hubris he seems to be supporting, Phaedrus buttresses his claim with the assertion that no-

body will die for a person but their lover, drawing on the tragic examples of Alcestis and Achilles as proofs for his argument. This is only one of many instances in the dialogue in which speakers explicitly or implicitly refer to tragedy and its patron deity, Dionysus.

Pausanias is next in line to discuss the topic of *eros*. After distinguishing between a 'common love', which hedonistically pursues bodies solely in pursuit of the sexual act and the physical gratification it brings, and a 'heavenly love', which cares for both the body and the mind of the object of *eros*, and shares with the beloved rather than simply taking from them, Pausanias, like Phaedrus, moves on to the subject of politics. He addresses topics that are central to this dissertation, and it is therefore worth quoting him at length:

> [I]n places like Ionia and almost every other part of the Persian empire, taking a lover is always considered disgraceful. The Persian empire is absolute; that is why it condemns love as well as philosophy and sport. It is no good for rulers if the people they rule cherish ambitions [*phronemata megala*, lit. 'great thoughts'] for themselves or form strong bonds of friendship with one another. That these are precisely the effects of philosophy, sport and especially of Love is a lesson the tyrants of Athens learned directly from their own experience: Didn't their reign come to a dismal end because of the bonds uniting Harmodius and Aristogiton in love and affection? So you can see that condemnation of Love reveals lust for power in the rulers and cowardice in the ruled, while indiscriminate approval testifies to general dullness and stupidity. Our own customs … are much more difficult to understand [and] also far superior … Recall … that [in Athens] a lover is encouraged in every possible way; this means that what he does [in the name of love] is not considered shameful … [O]ur custom is to praise lovers for totally extraordinary acts – so extraordinary, in fact, that if they performed them for

any other purpose whatever, they would reap the most profound contempt (182c-183a).

Pausanias quite clearly is suggesting that the character of the Athenians' political *eros*, popularly represented by the relationship between Harmodius and Aristogeiton, is divine and good, whereas that of the Persians, Ionian Greeks and of tyranny in general is common, sensual and vulgar (the tyrant's condemnation of love is not of love *per se* but, rather, of 'heavenly' love). Pausanias adds that "it is considered shameful for a man to be seduced by money or political power" (184b) if, after having tasted the benefits of these things, he cannot rise above them, for none of these benefits are permanent and therefore "no genuine affection can possibly be based upon them" (*ibid*.). Thus the tyrant, who is seduced by political power, cannot ever truly care about his people, since his love is of the common sort and does not support the growth of real affection. The *erastes-eromenos* relationship such as Aeschylus suggested existed between Achilles and Patroclus, on the other hand, is offered as the outstanding example of heavenly love and the strength of the bonds it forms between people. Like Phaedrus, Pausanias sees manliness as the willingness to take up arms, not only in battle general, but against tyranny in particular; and, again like Phaedrus, he understands same-sex relations to be the breeding ground of manliness (Ludwig 1996: 539). As we have noted in previous chapters, these ideas were definitive of Athenian democratic ideology.

Two elements of Pausanias' speech are important to note: first, through the mention of the Pisistratids and the tyrannicides, 'great ambition,' and 'extraordinary acts' in the context of love, is the intimation of an intrinsic connection between *eros*, political ambition, transgression, and violence. Second is the emphasis on the beneficial effects of homoerotic union, which is carried over from Phaedrus. As we shall see, both of these elements reappear in Aristophanes' speech and are part of the vision of politics that he promotes.

Following Pausanias in the dialogue is the doctor Erixymachus, the *erastes* of Phaedrus, who says at the beginning of his speech that he will try to carry Pausanias' argument "to its logical conclusion" (186a). He asserts that "Love is a deity of the greatest importance: he directs everything that occurs, not only in the human domain, but also in that of the gods" (186b) and goes on to claim that, as a physician, it is his duty to implant in people the healthy form of love and remove its diseased form (essentially the same categories of 'heavenly' and 'common' love provided by Pausanias). The doctor does this, he says, by reconciling opposed elements within the body, such as cold and hot, and wet and dry. The same regulation of the different elements in the cosmos is needed for bountiful harvests, and also for the maintenance of the order between gods and human beings, for "the origin of all impiety," the doctor tells us, is the failure of men to cultivate the healthy kind of love and their concomitant indulgence of its dangerous and pestilent form (188c). Impiety, discord, sickness, and infertility are thereby linked together by Erixymachus under the banner of 'common love'; respect, agreement, health and abundance, he says, are held in love's heavenly hand.

Although Erixymachus claims to fully develop the argument of Pausanias, he in fact appears to arrive at a rather different conclusion regarding the proper role of *Eros*, namely, that it works to bring about harmony through the reconciliation of opposites. The implicit conclusion of such an argument, for a Greek mind, would be that the finest example of love is found in the love between a man and a woman. This description of love does seem to resonate with the kind of *eros* we often see in tragedy, as I will show in the second part of my argument; and although it also appears to jar against the theme of homoerotic union as the basis of a healthy politics common to both Phaedrus and Pausanias, Erixymachus nevertheless makes it clear that such unions are perfectly acceptable manifestations of healthy love. Indeed, he insinuates that they are paradigmatic of it (186c). As

we will shortly come to see, however, this apparent contradiction is not as stark as it seems.

Once Erixymachus has finished, it is the turn of Aristophanes to speak. Like Socrates (whose speech, following Agathon's, will conclude the round), Aristophanes explicitly diverges from the speakers preceding him: his account of love is built not so much on the ground of logical argument or sophistries as it is on a species of dramatic myth (cf. Duncan 1977). Furthermore (and again like the speech of Socrates) his speech is "offered in a proselytizing spirit" (Scott and Welton 2008: 65); both the philosopher and the comic poet are concerned with the moral improvement of others. This is important to note, because as I will point out in the second part of my argument, just as Socrates' approach is representative of philosophy, Aristophanes' ethical standpoint can be considered, at least in part, to be representative of Dionysian poetry. As Socrates says at the beginning of the dialogue, Aristophanes' "whole time is taken up with Dionysus and Aphrodite" (177d).

Begging his audience to take him seriously (193e), Aristophanes nevertheless gives an account of humanity at which we cannot help but laugh. In the beginning, he says, human nature was very different from what it is now. There were then three kinds of human beings: the male, the female, and the androgynous. Being offspring of the sun, the earth, and the moon respectively, these humans were spherical in shape, with four arms and four legs, two faces, two sets of sexual organs and so on; they moved like gymnasts doing cartwheels, were possessed of terrible strength, and in their hearts harboured "great thoughts" that verged on hubris (190b; cf. Cairns 1996).[11] Apparently referring to Homer's story of Ephialtes and Otus, Aristophanes relates that the circle-people stormed the heavens in a vain attempt to unseat the gods. Having defeated these upstarts, Zeus nevertheless refrained from destroying them, as he had the race of giants,

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[11] This phrase is lifted directly from Pausanias' speech.

since this would deprive him and his fellow gods of worship and sacrifice. Instead, he divided them in two; a brilliant idea, at first glance, for not only did such a move increase the number of humans (and hence the amount of sacrifices they could provide) but it also divested them of the power to challenge the gods.

Unfortunately for Zeus, however, his plan backfired: as all the new humans wanted to do in their mutilated state was reunite with their other halves, they neglected to feed themselves and quickly began to die off from hunger and inactivity. To mitigate this problem Zeus invented sex and its pleasures, which, through opposite sex union, helped keep human numbers healthy, and through same sex union, kept humanity productive.

But for Aristophanes none of these things – sex, reproduction, and work – are definitive of *eros*; they are, rather, its derivatives. Even sex cannot account for the deep joy in being with the beloved. The true essence of love, rather, is to call back "the halves of our original nature together; it tries to make one out of two and heal the wound of human nature" (191d). *Eros*, in short, is the pursuit of what is similar to us for the sake of achieving completeness in a greater self (192e), and it is born into every human being.

Hence, those halves who are originally sawn from the androgynous sort will lust after the opposite sex; and these people, says Aristophanes (in a manner that points at the category of common love developed by Pausanias and Erixymachus), are often found to be lecherous and vulgar (191e). Of lesbians, who come from the fully female sort, the comic poet does not have much to say. However, for the fully male humans, who are attracted to manliness, he has only praise: those youths who enjoy the company of men are not shameful, we are told, but are in fact "the best of boys and lads, because they are most manly in their nature … they are bold and brave and masculine, and they tend to cherish what is like themselves" (192a). To prove this, Aristophanes turns to the example of politics, where, he claims, one finds that such boys grow up to be successful and

powerful, and will as they age come to cultivate virtue and wisdom in their own young men, thereby perpetuating the health of the *polis* (cf. Ludwig 1996: 537).

While in line with the logic of Phaedrus and Pausanias, Aristophanes here appears at odds with Erixymachus, whose argument is that *eros* seeks the reconciliation of opposites. As Arlene Saxonhouse points out, "Aristophanes' vision of political life cannot encompass what is other. The males entering the world of political life seek out those who are most similar and who seek unity in their similarity rather than in the complementarity of differences" (1984: 17). But a reading of these speeches as contradictory would overlook the emphasis that Erixymachus places on the *reconciliation* of opposites: he is especially keen to point out the harmony that is produced when agreement – that is, common ground or *sameness* – is produced between discordant elements (187a-c). As the philosopher Heraclitus, whose philosophical ideas are utilised by Erixymachus in the course of his argument (*Symp.* 187a-b), once said: the way up and the way down are the same.

Wholeness and wholesomeness are thus both defined by a state in which community and shared attributes constitute the basis of identity and potency. In Aristophanes' words: "I say there's just one way for the human race to flourish: we must bring love to its perfect conclusion, and each of us must win the favours of his very own young man, so that he can recover his original nature. If that is the ideal, then, of course, the nearest approach to it is best in present circumstances, and that is to win the favour of young men who are naturally sympathetic to us" (193c). Aristophanes therefore merely builds upon the theme of homoerotic union as the basis of a good society that is common to his fellow speakers, even if they have each developed it in different ways (Cooper 2008: 60). This emphasis on the benefits of homoeroticism – and its centrality to the *polis* – is the first theme that can be usefully compared with certain parts of Thucydides' *History*.

Now while *eros* is undoubtedly of great benefit to mankind in Aristophanes' account, he nevertheless makes it clear that love is a means and not an end. It is the engine that drives people in search of wholeness and the glue that helps to hold them together once they have found a person who approximates their other half. For the time being, Aristophanes says, *eros* does the best that can be done, by drawing people towards what belongs to them; "[b]ut for the future, Love promises the greatest hope of all: if we treat the gods with due reverence, he will restore to us our original nature, and by healing us, he will make us blessed and happy" (193d). *Eros* is not the final emotional condition in which people seek to exist; rather it is a state of unity, together with the feeling of power this unity bestows, that constitutes its aim, its *telos*. Aristophanes is quick to add that piety is necessary for the restoration of this wholeness; the law, he says, is the gate-keeper of wholeness, and it must be shown respect if we are to consummate the love that drives us on. According to Dorter: "[t]he goal which Eros sets for us – the restoration of the state we enjoyed in the Golden Age – is one which can be attained only as a reward for piety" (1969: 220). The fate of the Mantineans,[12] which Aristophanes uses as an example to illustrate this point, translates personal *eros* into political terms and puts the issues of unity and power into stark relief. It is therefore necessary to briefly consider their story.

Soon after the conflict that was described by Thucydides came to an end, hostilities between Athens and Sparta once again broke out. During this war the Mantineans, at that time democratic allies of Sparta, acted in a way that reminded the Spartans of the war that they had fought against Mantinea almost thirty years earlier, in 418, when the city had defected from Sparta and attempted to gain an empire within Arcadia for itself. The Spartans now accused the Mantineans of sending corn to Argos, an enemy state, and of serving in Spartan armies with

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[12] Mantinea was a city in the region of Arcadia. The question as to whether Aristophanes is referring to the Mantineans in particular or to the population of Arcadia is not resolved (see Mattingly [1958]; Morrison [1964]; Dover [1965]). I follow received opinion and accept that Mantinea is the proper subject of Aristophanes' example.

minimal effort, if they even served at all. Furthermore, they claimed that as so-called allies, the joy that was visible in Mantinea whenever misfortune struck Sparta was completely unacceptable; so, too, were the rumours that most of its citizens claimed that the thirty years' truce they had kept with Sparta had in fact ended early (Xen. *Hell*. 5.2.1-2).

Armed with these allegations, the Spartans declared that they could no longer trust Mantinea with its city walls intact, and demanded that they be torn down. The Mantineans refused to accept Sparta's dictate, and their city was subsequently besieged. After a masterstroke by the Spartan commander put the entire defence of the city in jeopardy, the government of Mantinea recognised the peril they were in and agreed to tear down their walls. Unfortunately for them, however, the Spartans now added the condition that, if peace were to be made, the city's democratic rulers were to be exiled and its people divided into four separate villages. The popular regime, preferring to avoid the horrible end that usually befell prisoners of war, acceded to these demands; they were expelled, the walls were torn down and the city was dissolved. As a consequence, the aristocrats, who were now closer to their estates in the country and rid of the popular demagogues who had previously controlled the city, gained more power over the population; so did Mantinea's men become more pliable, and came forward more willingly for service in Spartan armies than had been the case under democratic government (Xen. *Hell*. 5.2.3-7). As Dover points out, Sparta's policy an indelible impression on the rest of Greece; for Polybius, it remained "the classic example of international immorality" (Dover 1965: 6).

Aristophanes says that Zeus divided human beings "as punishment for the wrong we did him, just as the Spartans divided the [Mantineans]" (193a). The analogy with Aristophanes' circle-people works as follows. In the political realm, tyrannical power is equivalent to godhood; in its region, Sparta maintained such a position of overwhelming strength. It was therefore able to enforce its will on Mantinea, the independent and allegedly hostile actions of which had

offended it, as the circle-people had offended Zeus. Unity, which had characterised the city of Mantinea and which was symbolised by the wall that surrounded its entire population, is the natural state of a *polis* and forms the basis of its ability to maintain its military strength and formulate independent policy. Wholeness is likewise what gave the circle-people their strength. Division is of course the antithesis of this wholeness: it is an enabler of exploitation of Mantinea's people by domestic rent-seekers and despotic foreign states like Sparta, and it makes human beings weak and utterly subject to Zeus. Political *eros* in this case must therefore be the desire of separate individuals or groups to unite with one another with the aim of creating, out of their constituent parts, an independent political unit capable of following a course of action it has itself determined – since this is, essentially, what the democratic city of Mantinea had been before it was dissolved by Sparta.

For Aristophanes, then, political *eros* is the mutual desire for shared identity and political community on a grand scale, in pursuit of independence and power; in more modern terminology, one might frame it as the popular desire for a nation-state. Fostering *eros* in a political sense, therefore, means encouraging mutual affection on the basis of shared ties, identities and interests and promoting collective pursuits in which a sense of community can be actively constructed. Perhaps the most effective of such pursuits in ancient Athens took place at that festival dedicated to the god to whom both Aristophanes and the Symposium's host, young Agathon, pledged allegiance: and that is, of course, Dionysus. This idea of *eros* as the means with which to create a citizen body defined by strength and independence is the second element of Aristophanes' speech that has parallels in the *History*.

Finally, we come to the position of *eros* in the cycle of ambition, transgression and violence. This relationship is hinted at in the speeches preceding Aristophanes': Phaedrus speaks of pairs of lovers forming an army to conquer the entire world (a goal that Xerxes and Alcibiades too possessed); Pausanias notes

that loving union is the real source of "great thoughts", connects this fact to the tragically tangled lives of the Pisistratids and the tyrannicides, and argues that the lover, to attain his beloved, "may commit the most disgraceful or ugly acts, including even sacrilege" (Dorter 1969: 217); Erixymachus hints at the tale of Oedipus with his claim that an abundance of diseased *eros* can lead only to impiety, pestilence and poverty (Berg 2010: 63). Nevertheless, it is in Aristophanes' speech that the relationship between *eros* and crime is fully spelled out.

In Aristophanes' account of love, *eros* appears to be only the consequence of ambition and crime, not their cause. For it did not exist, the poet suggests, prior to the violence inflicted on the circle-people by Zeus; *eros* is "the hangover we are left with once the drunkenness of great thoughts has been sobered up by the punishments and prescriptions of lawful piety" (*ibid*). Zeus' decision to slice the circle-people in two had as an unintended consequence the birth, in each new half-person, of a burning desire to reunite with their lost part – a desire which, before the invention of intercourse, brought with it but death for this pitiful race. With sex, however, procreation and production were made possible again and, if only for a moment, the human longing for wholeness could be satisfied. It should be noted, however, that erotic longing and sex are not intrinsically related, as are *eros* and death: as Steven Berg notes, "the link between eros and sex that Zeus engineers seems rather to be a ruse whereby the original connection between eros and death is concealed, although not severed" (*ibid*.). With sex as the only means to ensure reproduction of the new human race, *eros* can thus be understood as both the giver and the destroyer of human life.

As much as the embrace of two bodies in the service of love bodes well for human happiness, insofar as it hints at the return of our original nature, obedience to Zeus and his siblings – which is the means to prevent another dissection and further diminution in the capabilities of man (193a) – remains, according to many scholars, just as important for human beings. According to Scott and Welton, for example, "Aristophanes believes that respect for the gods is the most

important virtue human beings can possess, for it was impiety that caused the original beings to be bisected" (2008: 67). For Roger Duncan, Aristophanes' entire speech "is a diatribe against *hubris* or the attempt on the part of men to enter the realm of the gods" (1977: 282).

But is Aristophanes' solution to the problem of human nature really as simple as that? There are a number of reasons why we might answer this question in the negative. First, the picture of an ideal humanity as perfectly pious and existentially content seems relatively odd for an Athenian, even one as supportive of the simple country life as was Aristophanes. Great ambition is, arguably, necessary for great striving, which was the hallmark of idealised Athens; and it was at the very least an essential ingredient in the success of the Great Dionysia, which was at its core a competition in which the entire community took part. Second, a partnership between *eros* and piety seems unlikely, especially since Aristophanes himself points out that *eros* is responsible for adultery (191d-e) – not only an offence against Hera, the goddess of marriage, but also, at least in its most famous example (that of Paris and Helen), a catastrophic offence against Zeus. In fact, *eros* "is impious in its very origin and nature" (Dorter 1969: 221). For *eros* is not the creation of Zeus, but an unforeseen reaction of raw human material to the laying down of divine law; it is nature's refusal to accept the dictate of the gods and the limitations that law has imposed upon it:

> *Eros* is essentially antinomian and what *eros* really longs for is not so much the union with another human being in order to complete our nature, as the overturning of the law that has mutilated and afflicted [that nature] … [E]rotic longing is, at the deepest level, a wish to renounce one's law-defined humanity in favour of the sub-human understood not simply as the bestial, but as the criminally impious. (Berg 2010: 65-8)

For human beings, then, the value of piety, if it has any value at all, lies only in its utility for ambition – and the impious ambition to overturn the law of the gods at that. There is nothing inherently good about piety, in other words, for it is only one means by which *eros* schemes for its goals; even then, with *eros* and ambition linked by necessity, a chain neither Hephaestus nor his brother Zeus can buckle, piety can in the end do little to please the gods in light of its inevitable ineffectuality.

Ludwig translates this personal manifestation of transgressive *eros* into the political logic of Aristophanes' speech appropriately:

> Once the essentially republican city has been established, political unity and the strength made possible by the combined might of the city permit men to think high thoughts once more. Further opportunities arise for eros to become vertical, directed upwards, once more. The way is now clear for the polis to become an imperial city. The goal of apotheosis and the desire for it once more become possibilities, and with them tyranny reemerges. The cycle is ready to be replayed, this time at the peak or end of civilization rather than at the beginning. (2002: 108)

In the last analysis, then, this link between *eros* and ambition, together with the irrepressible tendency of ambition to transgress and for transgression to call forth violence, suggests that human life is an irresolvable perplexity: in terms of his relationship with *eros*, "man is not merely suffering from a sickness, he is a sickness and this sickness has no cure" (Berg 2010: 69). And yet, despite the terrible symptoms of this disease – despite the fact that "[t]he realm of conflict, of war, of execution, of discourse is composed of partial beings seeking completion" (Saxonhouse 1984: 19) – it is the emphatic opinion of Aristophanes, whose task it was to bring merriment and laughter to his people, that there is "just one way for the human race to flourish: we must bring love to its perfect

conclusion" (193c). This tragic view of *eros* as both giver and destroyer of life, as an ambiguous emotion linked via impious ambition to both creativity and violence, is the last theme in Aristophanes' speech in which we can identify ideas about *eros* that are found also in the *History*.

(ii) Thucydides and Aristophanes on Political Eros

We now come to consider the ways in which the erotic elements of Thucydides' *History* can be illuminated by the foregoing discussion. In the exegesis of Aristophanes' speech we noted three themes that were of particular interest, namely: the idea that homoerotic love forms the basis of a healthy politics; an emphasis on *eros* as the means to reunite with 'what is our own' and to achieve a wholeness that is politically potent but which is at the same time linked to death; and the intricate web of ambition, criminality, and violence which *eros* helps to weave and into which it is also woven.

In terms of the first two themes, the most obvious points of comparison in Thucydides' *History* are Pericles' ideal of the erotic citizen and its basis in the story of Harmodius and Aristogeiton. The central problem that occupies Pericles in the *History*, to recall, is the proper place of *eros* in the city. As Thucydides presents it, Pericles' daring patriotic vision based on *eros* was a brilliant but unstable one; like tragedy, it incarnated and encouraged the human power released by love – in particular, homoerotic love – that was both the basic foundation of Athens' democratic imagination, symbolised by the relationship of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, and one of the reasons for, and justifications of, its tyrannical empire.

The ideal of erotic citizenship harnessed the dynamism born of self-interest and yoked it to the community, promising to the individual, for the sacrifice of his life, the most glorious of rewards – immortality in memory – and to the community, imperial mastery. Love was the path to glory, and glory to immortality; and immortality, for the Greeks, was the hallmark of divinity. The lover of the

city had the potential to reach beyond his limits, to overstep the boundary between man and god through his greater selfhood in – and ultimately as – the city. In his death, that is, the erotic citizen became identical with the *polis*, an eternally living being, in terms of the lasting lessons in manliness that his death in battle provided to future generations. Through the destruction of the individual citizen community could be born, giving the city the unity and strength to expand itself imperially.

In sum, homoerotic love is presented in Thucydides as the patriotic glue that binds democratic Athens together and the force that gives the city its dynamism. However, it is also the reason for Athens' imperial expansion and the war with Sparta that this caused. This kind of *eros* is, therefore, intrinsically linked to death; erotic union with the city is achieved only through the physical annihilation of the individual in battle, and this leads to his rebirth in a greater self. In order to reproduce itself, the city requires war and death in battle.

The Periclean ideal of erotic citizenship is thus very similar to the ideal love postulated by Aristophanes; in both cases, the individual seeks unity in a greater self, composed of like parts; but consummation of this unity, for both Pericles and Aristophanes, demands the sacrifice of individuals. Likewise, in both cases is the natural state of the greater self conditioned by a restless ambition that results in the transgression of social limits and the violence this provokes. This point brings us to the third theme in Aristophanes' speech that bears resemblance to ideas found in the *History*, namely, the erotic theory of politics.

This theory, as we know, is that human beings naturally tend to fall under the influence of an erotically charged impulse for freedom and rule (two sides of the same coin of political power), which is led on into danger by the hope that their luck will not run out. This tendency is conditioned by poverty and wealth, which encourage audacity through necessity and greed through insolence; the poor want what they do not have and the rich want more than they have got. The dan-

ger of such behavior is intensified in the case of collectives, because when acting together with others individuals tend to inflate their own capabilities and act irrationally on account of this.

These are claims to which the author of the *History* appears to lend his own support. The question of Alcibiades and the *eros* that he represented looms large in Thucydides' description of the Sicilian debacle. The Athenians, as Thucydides represents them, willingly accept the 'insolence' (*hyperphronoumenos*) implicit in imperialism and explicitly espoused by Alcibiades and are 'all alike' overcome by his lust for far-off Sicily. Unified by the power of *eros* in their pursuit of universal empire, the Athenians in this instance not only seem to prove Diodotus' point about *eros* and its relationship to *hubris*, but inevitably bring to mind Aristophanes' circle-people, the 'great thoughts' (*phronemata megala*) of whom likewise proved to be their own undoing. If we accept the argument of the previous chapter – namely that Thucydides himself shared the erotic theory of politics he puts into the mouth of Diodotus – then Thucydides' famed comments on the Corcyrean civil war only further entrench the link suggested above; Thucydides writes that "with the ordinary conventions of civilized life thrown into confusion, human nature, always ready to offend even where laws exist, showed itself proudly in its true colours, as something incapable of controlling passion" (Thuc. 3.84,2). As the foregoing discussion of the *Symposium* makes clear, Plato's Aristophanes could not have said it better.

It may even be that, as John P. Anton has argued, "Plato constructed this dialogue with the aid, though not exclusively, of a model from Thucydides *mythistoricus ...* cast mainly in the mold of tragedy, to disclose the philosopher's radical vision of eros in the *polis* in crisis" (1974: 277). The setting and structure of the *Symposium* are certainly remarkable in this regard; the dialogue is set (with historical inaccuracy) shortly before Alcibiades led the Athenians off to Sicily, the form of tragedy is woven into the very structure of the text, and the themes of the genre loom large in the conversation itself (Anton 1962; Sider 1980; Shef-

field 2001). This is especially so in the case of Aristophanes' speech:

> We can see how close we are [here] to a view of *eros* frequently expressed in Greek tragedy, if we think of a moment in the *Antigone*. Creon argues for the replaceability of love partners with a crude agricultural metaphor: there are "other furrows" for Haemon's "plow." Ismene answers, "Not another love such as the one that fitted him to her." With their shared emphasis on special *harmonia* [carpenter's fit or musician's harmony], tragedy and Aristophanes seem to capture the uniqueness, as well as the wholeness, that [… is] lacking in "Plato's" view of *eros*. (Nussbaum 1979: 141)

The *eros* described by both Thucydides and Plato's Aristophanes, in other words, is quintessentially tragic, which is defined not only by madness, unreason, and reversal of fortune but by the fact that it fundamentally concerns the *polis*. This is unsurprising, given that for "Plato's original audience … [t]he future of Athens in the light of its tragic past would have been the topic of the day" (Scott and Welton 2008: 3).

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has, I hope, shown that several parallels exist between the *History* and the *Symposium* in terms of the 'erotic theory of politics' that is central to them both and which has its roots in tragedy. Both Aristophanes and Thucydides appear to present homoeroticism as the basis of a powerful and independent, if ultimately unstable, democratic *polis*. This power lies primarily in the military strength that homoeroticism helps to foster; *eros*, as the longing for community felt by people such as the Mantineans, is the means to achieve political unity and is also one major inspiration for the exercise of gallantry in war. The erotic drive towards unity is inherently linked to death; the consummation in a greater self has as its price the annihilation of the individual. This self-sacri-

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fice is one of the foundations of the strength of the imperial city; it is, as Pericles said, the reason why Athens has the greatest name in all the world – without the expenditure of life and labour in warfare the city is unable to grow its empire.

Perhaps most importantly for the purposes of this thesis, however, is the vision of man and his politics as inevitably mired in the disasters that unbridled *eros* so often brings about which both Thucydides and Plato's Aristophanes share. This theory postulates that man is driven, in both private and public life, by an *eros* that is essentially and ineradicably antinomian and which tends to bring about catastrophe in wake. The very nature of *eros* thus guarantees the perpetuity of the human tragedy. As I will show in the following chapter, the primary elements of this erotic theory of politics are found also in the work of Hans Morgenthau. While the issues of homoeroticism and its relationship to militarism are ignored in Morgenthau's work, they are nevertheless implied in the logic of his argument. This, we will see, has serious consequences for his understanding of power and hence of international politics.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first of these will consider the intellectual and political context in which Morgenthau composed his texts. The reasons for doing so have been discussed in Chapter One; I argued there that without having some understanding of the audiences a certain text was meant to address, of the place of that text in a particular tradition, its use of a particular idiom, and so on, we are liable to learn lessons from the text that its author may not have intended to give. We will see that while, as might be expected, a wide variety of authors influenced Morgenthau's overall political philosophy, his concept of the *animus dominandi* (or 'will to power'), which is so central to his theory, is indebted not only to authors such as Nietzsche and Freud, but also to the classical discourse on *eros* that these other thinkers themselves drew upon. Part of the reason this is the case, I will argue, can be traced to the historical circumstances in which Morgenthau found himself.

In the second section of the chapter, I consider the reasons for examining 'Love and Power' in depth, and outline the arguments Morgenthau makes regarding these two phenomena. Essentially, Morgenthau claims that the will to power is the twin of despairing love; both are aspects of the desire for wholeness and are rooted in the loneliness of the individual human soul. They are also what give birth to political communities in all their various shapes and forms. I then examine some of Morgenthau's comments on freedom and democracy in relation to his thoughts on love and the will to power. I argue that although Morgenthau does not explicitly employ erotic terminology when talking about these issues, the concepts and reasoning that he uses are on closer examination remarkably similar to those we find in 'Love and Power'.

This discussion will draw out some of the ways in which Morgenthau's thoughts on love and power relate to his general political philosophy. It will also place us

in a position to examine, in the following chapter, the broader theme of tragedy in Morgenthau's work and its relation to the same in Thucydides.

Section One: Morgenthau in Context

(i) *The Influence of Freud and Nietzsche*

The renewed interest in Morgenthau's work over the last few decades has generated a substantial literature, much of which has been focused on unearthing Morgenthau's intellectual roots.[13]

For reasons of space, I cannot review this literature in any depth, and in any case it is not really necessary to do so; as was mentioned above, it is clear that Morgenthau engaged with a number of thinkers and traditions, each of which contributed to his thought in various different ways. What I seek to do here instead is to build upon parts of this commentary and sketch the ways in which Nietzsche and Freud, as towering intellectual figures in early twentieth-century Germany, provided Morgenthau with an intellectual starting-point and framework within which to discuss the relationship between love and power as a quintessentially tragic one. Morgenthau, I will argue, discusses certain political problems in language and ideas that are essentially harvested from his readings, themselves shaped in important respects by Nietzsche and Freud, of a number of classical texts that share a tragic theme.

The most important consequences of this are his identification of a close relationship between love and power and his explanation of how both are fundamentally constitutive of the human tragedy that undergirds all political relations. Put differently: by employing similar interpretive strategies as Nietzsche and

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[13] These roots are said to include individual figures such as Aristotle (Lang 2008), Nietzsche (Frei 2001; Gismondi 2004), Weber (Pichler 1998; Turner and Mazur 2009), Schmitt (Pichler 1998; Brown 2008; Scheuerman 2008a), and Freud (Schuett 2007); the broader German traditions of paleorealism (Honig 1995), liberalism (Shilliam 2007), and legal philosophy (Scheuerman 2008b; Jütersonke 2008); as well as tragedy (Lebow 2003), Judaism (Mollov 2002) and Christianity (Loriaux 1992; Murray 1996).

Freud in reading ancient texts, certain problems were bound to arise for Morgenthau in his quest for a tragic view of politics, such as: What are the proper roles of the will to power and love in the community? What can they hope to achieve? Is disaster always the end-point not only of the desire that makes politics and all its corruption possible but also even of humankind's most ostensibly creative and positive emotion?

Framing problems in this way granted Morgenthau the ability to compare diverse political phenomena across time and space, and thus allows him to postulate apparently timeless truths that are universally applicable. This, in turn, lends to his suggested method of dealing with contemporary political problems – the development of "the tragic sense of life" (Morgenthau 1946: 206) – the appearance of ancient precedent and experience. In short, Morgenthau suggests that the man of Athens is, by and large, the man of today also, and if we know where the man of Athens went terribly wrong, perhaps we can avoid making similar mistakes in our own time. The atmosphere of nationalism, popular ideology and totalitarianism in which Morgenthau came of age seemed to intensify the urgency of solving such problems, and helped to drive him toward Nietzsche and Freud and their assumptions regarding the 'tragedy of man'. Thus the historical circumstances – both political and intellectual – in which Morgenthau found himself helped to create the conditions in which he felt justified in modernizing part of the 'erotic politics' that has been the focus of the dissertation so far.

As Stephen Turner and George Mazur (2009) point out, it is important to take note of the fact that in the study of the relations between the thought of various authors in which a number of thinkers act as sources for another, the issue of overdetermination – that is, the fact that the same ideas can be attributed to numerous sources – will often arise. This does not, they add, necessarily create a problem for such a study. However, it does mean that comparing highly generic concepts appearing in two different authors' work will usually have little value as evidence of the 'dependent' author's intentions in his or her text, given that

definitive proof for the claim that X's use of concept A influenced Y's use of the same will be hard to demonstrate, particularly when Y makes no explicit reference to X. On the other hand, where the 'like' concepts are highly distinctive, and especially where they derive from the author's discursive setting, their appearance suggests, *prima facie*, that the meaning of the terms for the author is the meaning conventional in that setting.

Turner and Mazur thus commend Robert Schuett's "strongly evidence-based" (*ibid*: 479) discussion of Morgenthau's indebtedness to Freud on the issue of love and its role in human nature, and dismiss other interpretations of Morgenthau's philosophical development offered by the likes of Lebow and Frei, whose arguments, they claim, rely more on generic similarities or psychological assumptions than on direct evidence of any "genetic relationship" between Morgenthau and, say, Clausewitz or Nietzsche (*ibid*: 481). While there may perhaps be some basis for such criticism, Turner and Mazur are nevertheless essentially wrong in their final judgements, as I now hope to show.

Schuett does indeed make a strong case that in 1930 Morgenthau grappled with Freud's thought and that, in his later works, Freudian group psychology seems to have influenced his analysis of some issues (in particular the problem of 'identification' of the individual with the nation and its associated problems, such as nationalism and imperialism). However, his claim that Morgenthau was at his core "a veiled Freudian" (2007: 64), in particular with regard to his conception of human nature as defined by selfishness and the *animus dominandi*, is open to significant objections.

The first of these has to do with the aforementioned issue of overdetermination. Schuett states that Freud continuously referred to the ego instinct as hunger and the sexual instinct as love, quoting Freud's statement that "[he] took as [his] starting-point a saying of the poet-philosopher, Schiller, that 'hunger and love are what moves [sic] the world'" (*ibid*: 59). Schuett notes that Morgenthau also

used the terms 'hunger' and 'love' to describe the primary human drives in his 1930 essay on the derivation of the political from the nature of man; and because Morgenthau was experimenting with Freud's ideas at this time, and kept variants of the distinction in his later work, Schuett says, "we might well argue that Morgenthau's anthropology stems from Freud's pre-*Thanatos* instinct theory" (*ibid*: 60).

But Schuett's choice of quotation is troublesome for his argument. For if Freud took Schiller as a starting point for his project, what is to prevent us from hypothesising that Morgenthau did not do the same, and used Freud merely as an auxiliary in his quest to understand human nature? Schiller was, after all, a poet every German schoolboy learned by heart, and Morgenthau is sure to have read him long before he read Freud. Compounding the problem further is the fact that it was not only Schiller's maxim that provided intellectual foundations upon which an understanding of the driving forces of human nature as hunger and love could be built, but also a long-standing and influential philosophical tradition. For as Freud conceded – in a rare acknowledgement of intellectual debt – his own ideas "were not entirely new. The incomparable significance of sexual life had [already] been proclaimed by Schopenhauer" (Freud 1925: 217). Furthermore, Freud added, there was another philosopher whose "premonitions and insights often agree in the most amazing manner with the laborious results of psychoanalysis" (quoted in Kaufmann 1960: 472) – namely, Friedrich Nietzsche. Although Freud often declared in public that he had never read Nietzsche during his formative years (or indeed at all), out of concern for "the preservation of [his own] open-mindedness" (*ibid.*), the many references to, quotations from, and parallels with the latter's work in Freud's published and unpublished manuscripts seem to positively contradict this claim (Chapman and Chapman-Santana 1995; Lehrer 1995; Assoun 2002).

Nevertheless, whether Freud was or was not influenced by Nietzsche is largely beside the point. Of more concern to us is the fact that both Freud and Nietzsche

developed their ideas about what they considered to be the primary human drive – in the one case, as 'Eros,' and in the other, as 'will to power' – with reference to ancient Greek thinking about love.

According to Freud himself, "what psychoanalysis called sexuality was by no means identical with the impulsion towards a union of the two sexes or towards producing a pleasurable sensation in the genitals; it had far more resemblance to the all-inclusive and all-preserving Eros of Plato's Symposium" (Freud 1925: 218). Indeed, the very fact that the final development of Freud's instinct theory rests on ancient Greek terminology – 'Eros' and 'Thanatos' – is a clear example of his foundational debt to classical culture; essentially, these terms act as linguistic signifiers of the supposed universality of Freud's theory, to wit, of its reach beyond fin-de-siècle bourgeois Europe through history to the ancients and beyond. The 'Oedipus complex' is yet another, more famous instance of the way in which Freud framed his thinking about human nature in terms taken from ancient Greek literature and in the conceptual structures he found, or at least believed he found, there.

As for Nietzsche: many noted scholars have demonstrated his engagement with Greek ideas about love, particularly in terms of the centrality of Dionysus and the eroticism associated with the god, for Nietzsche's understanding of Greek tragedy and philosophy (Nussbaum 1991; Babich 2006), and as they influenced his idea that "all nature was pervaded by an Eros that he called the will to power" (Kaufmann 1974: 255). Kaufmann claims that Nietzsche's development of this idea "is full of allusions to Plato's *Symposium*, which, almost certainly, suggested these ideas to him" (*ibid*; cf. Cooper 2008).

Given Nietzsche's training as a classical philologist, this may not seem particularly surprising; nevertheless we should remember that Nietzsche's "most shocking claim, from the point of view of traditional German aesthetics" was that tragic art, like all art, "is not only not pure of practical interest, it is actually the

outgrowth of a profoundly erotic interest" (Nussbaum 1991: 108). That is, although the society in which Nietzsche lived and was educated was saturated with references to ancient civilisation, the novel way in which Nietzsche *interpreted* Greek culture and in particular Greek tragedy as influenced by eros proved very disturbing for his contemporaries. Despite their familiarity with the formal content of tragedy and other aspects of classical art, 19th century Europeans had not viewed these things from the radical 'Dionysian' perspective Nietzsche presented.

There are, in other words, significant similarities between Nietzsche and Freud in their understandings of human nature – similarities which are largely rooted in the fact that both men had, as a result of their idiosyncratic engagement with the ancient Greeks and with tragedy in particular, "rediscovered the autonomy of the dark and evil forces which, as manifestations of the unconscious, determine the fate of man" (Morgenthau quoted in Schuett 2007: 58; cf. Frei 2001: 100). Tragic eros acts as a reference point and as conceptual support for both Nietzsche and Freud in their philosophical endeavours, which were developed within an 'interpretive community'[14] that could be said to have included Schopenhauer, Plato and, perhaps, many others besides. The primary interpretive strategy that links these authors is their emphasis on the significance and explo-

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[14] Stanley Fish defines interpretive communities as essentially unknowable groups of individuals that apply the same, or similar, interpretive strategies in their reading (or as he puts it, their 'making') of texts. He explains interpretive strategies in the following way: when 'I' begin to read pastoral poetry, for example, "I am immediately predisposed to perform certain acts, to 'find', by looking for, themes (the relationship between natural processes and the careers of men, the efficacy of poetry or any other action), to confer significances (on flowers, streams, shepherds, pagan deities), to mark out 'formal' units (the lament, the consolation, the turn, the affirmation of faith, and so on). My disposition to perform these acts (and others: the list is not meant to be exhaustive) constitutes a set of interpretive strategies, which, when they are put into execution, become the larger act of reading. That is to say, interpretive strategies are not put into execution after reading (the pure act of perception in which I do not believe); they are the shape of reading, and because they are the shape of reading, they give their texts shape, making them rather than, as it is usually assumed, arising from them" (1980: 168).

ration of irrationality and in particular the theme of the erotic in tragedy, as well as the question as to how emotions like *eros* relate to politics, culture more generally, and, at the broadest level, to life itself.

As the following chapter will make clear, Morgenthau identified with this 'erotic' tradition of commentary on tragedy. For the moment, it is enough to note that he developed his ideas about human nature and in particular the *animus dominandi* in great measure, though not exclusively, in response to the ideas of both Nietzsche and Freud. That Morgenthau read Nietzsche prior to encountering Freud does not militate against this conclusion, for it is true that the drive for self-preservation that Morgenthau describes in his unpublished 1930 manuscript and elsewhere appears in Freud but definitely does not, in any significant sense, appear in Nietzsche. On the other hand, we need not believe that Morgenthau accepted Freud's writings uncritically – his autobiographical remarks make this much clear (Morgenthau 1978a: 67) – or that he abandoned the insights he had earlier gleaned from Nietzsche (Frei 2001: 113). It is likely that he used both as malleable intellectual material to help form *his own* conclusions about human nature and the kind of politics it gives rise to – a likelihood lent credence by his conceptual clarifications of the two drives (selfishness and the will to power/ *animus dominandi*) in an article published in 1945.

In 'The Evil of Politics and the Ethics of Evil', Morgenthau reproduces the same distinction between selfishness and the will to power which, though couched in slightly different terms, occurs in his 1930 essay on the derivation of the political from the nature of man (as, indeed, it occurs in other, later works as well). Schuett, as we have seen, claims that this distinction is essentially Freudian, and insists that, "following Freud's instinct dualism, the two instincts are [for Morgenthau] necessarily independent of each other and stand in fierce opposition" (2007: 60).

When viewed in the light of 'The Evil of Politics', however, Schuett's conclusion is clearly not justified. For according to Morgenthau,

> By setting in this way the desire for power apart from selfishness, on the one hand, and from the transcendent urges, on the other, one is already doing violence to the actual nature of that desire. For actually it is present whenever man intends to act with regard to other men. One may separate it conceptually from the other ingredients of social action; actually there is no social action which would not contain at least a trace of this desire to make one's own person prevail against others. (1945: 13-4)

Thus the structure of Morgenthau's thinking about 'love' and 'hunger' (or, in other words, the will to power and selfishness) is neither purely Nietzschean nor, as Schuett would have it, purely Freudian in character; it contains elements of both as well as its own original elements. In an intellectual climate in which Nietzsche and Freud stood out as hugely influential figures, Morgenthau, unsurprisingly, appears to have engaged with them both as interlocutors in the development in his own theory of human nature.

It is therefore not really necessary to conduct paternity tests to discover exactly who Morgenthau's "intellectual father" (Schuett 2007: 59) may be. A more fitting analogy than this biological one is perhaps as follows. If, as Morgenthau claims, "the difference between international politics as it actually is and a rational theory derived from it is like the difference between a photograph and a painted portrait" (1978b: 7), where the portrait, unlike the photograph, does not show everything but rather only the human essence of the person portrayed, we might call the young Morgenthau a budding Impressionist; Morgenthau's choice of colours, brushstrokes, subjects and themes may have been heavily influenced by the masters that went before him, but the hand that painted his theory of politics and the eye that guided it were none but his own.

It is also important to reiterate that Morgenthau turned to these thinkers not only for insights into human nature but also for guidance regarding the world of the ancients and in particular its peculiar creation, tragedy; their thoughts on these topics helped shape his own tragic vision of politics. It is of course true that Aristotle was another important source for Morgenthau in this regard, but the former's cool, uninterrupted quest for rationality in tragic art and life per se apparently required tempering by the investigation of 'Dionysian' eroticism that lay at the foundation of Nietzsche's and Freud's understandings of Greek culture, which Morgenthau himself made part of his political reasoning. Nevertheless, as we will see in the following parts of this chapter, Morgenthau's understanding of the terms 'love' and 'power' are ultimately rooted, just as they were for Freud and Nietzsche, in the classical discourse on eros – which is perhaps not too surprising in light of the facts that Morgenthau counted Plato's *Symposium* (which he could read in the original Greek) among the ten books that meant the most to him (Frei 2001: 25, 113).

(ii) *Morgenthau, Tyranny and War*

Before concluding this part of the chapter it would be wise to briefly mention the political context in which Morgenthau came of age, encountered the ideas of Nietzsche and Freud, and began developing his own ideas about politics in earnest. This time was effectively coterminous with the life of the Weimar Republic. One event in Morgenthau's life during this period is revealing of the effect that Weimar politics had on his philosophical outlook and on the political questions that he felt were pressing. In 1922, at the age of 18, Morgenthau watched Adolf Hitler speak in his hometown of Coburg. This was an experience that troubled him for the rest of his life. "I will never forget," he said many years later, "the paralysis of will that took hold of me while I was listening to this man" (quoted in Frei: 21). For a long time after and indeed even before this event, however, street brawls between various political parties, anti-Semitic per-

secution, assassinations, and general disorder had been tearing the civil society of Coburg apart.

Young Morgenthau, sensitive boy as he was, was thus for long periods confronted in his day-to-day existence by the frightening, unpredictable outcomes of the Weimar democracy and the challenges of extremism that the Germany of his day was faced with. The passion and violence of competing ideologies, the radical love of one's own that bordered on madness, the perverse ability of charismatic leaders to persuade and even to hypnotise, to elicit from their listeners emotional responses that could then be manipulated for particular political programs, together with the menace of tyranny constantly lurking in the shadows of democracy – all of these issues were, for Morgenthau, clear and immediate and posed real personal dangers from the very first days of his majority until the day he left Germany for Switzerland in February 1932. The dramatic events that shook Germany and the world in the years to come only proved to Morgenthau the enormity of the political problems that, with the help of the insights he had gained from others along the way, he took it upon himself to attempt to solve or, at least, to mitigate through his scholarship.

In summary, we can see that the historical context – both intellectual and political – in which Morgenthau matured created an environment conducive to his attempt to create a tragic vision of politics based upon the classical discourse of eros. Nietzsche and Freud can be said to have provided Morgenthau with a set of interpretive strategies for reading – or in Stanley Fish's term, for 'making' – tragedy, the terminology and conceptual content of which he then used to frame the political problems that he himself witnessed. The ways in which he framed and attempted to explain these problems form the core of the discussion that follows.

Section Two: Morgenthau on Love and Power

(i) *Loneliness, Love and Power*

The concept of power is fundamental to Morgenthau's intellectual approach to the study of international relations. The idea that on the international plane the immediate interest of a state is always power was for Morgenthau the "main signpost that helps political realism find its way through the landscape of international politics" (1978b: 5). All foreign policy, he consistently argued, "is only the will to maintain, increase or assert [one nation's] power" (2012: 118) vis-à-vis other states and political organisations.

In *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau defines political power as all of those social relationships that serve to establish and maintain the control of man over man; accordingly its form can range "from physical violence to the most subtle psychological ties by which one mind controls another" (1978: 11). This book is in large part devoted "to the meticulous analysis of these different forms of empirical power" (Rösch 2014: 8), and draws upon such historical examples as temporally and geographically dissimilar as the Peloponnesian and Vietnam wars to illustrate what he calls the "objective laws" of politics that have their roots in human nature and which have not changed "since the classical philosophies of China, India, and Greece endeavored to discover [them]" (Morgenthau 1978: 4).

Another of Morgenthau's major works, *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*, also deals with the issue of power, albeit from a different perspective. This book is, in essence, a polemic directed against what Morgenthau believes are dangerously optimistic visions of a world in which power relations can be eradicated. But already in his doctoral dissertation, many years prior to both *Scientific Man* and *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau was arguing that "[when] we assign the term 'political' to [an] activity … we mean by this that this activity is the expression of [an actor's] will to power" (2012: 107). In short, for Morgenthau

the political realm was and would always be defined by the will to and exercise of power. This conviction runs like the thread of Ariadne throughout his labyrinthine corpus – without it, he himself says, the theoretical understanding of politics would be impossible (1978: 5).

In light of all this, the importance of the concept of power in Morgenthau's broader understanding of politics needs no further elucidation; its centrality to his theory is not in doubt. What does require exploration and explanation, on the other hand, is Morgenthau's account of the link between power, politics and human nature, insofar as for him "[all] phenomena that we designate as political take us back to the human psyche as the source of the political" and, therefore, "the only way to gain insight into the nature of the political is to understand the nature of the human soul" (quoted in Frei 2001: 125).

We are now led to consider the little-noted examination of the nature of humanity in 'Love and Power', which, Ty Solomon writes, "constitutes some of [Morgenthau's] deepest thinking about power itself and moves far beyond the well-known discussions in his other works" (2012: 202). More to the point for the purposes of this thesis, the article in question also demonstrates the depth to which Morgenthau's theory is indebted to the concept of 'erotic politics' that has been the focus of the dissertation thus far.

In 'Love and Power' (1962a) Morgenthau lays out his own understanding of the primary roles these two phenomena play in defining the human condition, in detail and in explicit contradistinction to the stunted, soulless conception of humanity he alleges is the product of the modern mind, particularly as this is expressed in the philosophical traditions of Marxism and Liberalism. For not only do moderns deny the organic and inescapable connection between power and love, he says; they are ignorant of the root of loneliness from which both stem – the soul, the only soil in which existential qualities such as loneliness can grow. Thus, Morgenthau argues, "[while] the modern mind denies the intrinsic relation

between the lust for power and human nature, transcending all historic configurations, antedating them, as it were, and even determining them, it does not understand the nature of love at all;" and by doing so, he adds ruefully, it fallaciously sees in the power of one person over another "not an ineluctable outgrowth of human nature but only an ephemeral phenomenon, the product of a peculiar historic configuration, bound to disappear with the disappearance of that configuration" (*ibid*: 247).

According to Morgenthau, we can rid ourselves of this dangerous illusion only once we understand love and power in the way they should be understood: namely, side by side, as part and parcel of the same existential desire for wholeness – or, put differently, for community. In his words, we must recognise the paradox that "the lust for power is, as it were, the twin of despairing love" (*ibid*: 249). It is only once we have acknowledged this fact, it seems, that we will truly be able to open our minds to "the tragic sense of life, the awareness of unresolvable discord, contradictions, and conflicts which are inherent in the nature of things and which human reason is powerless to solve" (1946: 206).

But why do love and power loom so large in human life? And how and why exactly are they the same in all but name? In a manner owing much to Plato's Aristophanes, Morgenthau claims that the ubiquity of power and love in the history of human relationships can be traced to the fact that loneliness is the quality that defines human beings *qua* human beings.

"Of all creatures," Morgenthau writes, "only man is capable of loneliness because only he is in need of not being alone, without in the end to escape being alone" (1962: 247). In this "existential loneliness," the insufficiency of human beings to fulfill themselves manifests itself; being alone, man realises that "he cannot become what he is destined to be, by his own effort, in isolation from other beings" (*ibid*.). The awareness of insufficiency that is created in the individual by this realisation is what creates both the longing for love and the lust

for power – in the same way, we might say, that an empty belly gives rise to hunger. For according to Morgenthau, relations of love and power are a human being's natural means for overcoming loneliness, as a result of their capacity to duplicate a person's individuality; they are the means to achieve a kind of spiritual transcendence, or more precisely completion, in the communities they attempt to make possible (Mollov 2002: 96).

Morgenthau defines love as a psychological relationship marked by the complete and spontaneous surrender of two human beings to one another, a mutual giving which nevertheless stops short of a complete abdication of their respective individualities. For although these two people may long to be together as one, Morgenthau argues, they must also feel the need to preserve their own and each other's selves, if only for the sake of their love for one another. This argument, however, leads to a somewhat strange conclusion: namely, that it is love itself that stands in the way of its own consummation. That is, in order to continue loving each other, the lovers who desire union must nevertheless keep the defining points of their own individual characters and wills intact, for these are what constitute their mutual objects of desire. Morgenthau acknowledges this paradox, and sums up the phenomenon of love as "the most perfect union two human beings are capable of, without losing their respective individualities" (1962a: 248).

The struggle to maintain one's own individuality and the individuality of one's romantic quarry in the face of *eros*, however, sows the seeds for the generation of a power relationship; for it is all too often, Morgenthau says (quoting Socrates in the *Phaedrus*), that "as wolves love lambs so lovers love their loves" (*ibid.*). That is, the hunger for union that drives a lover on towards the object of his affection is a constant menace to the well-being and autonomy of the other person, insofar as it contains within itself a darker shade of desire which seeks to break down or destroy the individuality of one's lover in order to incorporate that self into one's own. *Eros*, as the need for self-completion, simultaneously seeks the

integrity of the beloved as well as his or her destruction – essentially, it wants to make one person out of two.

Hence, for the continued satiation of *eros* (which, we can assume, belongs to both partners) the relationship of love is therefore necessarily infused with some quantum of power, in order for the lovers to create a unified will; without power, Morgenthau argues, love remains only a succession of exaltations. Love, then, is pure only when the wills of both A and B spontaneously reach perfect, natural symmetry; only then does love extricate itself from all vestiges of power. But given the inevitable – and, indeed, desirable – differences that exist between two people, such flawless symmetry cannot exist for any great length of time (except in the *Liebestod*, which unites the lovers in eternity at the price of their own individual annihilation). Without power, which burns away some of these differences of will and individual preference, a stable relationship of love cannot exist.

In sum, then, with the aid of love man discovers another human being so like himself – "the Platonic other half of his soul" (1962a: 248) – and yet different enough from him that he is able, for a fleeting moment at least, to create the union that makes him feel complete and thereby satisfies his most basic human need. Nevertheless, he must rely, to a greater or lesser degree, on the psychological machinations of power to maintain a context of interaction in which this feeling of reunion can be experienced continually.

In a relationship defined by power, on the other hand, one person simply imposes himself upon another so that the will of the object of his power mirrors his own. Power is thus not only a doomed attempt to achieve communion in the absence of reciprocated desire; it is a focused attempt to "break down the barrier of individuality which love, because it is love, must leave intact" (*ibid*: 249). If the exercise of power succeeds in achieving its goal of domination, it will nevertheless be able to manufacture only an "artificial community" (*ibid*: 251) which

must forever remain a substitute for, and spite to, the real reunion that can only be built by love.

The process of creating community, of forging a relationship of egalitarian love out of one based on domination and reluctant submission, is according to Morgenthau what constitutes the problem of political stability; and this, he says, is a crucial issue with which all political orders must come to terms (*ibid*: 250; cf. Morgenthau 2004: 15). No political society, he told his students in 1952, "can exist for any length of time in any harmonious and stable way which does not take into consideration both the desire for power and the desire for love" (quoted in Mollov 1998: 98). All masters, on all levels of social interaction, have throughout history sought to solve the problem of community by basing their power upon the spontaneous consent of their subjects; they have always attempted to make the objects of their power come to love them – to forge them into their Platonic other halves, as it were. To prove his point, Morgenthau draws on the examples of Nazism and Stalinism and their continuous references to 'the beloved leader,' and notes also the conversations between Napoleon and de Las Cases on St Helena in which the fallen emperor bemoaned his fate and the fact that even in the fullness of his power he could still find nobody worthy of his trust or affection.

These facts do not, however, serve to completely disqualify power as a strategy for overcoming the existential loneliness of the self. For if the object of one's power can somehow be made to will also what oneself wills, not from inducement or fear but from autochthonous consent, then one's power will be based not on promises or threats but rather upon the respect, care and esteem of the other person for oneself – it will be based on love. Achieving this state of affairs relies on the master creating the external conditions for the object of his power so as to encourage the growth of real affection for him. Morgenthau believes this is possible; as such, for him, the power relationship can in some very rare instances forge a genuine community – that is, it can create a relationship of love.

Rather disturbingly, however, this rare relationship appears to occur, whenever it does occur, in the form of totalitarianism:

> One would misunderstand the nature of democracy and totalitarianism as well as their relationship were one to suggest that totalitarian elections are necessarily and always a sham and that they never reflect the true will of the people. They may well reflect that will, as elections in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy undoubtedly have, expressing a consensus between the popular will and the government. Here lies the decisive difference between traditional autocracy and modern totalitarianism. Autocracy imposes its will upon an indifferent or hostile people; totalitarianism aims at, and may succeed in, governing with the consent of the governed. (Morgenthau 1957: 717-8)

Even so, the transformation of the unilateral imposition of power into the spontaneous mutuality of love remains, in a political sphere that is by its very nature defined by power, more of an ideal than an attainable goal. "The world conqueror can subject all the inhabitants of the earth to his will," Morgenthau says, "but he cannot compel a single one to love him" (1962a: 250). The search for love therefore usually leads, in "the most passionate" of men, from a despair in longing for universal approval to blind and destructive hate; "the Genghis Khans, Hitlers, and Stalins lash out with unreasoning fury at their subjects whom they can dominate but whose love they cannot command" (*ibid*: 247). Political domination, Morgenthau concludes, is thus "a product of nature itself" (1945: 5).

In light of all this, Morgenthau argues that it is the common quality of love and power that each contains an element of the other; "there is," he says, "in even the crudest power relationships an irreducible element of love … Those who must use and suffer power would rather be united in love" (1962a: 250).

According to Morgenthau, the need for love, the desire for spiritual completion

in an unforced and spontaneous union, is universal and born into every human being. The will to power is likewise present whenever people intend to act with regard to others. In fact, the will to power is inherent even to such phenomena as the mystic's desire for union with the universe, the ambition of the mountaineer climbing a rock-face, the quest of the scholar seeking knowledge, and the drive of the poet to catch the essence of life in words – it is in other words all-pervasive, becoming political only when it touches upon other people as its objects (Pichler 1998). Thus Morgenthau told his students in 1952 that "[in] Napoleon you have the most impressive example of a man who comes closest to having absolute aspirations for power. He might have become a great religious mystic or a great lover, such as Don Juan" (quoted in Mollov 1998: 97-8). Despite their apparent differences in means, both love and power nevertheless possess, and are capable of attaining but for the briefest of moments, the very same end: the construction of a community in which a number of people share, as much as possible, the same identity, values and desires.

Put differently, as definitive characteristics of human relationships, love and power exist on a vertical spectrum defined at the top by equality, good will, shared gain, and mutual pleasure, and at the bottom by hierarchy, manipulation, exploitation, and domination. Power is embedded in the structure of love, and its influence acts as a kind of gravity to prevent love's pure form from being realised for any great length of time. The desire for a loving relationship, on the other hand, is essentially what motivates the master's attempts to change his environment through the use of power – and as such the power relationship is continually driven to push itself upwards, into the realm of love. Power's near inevitable failure to achieve a loving union, however, usually gives rise to love's perversion – hate – as the defining characteristic of the relationship it has built. "Master and subject," Morgenthau concludes, "are at the bottom of their souls lovers who have gone astray" (1962a: 250).

The longing for love and the will to power are, thus, genetically identical as res-

ponses to the existential fact of human loneliness; it is only the environment in which they find themselves that differentiates them from one another. Where love is not reciprocated, power must be employed in its stead. In Morgenthau's words: in its ultimate consummation, power "is the same as love, albeit love is corrupted by an irreducible residue of power. Love, in its ultimate corruption, is the same as power, albeit power is redeemed by an irreducible element of love" (*ibid*: 248).

(ii) *Morgenthau's Debts to the Ancients*

In order to make all of this clearer, and to prepare the ground for our discussion of freedom (and, in the following chapter, tragedy) in Morgenthau's work, it is necessary to consider those instances in which Morgenthau deals explicitly with ancient thinking on *eros* in 'Love and Power'. Both of these instances have been noted in passing above. In the first instance, Morgenthau cites Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium* as having provided "the classic description of the nature of pure love," defining it in terms of "the desire and pursuit of the whole" (*ibid*: 246). This Aristophanic conception of love has been considered in depth in the previous chapter, and it is not necessary to recount it here in full. It is sufficient to remind the reader that Aristophanes' understanding of *eros* is essentially a tragic one, in which love is both the creator and the destroyer of life. Love, for Aristophanes, is at its core a renunciation of one's law-defined humanity in the pursuit of a greater self – a pursuit which will almost always come to grief. *Eros* is a fundamentally ambiguous emotion that is linked via an inherently impious ambition to both joyous creativity and violent destruction.

Both for Plato's Aristophanes and Morgenthau, then, love is characterised by tragedy, and it is clear that the latter self-consciously draws on the former for philosophical inspiration. If Plato's Aristophanes has given the "classic descrip- tion" of pure love, as Morgenthau claims, then Aristophanes' conception must be coterminous with what Morgenthau means by the term – for it is reasonable

to assume that the classic (not 'classical') description is a timeless description. We can therefore conclude that the *Symposium* forms the ground of Morgenthau's discursive setting regarding love.

But what should we make of the will to power? Is this, too, erotic? Morgenthau suggests that this is indeed the case. Briefly after his explanation of the Aristophanic definition of love, Morgenthau quotes Socrates' summary of the rhetorician Lysias' understanding of *eros* in the *Phaedrus*; "as wolves love lambs," Socrates says there, "so lovers love their loves" (*ibid*: 247). According to Morgenthau, this is the corrupted form of *eros*. The following excerpt from Socrates' first speech in the *Phaedrus* helps to illuminate why Morgenthau should think this is the case:

> We must realise that each of us is ruled by two principles which we follow wherever they lead: one is our inborn desire for pleasures, the other is our acquired judgement that pursues what is best. Sometimes these two are in agreement; but there are times when they quarrel inside us, and then sometimes one of them gains control, sometimes the other. Now when judgement is in control and leads us by reasoning toward what is best, that sort of self-control is called *sophrosune*; but when desire takes command in us and drags us without reasoning toward pleasure, then its command is known as *hubris* … The unreasoning desire that overpowers a person's considered impulse to do right and is driven to take pleasure in beauty, its force reinforced by its kindred desires for beauty in human bodies – this desire, all-conquering in its forceful drives, takes its name from the word for force (*rhōmē*) and is called *eros* (237e-238c).

It is important to point out that the form of love that Socrates is describing here is essentially the same as the 'common love' identified in the *Symposium* by a

number of speakers, including Aristophanes and indeed Socrates himself (cf. *Phaedr.* 243c-d). It is not what Socrates considers 'true' or 'heavenly' to be, for in this case Socrates is actually satirising Lysias' speech on *eros*, which he considers erroneous.

In the *Symposium*, we remember, common love is also associated with bodily love, heterosexuality, tyrants, community discord, impiety, sickness and infertility (the tale of Oedipus comes to mind), and is contrasted with a 'heavenly love' that is associated with intellectuality, homoeroticism, tyrannicide, communal harmony, productivity, health, great ambition and extraordinary feats (characterised by the likes of Harmodius and Aristogeiton or Achilles and Patroclus). Socrates (or more properly speaking, Plato) reproduces these same associations in great measure also in the *Phaedrus*.

It seems quite clear, then, that common *eros* is largely equivalent to Morgenthau's concept of the *animus dominandi*. It is 'evil' insofar as it treats people solely as means and is therefore almost always detrimental to its object, creating as it does short-term relationships based on self-interest, domination, exploitation and manipulation (we can safely assume that a lamb is never happy in a wolf's jaws). The *animus* is overpowering, omnipresent, and characterised by destructive *hubris*. Indeed, Morgenthau confirms this much: Socrates, he says, "presents a picture of the love relation which is tantamount to what we would call a relationship of power" (1962a: 247).

It seems reasonable to conclude in light of all this that Morgenthau's thoughts on love and power have been significantly influenced by the classical and particularly Platonic discourse on *eros*, which distinguished between heavenly and common *eros*. For Morgenthau, these variations of *eros* correspond with love and the will to power, respectively. As we will see in the following chapter, Socrates' comparison of common *eros* and *hubris* in this regard is especially illuminating.

To summarise, in Morgenthau's view love and the will to power are two shades of the same desire, which for the ancients went by the name of *eros*. Despite the ultimate identity of the longing for love and the will to power, however, the transformation of the unilateral imposition of power ('common' love) into the spontaneous mutuality of 'heavenly' love remains almost impossible. In the end, it is only through the establishment of true union, in love with another person or persons, that the loneliness of the individual self can be overcome. That much being so, pure love can appear only for the briefest of moments, and the relationships in which it can regularly manifest itself are always at risk of being completely corrupted by the common love that is the basis of power. This inability to solve the riddle of life, Morgenthau says, is "the tragedy of both power and love" (*ibid.*)

These thoughts feed into Morgenthau's understanding of the human tragedy. As responses to our existential loneliness, neither love nor power can fully or forever satiate the human craving for wholeness, and their failure is what constitutes the tragedy that defines us. According to Morgenthau, "Christian ethics demands love, humility, the abnegation of self; man as a natural creature seeks the aggrandizement of self through pride and power. It is the tragedy of man that he is incapable, by dint of his nature, to do what Christian ethics demands of him" (1962b: 15). Put differently: all men are commanded to love and desire to be free, but we find man everywhere seeking to exploit and enslave – only to find himself in chains of his very own making.

Human beings are, therefore, fundamentally corrupted creatures, doomed to lead Sisyphean lives in which unfulfilled longing and lack of achievement are central and intractable aspects. Even if, through the illusions of religion, the predestined failure of both love and power as real-world remedies for the human condition can for more than a moment somehow be overcome, death ultimately puts to an end all hope of spiritual satisfaction:

[In] the end, his wings seared, his heart-blood spent, his projects come to nought – despairing of power and thirsting for, and forsaken by, love – man peoples the heavens with gods and mothers and virgins and saints who love him and whom he can love and to whose power he can subject himself spontaneously because their power is the power of love. Yet, whatever he expects of the other world, he must leave this world as he entered it: alone. (1962a: 251; cf. Plat. *Phaedr.* 248)

This position is Morgenthau's bleakest pessimism, and it forms the basis of his vision of man and politics. As Nicholas Rengger notes, the incompleteness of man is "a theme to which [Morgenthau] returns again and again … Human beings are necessarily and always imperfect and can *never* overcome this" (2005: 324, original emphasis).

(iii) *Tyranny and Democracy, Power and Love*

Moving on to Morgenthau's thoughts on democracy, we turn to a short and sorely neglected essay published in 1957. Here, Morgenthau discusses the problems of freedom in a manner that hints at the erotic theory of politics he later makes explicit in 'Love and Power'. He begins by quoting Abraham Lincoln's Sanitary Fair Speech, made during the Civil War, in which Lincoln lays bare "the essentials of the dilemma which has baffled the philosophic understanding of freedom and which has made it appear that there was always something left to be desired in its political realization" (1957: 714).

Lincoln laments the fact that history lacks a satisfactory definition of liberty, noting that while everybody has always claims to value liberty, they do not all mean the same thing by that word. For some, liberty may mean the ability for each to do as they please with themselves and the fruit of their labour; for others, it means the ability to do as they wish not only with themselves but with other people and their property also. Lincoln quite rightly claims that these two

ideas are very different, and in the end also incompatible; "it follows," he says, "that each of the things is, by the respective parties, called by two different and incompatible names – liberty and tyranny" (*ibid*.).

Morgenthau makes a similar line of argument. "The political master," he says, "can have his freedom only at the price of the freedom of those who are subject to him; the latter can be free only if the master is made to sacrifice his freedom as a master" (*ibid*: 715). It follows from this that the citizens of any society possessing any sort of government cannot all be equally free – "universal and absolute freedom is a contradiction in terms" (*ibid*.).

But if power is a zero-sum equation, every society must somehow determine the kind and degree of freedom that each of its members will be able to enjoy. What shape such delineations take is determined by the kind of political justice that the political order seeks, insofar as "liberty cannot be defined without justice" (*ibid*.). Justice, in its turn, depends upon an understanding of political truth – or, more specifically, it depends upon an understanding of who is able to access this truth.

Morgenthau argues that all historical attempts at realizing freedom have been derived from one of two conceptions of justice, namely the 'minoritarian' and the 'equalitarian.' The minoritarian conception of justice assumes that only an oligarchy, determined by birth, supernatural charisma, wealth or some other kind of distinction, is capable of recognizing the political truth. The majority under this system is thus indefinitely subject to the will of the few, for the presumed good of everybody. This philosophical tradition, according to Morgenthau, stretches from the systems devised by Plato and Aristotle to the aristocratic and Leninist justifications for their respective systems of government.

Those who adhere to an equalitarian conception of justice, on the other hand, oppose all oligarchies on the ground that "no minority can be politically so wise

in comparison with the majority as to possess a monopoly of political wisdom" (*ibid*.). Not even a leader with truly supernatural abilities can bypass this problem, Morgenthau writes elsewhere, for since such a leader is "only like a god and not a god himself" (2004: 61), he is just as vulnerable to the corruptive influences of power as is anybody else. Indeed, given that he has much more opportunity to succumb to temptation than does the average politician, precisely because his power is so great, he is at even greater risk of corruption than is usual for a human being. As a result of the distortions in judgement that power such as this inevitably engenders, the 'truth' of a charismatic leader's political vision will at some point degenerate into illusion and will create some form of injustice. "In other words, even the most powerful human is not virtuous and wise enough to limit himself in the exercise of his power. And so the issue of political equality is not transcended by the emergence of a charismatic leader" (*ibid*.).

Equalitarians believe that all members of society have access to some measure of political truth, however dimly, and from this it follows that while any given understanding of the public good should be able to come to the fore in a given society, no one truth should have the chance to prevail over others once and for all – not even that of a supremely talented leader who commands the love of his entire people.

Morgenthau claims that within equalitarian societies, the social mechanism that has historically evolved to ensure the long-term stability of the volatile competition of political truths is the periodic majority vote. This democratic mechanism works to decide the issue of political truth, if only on each occasion for a brief period of time; each election is, in effect, at the same time the death of an old ruler and the birth of a new one.

Popular elections also limit the opportunities for the abuses of power that human beings are always tempted to grab; the preferences of the electorate are always

present as limitations on the *animus dominandi* of elected politicians, since they are forced to keep these preferences in mind if they are to keep their own desires satisfied at the next round of elections. Other checks and balances must also be firmly grounded in equalitarian societies, however, or else the freedom of competition essential to the proper functioning of democracy will be impaired and then corroded.

This is because equalitarian societies can be threatened from within in other ways than the simple tendency of politicians to abuse their power. One of these is when people are forced, by circumstance or design, to choose from among candidates for office individuals whose policies are essentially identical and judged solely according to efficiency or charisma. In this case, democratic elections will have lost the ability to protect the freedom of the people, insofar as the people will then have no real choice left at all. Choosing men instead of policies hollows out the substance of democracy.

A more insidious threat to freedom than this, however, is the tendency of all majorities to think and act as if their own will provided the ultimate standard of political truth. "The majority, as long as it lasts, tends to become the absolute master, the tyrant, of the body politic, stifling in that body the vital spirit of questioning and initiative and evoking instead the submissiveness of conformity" (1957: 719). The majority, in other words, often does what it can in the time available to it in government to cement itself in place as political orthodoxy. In theory, Morgenthau says, this tendency is not necessarily disastrous, as elections can effectively overthrow any given political orthodoxy in favour of another; indeed, "the content of political truth changes with every change in the majority" (*ibid.*: 720). In practice, however, the majoritarian claim to truth is likely to deny, at least implicitly, the right of the minority to make itself the majority of tomorrow. This assumption thereby works to chip away at the minority's democratic reason for being; its continuing existence, as a living reminder of alternatives, implicitly contests the majority's claimed monopoly on truth.

In the absence of effective laws and institutions to safeguard the freedom of all to express and pursue their own visions of the political truth, therefore, only a very small step remains to separate imperfect democracy, which is characterised by stunted or hindered competition, "from the destruction of competition itself, that is, totalitarianism" (*ibid*.: 718).

These tendencies toward self-destruction, Morgenthau says, "are inherent in the dynamics of democracy itself" (*ibid*: 720). This is due to the fact that power relationships require the subordination of others creates a situation in which successful politicians are continuously striving, consciously or unconsciously, to undermine the very principle of equality that they claim to hold dear. Morgenthau once told his students that such a dynamic constitutes "a culminating paradox" of politics: "a just political order," he said, "is based upon the principle of equality, but it is in the very nature of politics that it divides men on the basis of inequality" (2004: 61). This is compounded by the problem of modern liberalism, which fully believes in freedom but which, in its attempts to remedy the fact that people are everywhere enslaved, creates yet another paradox – "more shocking than the first for being the result of liberalism's own efforts" (1957: 720) – by forming institutions which limit the freedom of some people so as to preserve the freedom of others. Morgenthau concludes that "the philosophy of liberalism can provide no intellectual tools with which to master this dilemma" (*ibid*: 721).

At this point, Morgenthau takes a significant step away from the position of Lincoln and the philosophy that he represented in the direction of his tragic vision of politics and the *eros* that underlies it. This is best demonstrated by returning briefly to the Sanity Fair Speech, where the President provides an interesting analogy to illustrate his points:

> The shepherd drives the wolf from the sheep's throat, for which the
> sheep thanks the shepherd as a *liberator*, while the wolf denounces

him for the same act as the destroyer of liberty, especially as the sheep was a black one. Plainly the sheep and the wolf are not agreed upon a definition of the word liberty; and precisely the same difference prevails today among us human creatures, even in the North, and all professing to love liberty. (*ibid*: 714)

Although, as we have seen, Morgenthau makes Lincoln's dilemma his own, he subtly changes Lincoln's analogy. For he does not speak of wolves and sheep and shepherds, but now of wolves and *lambs* only. This change is important to note for two reasons.

First, the substitution of 'lambs' for 'sheep' appears to constitute a reference to the common *eros* described by Socrates in the *Phaedrus* – a form of *eros* which is, as we seen above, equivalent to Morgenthau's conception of power. While it is true that 'Love and Power' was published much later than the article currently under discussion, there is no good reason as to why Morgenthau should want to alter Lincoln's imagery; there is simply no rhetorical gain to be achieved by it. Indeed, the change dislocates the reader's attention and on first reading comes across as a conspicuous stylistic error. Given that Morgenthau had much earlier meditated on the link between *eros* and the will to power in his readings of Nietzsche and Freud, and given that he was intimately familiar with Plato's work, it seems more reasonable to conclude that rather than constituting a jarring and rather obvious mistake, this substitution is an anticipatory manifestation of Morgenthau's 'erotic politics', the theory of which Morgenthau later lays out in 'Love and Power'.

A second point, related to the first, is the fact that in Lincoln's view, once the sheep is 'liberated' it is no longer subject to the wolf but now only to its shepherd; if the sheep and the wolf still have conflicting definitions of liberty, Harold White points out, it means that a new definition of the word must be sought. To Morgenthau, on the other hand, this situation means that the conflicting defi-

nitions have to be reconciled, which he does "by identifying freedom and power" (1957: 724). Douglas Klusmeyer rightly notes that this apparently paradoxical conception has clear antecedents in the classical Greek understanding of freedom, which "at the most basic level [is] derived from the dichotomy between master and slave" (2010: 403-4). As we have seen in Chapter Two of this dissertation, the dichotomy that Klusmeyer refers to is inextricably intertwined with Greek sexuality and this created a central problem for Athenian masculinity and the love between men; in a sexual encounter, one man (or youth) was inevitably worse off. These facts seem to add weight to the assumption that, in this discussion of democracy at least, Morgenthau has some theoretical form of erotic politics in mind.

Genuine democracy, Morgenthau says, must forever guard against its tendency to degenerate into tyranny, but the way in which it does so will "depend upon the values which society attributes, not in the abstract [as Lincoln would have it] but in the carving out of concrete spheres of action, to the freedom of the wolves and the lambs" (1957: 723). Since neither the lambs nor the wolves can be allowed to go as far as they would like, "society must intervene, deciding the value it wishes to put upon their respective capabilities and interests and assigning to each a sphere of action" (*ibid*.). Sometimes this intervention may take the form of a clear decision settling the issue once and for – but we might suppose that this is yet another path to tyranny, for as he writes elsewhere, "the whole political life of a nation, particularly of a democratic nation, from the local to the national level, is a continuous struggle for power" (1978b: 35). Hence the healthiest and happiest social intervention is one that results in the formation of a multifaceted and ever-changing interplay of social forces that continuously strive to balance the myriad of competing desires within society. "It is upon that complex and shifting ground," Morgenthau concludes, "that freedom rests" (1957: 723).

Liberalism, with its promise of political salvation, nevertheless refuses to reco-

gnise this fact. As Morgenthau put it in 'Love and Power', this kind of philosophy "sees in the power of man over man not an ineluctable outgrowth of human nature but only an ephemeral phenomenon, the product of a peculiar historic configuration, bound to disappear with the disappearance of that configuration" (1962a: 247). As a result of this, liberalism is helpless in the face of those cunning wolves that manage to wriggle through the holes in the legal and logical fences that it erects to guard the sheep. It is for reasons such as this that Morgenthau believes it necessary for us to turn away from traditional liberalism, toward "the tragic sense of life [as] the awareness of unresolvable discord, contradictions, and conflicts which are inherent in the nature of things and which human reason is powerless to solve" (1946: 206).

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that the will to power is at the heart of Morgenthau's political philosophy. This concept is heavily influenced by his reading of Plato's dialogues. The will to power, in for Morgenthau, is the twin of despairing; love and the lust for power are two shades of the same desire for wholeness. For the ancients this desire went by the name of *eros*. As responses to our existential loneliness, however, neither love nor the will to power (in other words, *eros*) can fully or forever satiate the human craving for wholeness. Their failure is what constitutes the existential tragedy of man. Human beings are at their core fundamentally corrupted creatures, doomed to lead Sisyphean lives in which unfulfilled longing and lack of achievement are central and intractable aspects.

One of the ways in which this tragedy manifests itself is in the question of freedom. For Morgenthau, as for the Greeks, universal and absolute freedom is a contradiction in terms; power is a zero-sum equation, and hence not everyone can be a master of others. Liberals, who recognise and deplore human oppression, seek to liberate whenever possible those individuals they see in chains. In

the process of doing this, however, liberals must limit the freedom of the 'wolves' to exercise their own power over others (the 'lambs'). They must, in other words, engage in politics and indulge the evil of power. It may be a tragedy that liberals are stuck in this limbo between theoretical ideal and political reality, but it is a dangerous folly that they fail to recognise the fact that the exercise of power in some shape or form is an inescapable element of social existence. The tendency of democracy to degenerate into tyranny is inherent to the nature of government, and liberalism's neglect of this fact makes society's slide into despotism more likely. To best deal with these problems, Morgenthau suggests, we need to turn to a tragic vision of politics. This tragic vision is the focus of the following chapter.

CHAPTER NINE

Introduction

In the following discussion, I will build upon the conclusions reached in previous chapters. I will begin by detailing the connections that exist between Morgenthau's thoughts on love and power and the theme of tragedy in his broader oeuvre. I will argue that international politics, for Morgenthau, theoretically boils down to the dichotomy between love and the lust for power and their root in the loneliness that defines the human soul. This is because these phenomena are the "elemental biopsychological drives by which … society is created" (Morgenthau 1978b: 30) – they are what create the urge for society and as a result give birth to all political orders, of whatever scope and level of complexity they eventually come to possess. The tragedy of international politics is only a larger manifestation of the fundamental tragedy of man.

This discussion will place us in a position to interrogate the ways in which Morgenthau's philosophy relates to Thucydides' *History*. This endeavour will form the core of the second section of the chapter. I argue there that although Morgenthau draws mostly upon the Platonic corpus for direct inspiration in theorising love and the will to power as twin tragic responses to man's existential loneliness, the Platonic corpus dealing with *eros* shared with Thucydides the same discursive setting in tragedy, and as a result, Morgenthau and Thucydides construct remarkably similar accounts of erotic politics. Morgenthau, in other words, found in Thucydides a philosophical forebear whose shared understanding of the basic elements of human behaviour made selectively quoting from the *History* seem a natural and legitimate exercise.

Section One: *Eros* and the Tragedy of Political Man

(i) *From the Domestic to the International*

The term 'tragedy' is abundant in Morgenthau's writing, but it refers to very dif-

ferent phenomena and occurs, often enough, without particularly satisfying or coherent definitions. This is, one suspects, the result of the fact that "[elevated] to the structure of existence, from a staged drama tragedy becomes [for Morgenthau] a special 'sense of life'" (Paipais 2013: 851). That is, rather than subjecting specific tragic plays to sustained interrogations, it is by drawing on the usually unstated (or understated) ideas that inform his tragic philosophy that Morgenthau identifies 'the tragedy of power and love', 'the present tragedy of America', 'the tragedy of German-Jewish liberalism', 'the human tragedy', and so on (Klusmeyer 2001; although cf. Morgenthau 1971b). Despite the generally underdeveloped conceptualization of tragedy in Morgenthau's work, however, scholars generally agree that a number of ideas can be said to constitute the foundations of his 'tragic philosophy'.

Particularly prominent among these is the ethical problem of *hubris*, which has been explored most thoroughly by Ned Lebow in *The Tragic Vision of Politics*. According to Lebow, Morgenthau followed in the footsteps of the tragic poets, who believed that the cycle of *hubris*, *ate*, *hamartia*, and *nemesis* "would repeat itself as long as humans stride the earth" (2003: 65).

This pattern of behaviour manifests itself not only in political action itself but also in the intellectual means to understand and engage in such action. For the will to power, as we have seen, is "of the same kind as the mystical desire for union with the universe, the love of Don Juan, [and] Faust's thirst for knowledge" (Morgenthau 1945: 13). These attempts at pushing the individual beyond his natural limits towards a transcendent goal, towards self-completion and the feeling of divinity, also hold in common the fact that this goal can be reached in the imagination but never in reality. Trying to transcend the human condition in actual experience, Morgenthau warns, can only end "with the destruction of the individual attempting it, as the fate of all world conquerors from Alexander to Hitler proves and the legends of Icarus, Don Juan, and Faust symbolically illustrate" (*ibid.*).

On this view, the fate of the aspiring tyrant is as it is because the unethical nature of the will to power, that incessant drive to dominate the world and everything in it – the will to become god, as it were – inevitably encounters hatred, hostility and resistance. At one point or another, tragic thinkers believe, miscalculation or weakness will some day cause the proud to stumble and fall into the hands of their enemies, to whose power they will be subject and for whose mercy they must hope. At the root of all power, therefore, lies "the very sin of pride against which the Greek tragedians and the biblical prophets have warned *rulers and ruled*" (Morgenthau 1978b: 13, emphasis added).[15] This 'sin,' it seems, forms the 'fatal flaw' of tragic figures, and in this regard Morgenthau appears to have been influenced by Aristotle's theory of tragedy.

As Kostagiannis rightly points out, however, "[the] ethical dimension [to tragedy], important as it may be, is but one of the several aspects of tragedy to be found in Morgenthau. At another level, tragedy has for Morgenthau an existential dimension, one that is expressed through his anthropological assumptions" (Kostagiannis 2014: 515). The crux of this existential dimension of tragedy has already been discussed in the previous chapter. Love and the lust for power, as responses to the loneliness that is definitive of the human soul, both fail to achieve their aims, and insofar as this is true they exemplify Morgenthau's statement that man, "suspended between his spiritual destiny which he cannot fulfil and his animal nature in which he cannot remain, … is forever condemned to experience the contrast between the longings of his mind and his actual condition as his personal, eminently human tragedy" (1946: 91). From this, the inescapable human tragedy based in the lonely soul of man, Morgenthau abstracts and extrapolates to describe as 'tragic' those political situations that present the same discrepancy between longing and lack of achievement that characterises the existential condition through love and power. As Frei notes: "[as] a corrective to an insipid faith in progress, the tragic calls attention first

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[15] 'Rulers and ruled' is Morgenthau's equivalent of Thucydides' 'tyrant and tyrannicide'.

and foremost to the limits of human existence, *eo ipso* to the permanence of the abyss between desire and capacity, between the *ought to be* and the *is*, between ideal and reality" (2001: 187, original emphasis).

We have seen this point already in our discussion of Morgenthau's thoughts on the dilemmas of freedom, but it is no less common in his other work. In 'The Evil of Politics and the Ethics of Evil', for example, Morgenthau argues that it is the ubiquity of the will to power which, beyond any particular selfishness, constitutes the ubiquity of evil in human action: "Here is the element of corruption and of sin which injects even into the best of intentions at least a drop of evil and thus spoils it. On a grand scale, the transformation of churches into political organizations, of revolutions into dictatorships, of love for country into imperialism, are cases in point" (1945: 14). Hence, we read in *Politics Among Nations*, judging by Robespierre's motives, the Jacobin leader was one of the most virtuous men to have ever lived. Even so, it was the incorruptibility and barbaric extremism of his very 'virtue' that tied the fates of so many thousands, guilty as well as innocent, to the guillotine (1978b: 6).

Indeed, although Morgenthau does not overtly acknowledge it as such, the French Revolution seems to constitute a perfect example of political tragedy – a claim for which Robespierre's statement (in his speech on the principles of political morality) that "the government in a revolution is the despotism of liberty against tyranny" seems concrete proof. Spoken during the chaotic depths of the Terror, there could hardly be a crueller paradox, or a larger lack between moral ideal and murderous reality, than what we find here. But, he says, that "national self-determination was to become the ideology of new imperialisms and social justice the ideological disguise of servitudes new and old was to be expected" (1975: 514).

Morgenthau would elsewhere write more explicitly that what constituted the "tragedy of America" was the discrepancy between the ethos of the American

Revolution, which defined the domestic moral fabric of the country, and the fact that US foreign policy with regard to Indochina bore only "extremely remote relations to that ethos" (1969: 14).

Morgenthau argues that, having for the most part taken care of the protection of life in America, US policymakers concentrated their thoughts and efforts on creating the right conditions for the preservation of liberty and the pursuit of happiness of their countrymen. In so doing, however, they inappropriately erected the limited experience of the United States, bound to time and place, into one that held for people everywhere: "we assume," he says of his adopted countrymen, "that what we are allowed to take for granted all men take for granted, and that what we are striving for is the object of the aspirations of all mankind" (1971a: 202).

This hubristic identification of the US national interest with the interest of all people, Morgenthau says, was based to a large extent on policymakers' ignorant dismissal of the historic connection between democracy and the growth of the middle class. Nevertheless, the larger problems that it led to were more deeply rooted in a broader philosophical dilemma that was essentially the same as the one identified by Lincoln in his Sanity Fair Speech. For if the American and the Russian, or the American and the Vietnamese or Cambodian, were able to speak to each other they would speak in different tongues:

> and if they uttered the same words, those words would signify to them different objects, values and aspirations. So it is with concepts, such as democracy, peace, freedom, security. The disillusion of differently constituted minds communicating the same words, which embody their most firmly held convictions, deepest emotions, and most ardent aspirations, without finding the expected sympathetic response, has driven the members of different nations further apart and strengthened their conviction of incompatibility of

their moral values and political interests. (*ibid*: 202)

With ever increasing intensity, therefore, "each of the contestants in the international arena claims his "way of life" to possess the whole truth of morality and politics which the others may reject only at their peril" (Morgenthau 1948: 99). In the 1960s and 1970s, this was especially true of the United States. During this tragic time, America found itself suspended between its longing for a free world community of democratic peoples, characterised by the pursuit and preservation of happiness and liberty, and the reality of its oppressive and imperial behaviour in poverty-stricken Indochina. The United States' idealistic love for the peoples of the world had, as a result of the *hubris* inherent to US policymakers' identification of America's historical experience with that of all other nations, degenerated into a destructive lust for power over the peoples it claimed to care about but whose social needs and interests it utterly ignored. Despite professing, and originally possessing, noble intentions, America had in this way stooped to commit "that very sin of pride against which the Greek tragedians and the biblical prophets have warned rulers and ruled" (1978b: 13) – and as such it was forced to suffer the consequences, in the form of much lost blood, honour and treasure.

It is quite clear, then, that Morgenthau interpreted events in Indochina as constituting scenes in a tragedy on an enormous scale, involving hundreds of millions of people, but a tragedy that was nonetheless in essence not altogether different to, for instance, the one that befell Creon and Antigone. Such an interpretation makes theoretical sense, given Morgenthau's conviction that all reflection about political reality "must go back to the basis of everything pertaining to the political realm … and this basis is man himself" (quoted in Frei: 119). Nevertheless, it requires some explanation if we are to understand how Morgenthau can speak so easily of both the tragedies of individual tyrants such as Alexander, Napoleon and Hitler and the tragedy of America, in which power is diffuse and decision-

making capabilities democratically mediated.[16] For there was, as Morgenthau himself notes, "a difference between the national interests of France and the personal interests of Napoleon" (2004: 60) and it seems logical that there must also exist some differences in the shape of the tragedies that occur on different levels of analysis.

According to Morgenthau, the will to power intrinsically "rejects boundaries" and "reaches out to the limits of the social world." Society, as a result, must be "intrinsically based on moderation and limits" (quoted in Frei: 132). This is due to the fact that the struggle for spheres of influence will, as a result of the unlimited nature of the will to power, naturally tend to unfold into conflict and violence; recognizing this, and out of concern for their well-being and security, powerful people create norms and institutions, such as the taboo against murder and its codification in the legal system. These norms work to moderate and trammel the behaviour of individuals in ways that help to prevent dissatisfied members of a society from tearing the community apart. Lebow summarises it nicely: "norms, institutions and laws direct the struggle for power into ritualized and socially acceptable channels that prevent its otherwise violent and destructive consequences" (2003: 225).

Most individuals within a community nevertheless find their own desire for power frustrated and unsatisfied in such circumstances. Rather than unsettling the status quo to remedy this situation, however, the common man instead attempts

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[16] It is very odd and somewhat disturbing that Morgenthau, in light of his own traumatic experience of Hitler, speaks of violent and megalomaniacal leaders in such heroic terms. Nevertheless, it was his opinion that "great deeds are valued more highly by Western man than great thoughts, and sometimes even bad action is more admired than sound thought. Napoleon's standing in the estimation of posterity has hardly been impaired by his mistakes. He remained a hero even after he crossed the Njemen and courted disaster in Russia. But there are not many who remember Coulaincourt, the reflective observer who warned him in vain" (Morgenthau 1971b: 612). As Frei notes, Morgenthau himself confessed to being "fascinated" by all that was "great, exalted, eternal" (2000: 30). These heroic aspects of Morgenthau's thought are important and deserve much more attention than I can give them here.

to satisfy his desire for power by projecting his own aspirations onto the collective of the tribe or race or nation; he identifies with, and often enough participates in, the decisions made and actions undertaken by his rulers, and hence he is able to feel the pride or shame that come with the success or failure of these actions. By transferring his egotism to the nation, furthermore, the individual not only allows his suppressed aspirations some vicarious satisfaction, but also transforms the evil and immorality that defines the will to power into something noble and altruistic, namely, patriotism. This phenomenon is especially prevalent in the modern secular state, which has become the most exalted object of loyalty for most individuals and also the most effective organisation for wielding power over them (Morgenthau 1945: 15; 1978b: 94-5).

As we know, Morgenthau's thoughts on this issue are influenced by Freudian psychology. Freud fully articulated that what is forbidden for the individual *within* a nation – namely, the limitless satisfaction of the pleasure principle – can sometimes be successfully pursued *as* a nation through the process of identification, and Morgenthau accepted this idea. In contradistinction to the domestic sphere, he says, on the international plane there are few norms and institutions that can effectively restrain politics from descending into hostility and violence: "[the] state's collective desire for power is limited, aside from self-chosen limitations, only by the ruins of an old, and the rudiments of a new, normative order, both too feeble to offer more than a mere intimation of actual restraint" (1945: 15). This fact allows the will to power of the masses to find an outlet – with results that are all too often tragic. It is also one of the most important factors distinguishing the struggle for power on the international level from the same struggle on the domestic level.

Despite the twilight of functioning international morality, however, Morgenthau claims that man is and will always be a moral creature and hence must ground his actions in moral discourse. Like Hellenistic tyrants who self-identified with Dionysus, Asian emperors who claimed the Mandate of Heaven, and medieval

kings whose rule was legitimated by Divine Right, modern nation-states also feel obliged to make universalistic moral appeals in order to justify their own power or imperial expansion. In the unconstrained struggle for dominance between states, therefore, all nations will be tempted "to clothe their own particular aspirations and actions in the moral purposes of the universe" (1978b: 12). Morgenthau pointed out how European imperialists justified their conquests weaker peoples as a moral obligation in the name of 'the white man's burden' and cited the Athenian argument that the strong are naturally compelled to dominate the weak as examples of this tendency (Klusmeyer 2011: 18). As we have seen, however, it was this identification of the interests of one's own people with the destiny of the world is symptomatic of *hubris*, and as such it is the first step on the path to *nemesis*; "it is liable to engender the distortion in judgment that, in the blindness of crusading frenzy, destroys nations and civilizations – in the name of moral principle, ideal, or God himself" (1978b: 13). The phenomenon of nationalism is thus the element distinguishing the struggle for power on the international realm from that struggle on the domestic level.

Morgenthau realises, of course, that a nation is not an empirical object but rather an abstraction from a number of individuals who share certain characteristics in common. He recognises that it is these common characteristics that define these individuals as members of the same nation. But besides being a member of nation "and thinking, feeling, and acting in that capacity," Morgenthau says, "the individual … is also a human being pure and simple, and thinks, feels, and acts in that capacity" (*ibid*: 93). Therefore, when he speaks in empirical terms of the power of a nation, or of its foreign policy, Morgenthau only means "the power or the foreign policy of certain individuals who belong to the same nation" (*ibid*: 94). In this way, then, via the process of collective identification of the masses with the nation and its individual representatives, the tragedy of the individual can be reproduced at the level of the state, insofar as the latter "serve as vehicles for the continuation of the struggle for power [between individuals] at a higher

level" (Kostagiannis 2013: 519).

It seems clear that, for Morgenthau, *hubris* is indeed a psychological corruption, even a sin, for both individuals and states – and Lebow is right to point out its importance to his tragic vision of politics and the ethical element thereof. But *hubris* is also closely connected to the *existential* tragedy of humanity, which is defined by the inadequacy of either love or power to solve the problem of man's spiritual loneliness. That is, *hubris* is related to Morgenthau's tragic vision not only of politics, but also his tragic vision of *man*. As we have just seen, the corruption inspired by power that is constantly imperiling interpersonal relationships is only "broadened and its intensity strengthened by the particular conditions under which political action proceeds in the modern nation-state" (Morgenthau 1945: 15). In essence, it is not qualitatively different from that which affects the relations of love and power between individuals – which, as we know, are constitutive of the human tragedy.

Section Two: Morgenthau and Thucydides

(i) *Morgenthau's Engagement with the* History

In the previous chapter, we considered those two instances in which Morgenthau deals explicitly with ancient conceptions of *eros* in 'Love and Power'. In the first instance, Morgenthau credits Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium* as having provided "the classic description of the nature of pure love," defining it in terms of "the desire and pursuit of the whole" (1962a: 246). In the second instance, Morgenthau quotes Socrates' satirical summary of Lysias' understanding of *eros* in the *Phaedrus* as exemplifying the 'corrupted' form of love that is decried by participants in the *Symposium*. Morgenthau explicitly states that this account of "love as commonly experienced" (*ibid*: 247) – that is, as wolves love lambs – is more or less coterminous with what he calls a relationship of power. These erotic dynamics are also present, to some degree at least, in Morgenthau's discus-

sion of liberal democracy and the egalitarian freedom it strives to uphold.

We have also considered the ways in which Morgenthau's tragic vision of politics is rooted in the existential loneliness that defines the human condition. Via processes of collective identification, human beings tend to transfer their own individual will to power onto the nation and its representatives, which has the effect of pushing the state onto the path of *hubris*, recklessness and self-destruction. On the individual level, however, the will to power is one prong of the dualistic *eros* that is the soul's natural response to overcoming the loneliness that defines it. The tragedy of international politics, in other words, is seeded in the human heart; the existential need for self-completion creates the urge for society, and as a result gives birth to all political orders, whatever scope and level of complexity they eventually come to possess.

These discussions bring two points to the fore. First, Morgenthau's understanding of love and power as twin responses to the human condition is explicitly rooted in the classical, as it is refracted by the Platonic, discourse on *eros*. Second, given that the will to power lies at the root of the tragedy of international politics, and given that the *animus dominandi* is in essence a form of *eros*, Morgenthau's broader vision of tragic politics is also based, at least in part, upon this same discourse.

If we accept this much, we are forced to ask: did Thucydides also factor into Morgenthau's thoughts on political *eros*? Do the two men share the same tragic vision of politics?

On the face of it, the first question at least appears to require an answer in the negative. Douglas Klusmeyer (2011) argues persuasively that Morgenthau's engagement with the *History* is embarrassingly superficial. He points out that when Morgenthau quotes from the *History*, he does so without any attempt to contextualise the quotations that he chooses, and attributes the insights apparently gleaned from these statements not to the characters in the narrative who ac-

tually pronounce them, but rather to Thucydides himself, without giving any reasons as to why he does this.

In *Politics Among Nations*, for example, Morgenthau reiterates the idea that all social life is characterised by will to power. "The tendency to dominate," he writes, "is an element of all human associations, from the family through the fraternal and professional associations and local political organizations, to the state" (1978b: 35). To support this claim, he appeals to Thucydides, who, apparently, argued "that it is a necessary law of [men's] nature that they rule wherever they can" (*ibid*: 36). As Klusmeyer demonstrates, however, this statement is not actually made in Thucydides' authorial voice. Rather, it forms part of the argument used by the Athenian delegates to Melos to convince the Melians that any resistance to them would be futile. The 'Athenian thesis' thus essentially encapsulates "the moral logic of Athenian imperialism" (Klusmeyer 2010: 396; cf. Klusmeyer 2011), and not, necessarily, his own beliefs about the nature of humans in general. In light of this, Laurie Johnson Bagby (1994) argues that Morgenthau's silence on the matter of context downplays the variety of 'national characters' in the *History* and streamlines Thucydides' consideration of different human types into a concept of human nature based solely on the Athenians.

A similar argument can be made regarding Morgenthau's claim that Thucydides believed that "identity of interests is the surest of bonds whether between states or individuals" (1978b: 8). Once again, this statement is not made in Thucydides' authorial voice; it occurs in a speech made by the Corinthians to the Spartans in an attempt to convince them to enter into an alliance with Corinth against Athens. This argument is clearly made with a view to Corinth's self-interest, and this obviously prejudices any naïve assumption that it is meant by Thucydides to convey a universal truth. To be fair to Morgenthau, however, his basic argument is not so much that Thucydides fully identifies with Corinthian sentiment. Rather, he is suggesting that Thucydides, like the Corinthians and many other as-

tute observers and practitioners of international politics, seems to have held that "the idea of interest is indeed of the essence of politics" (*ibid.*).

Nevertheless, according to Klusmeyer (2011: 6), all this suggests that Morgenthau used the *History* as little more than a mine for his own theory's mint; he found there exactly what he was looking for – support for his rational theory of politics – at the expense of discounting all the detail and narrative pathos that define the *History*. Sean Molloy concurs with this judgement, and adds that while Morgenthau's method may be have been useful "in terms of the development of [… his] vision of realism, … it is a misunderstanding of the nature of history" (Molloy 2004: 13).

These are all cogent criticisms, but there is reason to believe that they are not as devastating as they first appear to be. For while it is true that Morgenthau does not adequately contextualise the statements he extracts from the Thucydides, and this definitely ranks as a methodological flaw in his writings, he nevertheless fully understands the challenges facing scholars dealing with historical works such as the *History*. "How do we avoid reading our meaning into the ancient texts and then extracting from them what we want to learn?" he once asked. "How do we get at Thucydides's many insights and make them relevant for our day?" (1968: 239). Morgenthau's answer to these questions is, appropriately, that there is no easy answer to them; "no [theoretical] categories," he wrote, "can emerge from the historical substance which have not been first in the mind of the observer, and the real issue is whether the categories employed are appropriate to the historic substance" (*ibid.*).

But if Morgenthau was aware of these methodological problems, how can the objections raised by Klusmeyer and Molloy, who accuse him of falling precisely into these traps, be met? The most reasonable and simple answer to this question is that Morgenthau believed his own theoretical categories to be self-evidently 'appropriate to the historic substance' under consideration and that the assump-

tions that supported them were held by Thucydides also. This would explain why he did not feel obliged to engage with the broader context of the quotations he selected; Thucydides' emphasis on power and interest in the *History* was, he thought, blindingly obvious, and if Thucydides recognised them in the historic substance that he wrote about, so too should we.

This explanation is given weight by Morgenthau's discussion of theory and Thucydides, where he writes that:

> Theory is implicit in all great historiography. In historians with a philosophic bent, such as Thucydides and Ranke, the history of foreign policy appears as a mere demonstration of certain theoretical assumptions which are always present beneath the surface of historical events to provide the standards for their selection and to give them meaning. In such historians of international politics, theory is like the skeleton, which, invisible to the naked eye, gives form and function to the body. What distinguishes such a history of international politics from a theory is not so much its substance as its form. The historian presents his theory in the form of a historical recital, using the chronological sequence of events as a demonstration of his theory. The theoretician, dispensing with the historical recital, makes the theory explicit and uses historic facts in bits and pieces to demonstrate his theory. (2000: 45-6)

Most important to note here is Morgenthau's assertion that Thucydides' *History* is not simply a historical narrative, but a historical narrative informed and guided by a theoretical understanding of international politics. This is, in fact, a warranted conclusion; as we have seen in Chapter Six, the broader narrative of Thucydides' *History* was supported by an erotic theory of politics which itself owed much to the tragic tradition.

Klusmeyer objects here to Morgenthau's collapse of the distinction between

theory and narrative into one between explicit and implicit theorization on the grounds that "such a reading elides the ambiguities, paradoxes, disruptions and tensions abundant in Thucydides' work" and "ignores the work's powerful effects on the reader's emotions" (2011: 6). Klusmeyer's claim may in practice be well founded, but it does not invalidate Morgenthau's argument. This is because creating a tragic *theory* of politics, which is Morgenthau's stated goal, requires engaging in precisely what Klusmeyer thinks is problematic: namely, abstracting from the individualised suffering and ambiguities displayed on the tragic stage or related in the history books.

In other words, Morgenthau ignores the issues Klusmeyer identifies not because they are unimportant *per se*, but because they are important to specific genres, namely tragedy and history (and, some might say in the case of Thucydides, tragic history). He suggests that it is only with such a rational theory already in place that it is possible to write a specific tragic history; Thucydides, Morgenthau reasonably assumes, must have already had some sort of theory in mind in order to select certain facts and speeches for inclusion in his *History* at the expense of others, just as he needed such a theory to rationalise discussing the Sicilian expedition and the tyrannicides in the order and manner that he does (Cohen 1984). Tragic history and tragic theory therefore differ in important respects, but they are nevertheless inherently related; what distinguishes tragic history from theory is 'not so much so much its substance as its form.' With his tragic *theory*, we might hypothetically assume that Morgenthau could have written a tragic *history* full of the ambiguities, paradoxes, disruptions and tensions that would have affected his reader's emotions in a manner which Thucydides would have approved of.

If we accept this to be the case, the question remains as to what the 'certain theoretical assumptions' that Morgenthau believes Thucydides used as his standards to select events for inclusion in his *History*, and which thus form the core of the political theory that underlies the work, finally are.

(ii) *Morgenthau and Thucydides on Erotic Politics*

As we have seen in passing above, one important theoretical assumption that Morgenthau identifies in Thucydides' work is the existence of the will to power as one of the fundamental organising principles of human life. By quoting the statement of the Athenians at Melos in support of his claim that the tendency to dominate runs through all human associations, and by attributing the Athenian sentiment to Thucydides, Morgenthau must be implying that Thucydides, much like himself, uses the will to power (or something very much like it) as a theoretical linchpin to guide his thinking about international relations. The same is true of Morgenthau's claim that interest, however defined, also plays a crucial role in explaining political outcomes for Thucydides.

The question then arises as to whether or not Morgenthau's beliefs about Thucydides are justified. Does Morgenthau have good reasons to believe that Thucydides held the will to power to be a fundamental explanatory factor in international politics? If it can be shown that he does, then the charges that Morgenthau has misused or misunderstood the *History* should be dropped, and he could only be found guilty of the relatively minor infraction of intellectual sloppiness. I will now argue that Morgenthau does in fact have good reasons for his beliefs.

In Chapter Six, I argued that there exists an erotic theory of politics in the *History* that is explicitly propounded by the character Diodotus but effectively confirmed by Thucydides himself. This theory runs as follows. *Eros* is the primary driver not only of political action but of human life *per se*; all people have an erotic impulse at the root of their consciousness that will stop at nothing to achieve its aims, and this extends naturally into their politics. *Eros*, goaded by hope, is responsible for much of the crime and catastrophe faced by the world; so long as poverty exists to give people the courage born of necessity, and so long as conditions of plenty exist to encourage in them ambition and *hubris*, the erotic impulse will continue to push people and the states they make up into pur-

suing reckless and risky endeavours. The vicissitudes of fortune, however, will ensure that most of these ventures end in disaster. This is especially the case with political communities, Diodotus says, because the stakes played for are freedom or empire and, when all are acting together, each man irrationally magnifies his own capacity. Neither the death penalty nor any other kind of punishment can hope to prevent this tragic cycle; *eros* is by nature deaf to the claims of law and blind to the consequences of its crimes.

As I hope to have demonstrated in Chapter Five, Diodotus' theory of *eros* as the fundamental basis of human behaviour is clearly meant by Thucydides to apply also to Athens' attempt at expanding its empire in the western Mediterranean. His detailed description of the launch of the Sicilian Expedition also tracks back to the first appearance of *eros* in Thucydides' work (which occurs in the context of Pericles' Funeral Oration, in which he outlines his vision of the Athenian ideal). Thucydides portrays the men of Athens, as they prepare for the invasion of Sicily, as actively competing with one another for the 'hand' of their beloved city, like the *erastes* Pericles had earlier exhorted them to become. Tragically, in this case, the power of *eros* manages to break free from its bond to the Athenian community that Pericles had carefully constructed, to focus instead on the 'city' of individual gain. What had previously served as the engine of Periclean democracy now served the same role for aspiring tyrants, both individual and communal.

In light of this and the conclusions of the previous chapter, Morgenthau's beliefs regarding the fit of his theoretical categories to the substance of the History do not seem at all unreasonable. It is worthwhile briefly recalling Chapter Eight, to substantiate this claim. Before doing so, however, it should be noted that the issue of whether or not the idea of interest was important to Thucydides, as it was to Morgenthau, will not be considered here. This is because it is not central to this thesis, and it is in any case a very straightforward matter. Simply put, the concept of interest is a constant and self-evidently crucial element of the *Histo-*

ry. We have seen this already numerous times in our previous discussions, and the issue resurfaces on many other occasions in the *History*, which, due to their distance from the central concerns of this thesis, we do not have the time or space to consider. Other scholars, however, have examined these instances in great depth and hence we need not trouble ourselves with it here (cf. Cohen 1984; Lebow 2003).

In Chapter Eight, we saw that there exists (in Morgenthau's understanding) an irreducible element of love in even the crudest power relationships. All of those people who use or are subject to power would rather live in a union forged by love; these two phenomena differ not so much in terms of the goals that they seek – the construction of a community in which a number of people share, as much as possible, the same identity, values and desires – as in the means that they use to reach them.

Love and power are comparable to the different versions of desire that we find in the Platonic discourse on *eros*; indeed, Morgenthau explicitly draws on this discourse for 'the classic description' of love to define his position on both love itself and the will to power. The will to power is only the twin of the longing for love – it is, we have seen, equivalent to 'common' *eros*, the hubristic twin of 'heavenly' *eros*. Given that the will to power is for Morgenthau a kind of *eros*, we might therefore agree with him that the will to power, which he takes as the linchpin of his theory, is in fact an appropriate theoretical category with which to interpret Thucydides' narrative of the Peloponnesian War, insofar as both he and Thucydides are attempting to understand and describe a dangerous erotic impulse that drives individuals and communities into tragic situations.

While it is true that the 'Athenian thesis' – which posits that man rules wherever he can – is not stated by Thucydides in his authorial voice, and that in this sense Morgenthau's attribution of the quote to him is potentially misleading, the basic premise behind the statement is nonetheless implicit to the erotic theory of poli-

tics implicit in the *History*. In Diodotus' vision of the human tragedy, which Thucydides appears to share, empire and freedom are proclaimed as the greatest goods for political communities – and these are precisely what the Athenians at Melos, and indeed the Melians themselves, are trying to secure for themselves. Indeed, in Thucydides generally states "fight either to protect their own freedom or to secure domination over others" (Larsen 1962: 232). But empire (ruling over others) and freedom (ruling over oneself) are versions of the same good, namely, power. Power is the object of political *eros* for Athens and Melos alike, and its erotic pursuit is what draws these communities on toward their unhappy fates. This is, effectively, Thucydides' anticipation of 'the will to power.'

Both Thucydides and Morgenthau, furthermore, identify *eros* as being particularly potent in democratic societies. As I demonstrated in Chapter Four, the daring characteristic of the Athenians, which is praised by Pericles in his Funeral Oration, can be traced from its exemplary display in the current generation in their fight against the (allegedly) despotic Spartans who seek to take their city and its beautiful empire away from them, through their fathers, who turned back the Persians (and the hated tyrant Hippias) at Salamis and Marathon, to the love of one middle-class *erastes* for his noble *eromenos* that eventually delivered both to their dooms but which, in myth at least, gave birth to the Athenian democracy.

Morgenthau too sees 'common' *eros* as a permanent fixture of democratic politics; "the whole political life of a nation, particularly of a democratic nation," he says, "is a continuous struggle for power" (1978b: 35). But true love, or heavenly *eros*, is just as important for this kind of society – indeed, it is what defines it. In democratic political orders, potential masters (the wolves) and their subjects (the lambs) can, theoretically at least, regularly and freely unite their wills through the mechanism of popular elections, and we remember that it is precisely such spontaneous coalescence of wills that characterises love as an interpersonal relationship. Though power is certainly not absent from democratic poli-

ties, Morgenthau points out in 'Love and Power' that a loving relationship also requires some quantum of power to maintain the stability needed for the spontaneous mutuality of two wills to regularly occur – in its absence, he says, love remains simply "a succession of precarious exultations" (1962a: 251).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we examined the concept of tragedy in Morgenthau's broader oeuvre. According to Morgenthau, human beings tend to transfer their own individual will to power onto the nation and its representatives via the process of collective identification. Due to the amoral context of the international system and the psychological transformation of the will to power into noble patriotism, collective identification with the political community – e.g. nationalism – often has the effect of pushing the state onto the path of *hubris*, recklessness and self-destruction. On the individual level, however, the will to power is one prong of the dualistic *eros* that is the soul's natural response to overcoming the loneliness that defines it. The tragedy of international politics can therefore be traced back to the human heart; the existential need for self-completion creates the urge for society, and as a result gives birth to all political orders, whatever scope and level of complexity they eventually come to possess. The tragedy of international politics is the tragedy of man.

We have also seen that the emphasis on political *eros* in the *History* ultimately confirmed but did not definitively shape Morgenthau's own understanding of erotic politics. For while there is no direct evidence to suggest that Morgenthau drew upon Thucydides to any great extent for inspiration in his own theorizing on erotic politics, it is nevertheless very clear that the two men share a remarkably similar understanding of the role of *eros* in politics and in human life more generally. As the discussions of Chapters Seven and Eight suggest, this is because they, like Plato and his Aristophanes, draw upon the tragic tradition of philosophizing about political *eros*. We have seen, moreover, that Morgenthau was

conscious of these similarities; he therefore seems to have found in Thucydides an intellectual forebear whose shared understanding of the 'elemental biopsychological drives' and their tragic effects on politics made selectively quoting from the *History* feel to him a natural and legitimate exercise. In sum, the discursive settings of the two authors were in one respect very similar – both were steeped in tragedy and its representations of *eros* – and this resulted in particularly striking resemblances between their political philosophies.

CHAPTER 10

Introduction

How can the study of tragedy enhance our understanding of international relations?

This question has guided the current study, and now is the time to review the conclusions reached so far and to provide a full and explicit answer to it. This chapter is dedicated to this task, and is structured around three questions: first, what have we found in our study of tragedy in the work of Thucydides and Hans Morgenthau? Second, how do our findings matter for the discipline of IR (beyond issues of textual interpretation)? Third, in which directions can our findings be taken by further research?

Summary of Findings

(i) *Overview*

The foregoing chapters have demonstrated that Thucydides and Morgenthau construct remarkably similar political theories based on their understanding of the role that *eros* plays in people's lives and particularly in those parts of them concerned with politics. Both men believe that there exists a familial relation between *eros* and the longing for power; like force and fraud for Hobbes, these two are twins in the political philosophies of Thucydides and Morgenthau. Both men, furthermore, implicitly or explicitly draw upon tragic representations of *eros* when elaborating their political theories, although they seem to have been influenced by tragedy and tragic *eros* in subtly different ways.

Tragic *eros* is defined not only by the fact that it is almost univocally associated with madness, unreason, and reversal of fortune through the transformation of self, but also by the fact that it fundamentally and unavoidably concerns the *polis*. The reason why *eros* was one of the more important tragic emotions is that it was one of the more important *political* emotions in Athens. Erotic desire and its

effects on society were central to both the self-image of the democracy in that city and the image of its ideological arch-enemy, 'the tyrant.' *Eros* for the Athenians was experienced not only in relation to objects such as human beings but also to abstractions such as 'tyranny' or 'the city and its power.' As such, and in its function as the ideal type of extreme emotion, it was used by the tragedians to catalyse and explore wider issues and conflicts relating to the *polis*. The *eros* of tragic figures opened up a realm of dark fantasy and troubling questions that could simultaneously excite, disgust, terrify and sadden those who observed it. And, as Plato suggested, this realm could also motivate. Tragic *eros*, that is, was not confined to the stage; its dynamics were also *lived*. The tyrannical *eros* of figures such as Xerxes, Oedipus and Clytemnestra had touched, or was imagined to have touched, the Athenians in their own historical (and mythological) experience.

Given that some of the primary functions of tragedy were to interrogate the norms that democratic Athens took for granted and to work through the social issues of the age, it was natural that a political phenomenon as important as *eros* was to the Athenians should be explored upon their tragic stage. The centrality of male sexuality and masculinity to the Great Dionysia, and hence to tragedy, is in any case confirmed by the aetiology of the festival and the identity of the god in whose name it was ritually staged: the Great Dionysia was a festival commemorating the erotic suffering of the Athenians at the hands of Dionysus, an androgynous god associated with sexuality and self-transformation in whose worship the performance of drama played a ritual part.

In the *History*, all alike are led on by *eros*, hope and chance in the pursuit of political power; poverty and wealth are the conditions that most aggravate this problem, insofar as the one gives rise to the reckless audacity inspired by necessity and the other to the greedy ambition born of insolence. Due to the vicissitudes of fate, these erotic adventures end all too often in disaster, and there is no law that will prevent this from happening. This is especially so in the case of

communities and states, because when acting together individuals magnify their own capabilities and thereby tend to act irrationally.

Thucydides suggests that only extraordinary individuals like Pericles (and, to a much lesser extent, Diodotus) acting with full knowledge of these behavioral tendencies can have any hope of mitigating the usual risks of audacity and arrogance that come with them. This fragile hope rests on a leader's possession of virtue, foresight and political skill (and, in lesser leaders, the ability to lie well). Thus, like Athena in the *Eumenides*, Pericles yoked the destructive power of *eros* to the chariot of the state, thereby healing social divisions, consolidating the empire, and providing a safety-valve for the pursuit of individual interest through death in battle. It was at this point, Thucydides says, that Athens was at her greatest.

But fortune can and usually does intervene with a vengeance. A disastrous plague struck Athens following the breakout of the war, and the deterioration of Athenian political life began almost immediately thereafter; Pericles died, the moral fabric of society disintegrated, and, as a result, politics became characterised by the struggle for power between violent, second-rate politicians. *Eros* broke free from its bounds and lurched the city on a tragic trajectory, to which attests the fate of Nicias, the doomed commander of an expedition cursed on account of the intrigues of politicians and the ignorant harshness of the *demos* – a disaster for which he never lusted but through well-meaning lies unintentionally encouraged.

Thucydides' theory owes a significant debt to the tragic tradition. His emphasis on and characterization of *eros* clearly echoes many tragedies in terms of its thematic centrality and ascribed qualities and dynamics. This is nicely summed up by the fact that, when describing the fateful moment that '*eros* fell upon' the Athenians for empire in Sicily, he reproduces the language used by Aeschylus to describe the Greek's unholy desire for pillaging Troy and her rich temples. The

dramatic narrative structure of the *History*, which is exemplified by but by no means limited to the Sicilian expedition, underscores this point and demonstrates the extent to which Thucydides, consciously or not, crafted his work in line with many of the conventions of drama.

The influence of tragedy in its broader social function is arguably also visible in the *History*. Thucydides, who had participated over a dozen times in the Dionysia and had likely seen Cratinus compare Pericles to Dionysus on the comic stage, returned to write his *History* in Athens in 404, the year of the production of Aristophanes' *Frogs*. The *Frogs*, to recall, is a comedy that explicitly links the didactic value of tragedy and the problem of Alcibiades through the figure of Dionysus. In light of this discursive setting, the conclusion that Thucydides provides regarding the ultimate cause of the Athenian defeat – namely, the ignorance and factionalism that led to Alcibiades' persecution and subsequent defection to Sparta – points toward the idea that the core meaning of the tragedy of Athens lies, for Thucydides, in the ironic fact that the Athenians had repeated in their politics the same kind of behaviour they mourned every year at the Great Dionysia, the behaviour that had brought erotic suffering to their ancestors. On account of their suspicion and ignorance, that is, the Athenians were blind to the fact that they had been led to attack the one extraordinary individual who could unify them, through *eros*, and hope to lead them to victory in their struggles. In doing so, they courted Alcibiades' wrath and ensured that he would act as the agent of their destruction.

For Morgenthau, on the other hand, politics is defined by his own version of *eros*, or what he calls 'the will to power.' Alongside 'love,' its mirror image, this urge is rooted in the loneliness of the individual human soul, and it is what gives birth to political communities in all their various shapes and forms. Political power, the object of this desire, is effectively summed up in the position of the master in all of those social relations in which one person controls another. Such control can be obtained by all sorts of means, ranging from physical vio-

lence through subtle psychological manipulation. The theoretical limitlessness of this *animus dominandi* has the consequence that those people subject to it (meaning, more or less, every person who will ever live) are always prone to *hubris*, or else 'the sin of pride.' *Hubris*, Morgenthau believes, is a corrupted state of mind in which people misjudge their capacities and fall into danger, on account of the irrational behaviour such misjudgement inspires and the mistakes and offences it ultimately leads to.

Alongside love, the will to power is definitive of man's existential tragedy; those individuals most intensely motivated by them are doomed to collapse into dysphoria, whether as the result of the catastrophes invited by the *hubris* the will to power typically produces or simply by languishing in the limbo that exists between the ideal of loving communion and the reality of domination. The human tragedy is reproduced and at the international level via the process of collective identification with the nation and its representatives; indeed, it is intensified by the fact that the moral limits imposed on the will to power in domestic life are lacking on the level of the international and, to make matters worse, by the fact that the evil of the will to power is transfigured on this level and normalised as patriotism.

Morgenthau, living some two and a half millennia after tragedy's high-water-mark, was obviously influenced by tragedy in a different manner to Thucydides, who had been born in the time of Aeschylus and began composing his *History* just after Euripides' death. Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Schopenhauer, Hegel, Nietzsche, Freud – all of these great figures and a host of lesser ones stood between Morgenthau and the performance of the Great Dionysia. Given this distance, Morgenthau turned to some of these historical interpreters to help make sense of tragic drama. In his streamlined and formulaic use of the concept of 'tragedy' and his emphasis on *hubris* as a kind of 'fatal flaw,' Morgenthau seems to have been influenced by Aristotle. Morgenthau's identification of *eros* at the heart of the will to power – which is what generates *hubris* – and hence at

the heart of tragedy, on the other hand, was encouraged by his study of Freud, Nietzsche and, ultimately, Plato.

Plato's dialogues, in particular the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, provided a bridge for Morgenthau to enter the ancient world of erotic politics. From this world he took the insights that the longing for community and the longing for power are impossible to separate, that this hybrid longing was tragically destructive, and that it was the most powerful and most ancient animating force of human action. These insights are very similar to those we find in Thucydides, a fact which should not be surprising given that he and the characters whom Plato represents lived and breathed the same air, an air on which wafted the stench of Athenian corpses rotting in Sicilian quarries.

Although Morgenthau draws mostly upon the Platonic corpus for direct inspiration in theorizing love and the will to power as tragic responses to man's existential loneliness, Plato himself shared with Thucydides the same discursive setting in tragedy. Both, furthermore, were intimately familiar with the phenomenon of erotic politics and devoted much of their time to analysing it. While Morgenthau perhaps did not philosophically engage with Thucydides to the extent that he did with Plato, he nevertheless found in the author of the *History* an ancient member of his 'interpretive community' whose shared understanding of tragedy and of the animating factors of human behaviour made selectively quoting from him seem natural and legitimate. Furthermore, given that the themes with which Thucydides dealt – ideological passion, tyranny and democracy, war and great reversals of political fortune – were so apparent in Morgenthau's own time, and given that Thucydides insights seemed to chime so well with his own, Morgenthau considered it self-evident that there were "objective laws" of politics that had not changed "since the classical philosophies of China, India, and Greece endeavored to discover [them]" (1978b: 4).

(ii) *Relevance to the Discipline*

This summary of our main conclusions leads us to the question as to how these findings matter to the discipline beyond the issue of interpretation. To answer this question, however, we need to bring the issue of interpretation into sharper focus. There are two central points to make here. One concerns the question of whether and how the ancients can instruct us in politics. The other point, stemming from the first, concerns the fact that, as constructivists have long pointed out, the notions actors have about themselves and their actions matter insofar as they shape social reality and, hence, foster certain patterns of belief and behaviour.

Tragedy was not created to instruct *us* (that is, literate English-speaking people in the 21st century). Instruction, David Runciman points out, is "a deliberate and deliberative act, designed for the needs and expectations of those to be instructed" (2001: 85). Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides could not have known what the people reading their work two and a half thousand years later would be like, or of what would constitute their central concerns; as such, they cannot have designed their texts with the intention of instructing *us* in how to confront the problems *we* face primarily in mind. Similarly, *we* cannot construct our own texts with any realistic hope of addressing the needs and expectations of whomever or whatever inhabits the Earth in 4500 AD. Imagine, for instance, the confusion that Ned Lebow's joke (that his colleague "rightly insists" that something called "tennis" [2003: 355] should be added to the list of fundamental requisites for survival) would create for a simplified cyborg, the quantum processors of whom are programmed on obsolete New Chinese code, when faced by the problem of intergalactic warping!

But overcooked witticisms such as the above do not prove that the tragedians did not intend to instruct *at all*. Indeed, in Chapter Three, we saw that one of the primary functions of tragedy in Athenian life was to do precisely this; to instruct and develop in the audience of Athenian spectators a critical and self-questioning stance towards norms and behaviours typically taken for granted by them

whilst simultaneously reaffirming those same norms and behaviours in the broader context of its performance. *Eros* was one of the vehicles by which these goals were accomplished, both textually (in the role it played in the dramas themselves) and practically (in the homosocial bonding inherent to the performance of the festival). The tragedians clearly intended to instruct, if not so much in one particular formulaic lesson as a more general intellectual attitude (although, of course, each play had its own specific social settings and concerns, such as marriage, justice, piety, fate, death, war, power, knowledge, or some combination of these and others). It may be that Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides fully believed – and intended – their plays to be relevant for all time and to all people, but their dramas were written with the language, concepts, norms, concerns, and expectations of fifth century Athens first and foremost in mind. This is especially true in light of the fact that a tragedy was originally produced as a political and religious communal *performance*, complete with ritual, music and dramatic movement, not simply as a static text to be 'made' by individual readers.

Thucydides, however, whose work was deeply influenced by the tragedians, explicitly states that his text is intended to be "a possession for all time," insofar as it may be "judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it" (1.22.4). What Thucydides claims to offer his readers is not so much a prediction of the precise details of future political action, but rather "a more generalized, essential truth, one which adheres to the constancy of the human situation" (Scanlon 2002: 132). Thucydides believed that he *could* and *did* write for *us*, that is, because he believed that as long as human beings were human, the truth that he described would hold steady and future people such as *ourselves* could come to see this.

This truth, as we know, is that human beings naturally tend to fall under the influence of an erotically charged impulse for freedom and rule (two sides of the

same coin of political power), which is led on into danger by the hope that their luck will not run out. This tendency is conditioned by poverty and wealth, which encourage audacity through necessity and greed through insolence; the poor want what they do not have and the rich want more than they have got. The danger of such behaviour is intensified in the case of collectives, because when acting together with others individuals tend to inflate their own capacities and act irrationally on account of this.

Morgenthau was familiar with Thucydides' theory, and he developed his own version of the same (albeit not so much with reference to Thucydides as to tragedy and the Platonic dialogues). Morgenthau took from the world of the ancients the insights that the longing for community and the longing for power are impossible to separate, that this hybrid longing was tragically destructive, and that it was the most powerful and most ancient animating force of human action. The homoeroticism of Athenian democratic ideology, as well as the explicit emphasis that Thucydides placed on hope and fortune and the conditioning factors of poverty and wealth, were played down (although hope implicitly remained in mankind's dreams of salvation) in Morgenthau's philosophy, and were replaced by a stronger focus on the *hubris* that the will to power tended to produce. In Morgenthau's work, while the nuclear missile had replaced the spear and the trophies of empire now extended into the heavens, the erotic tragedy of man remained essentially the same.

This all raises the question as to whether Thucydides' erotic theory of politics, as the structuring principle of a work explicitly intended to be instructive 'for all time,' and Morgenthau's development of a very similar set of ideas (influenced by the same discursive setting in tragedy), as 'objective laws of politics' that are rooted in 'human nature,' can indeed be relevant as such. In other words, was Morgenthau correct in his belief that ancients such as Thucydides, Plato and the tragedians (and the erotic politics with which they were so concerned) can be instructive to *us*?

There is, in fact, a good argument to be made that they can be. Paul Ludwig points out that much work in contemporary social science embraces a theoretical model of man as *homo economicus*, driven by rational self-interest. While such a model may have many useful functions (particularly in the context of modern capitalism), it does not pay heed to the fact that human beings are often motivated by intense emotions and desires that produce behaviour very difficult, if not impossible, to fully anticipate or reason with. Such behaviour, furthermore, often has dramatic consequences:

> To cite the simplest example: the political, social, and economic behavior of an ordinary taxpayer with a conservative investment portfolio is far easier to predict than the same variables in a compulsive gambler who cannot resist letting everything ride on the next throw. Both agents are motivated by profit, at least in part, but the inner emotional experiences are so different that they produce radically different behavior. (Ludwig 2002: 16-7)

Ludwig notes that Thucydides' portrait of Athens is precisely of this kind; in the *History*, Athens is presented as a compulsive political gambler whose lust for empire, in the wake of Pericles' death, leads it to hazard its entire existence on one roll of the dice in Sicily. Morgenthau's erotic theory of politics differs from Thucydides' *History* 'not so much in substance as in form' – the theory of the will to power explains how and why individuals and states can be led to psychological, emotional and behavioural extremes (particularly in and as a result of their desire for power) which jeopardise their own well-being. It seems reasonable to agree with Ludwig that "erotic theory may have something new to say about ordinary motives under special circumstances" (*ibid*: 17).

These 'special circumstances' are nowhere more apparent than in war, one of the most important institutions in international politics. As Carl von Clausewitz observed, "of all human activities, war most closely resembles a game of

cards" (1982: 27). Indeed, Clausewitz once wrote that, in its pursuit of power in central Europe, Prussia ought to follow the example of Frederick the Great, who had "resolved wholly to lose or wholly to win, like the gambler who risks his last penny" (quoted in Parkinson 2002: 48). Clausewitz's advice clearly reproduces the logic (although it sits uneasily with the counsel) of Thucydides, who concluded that the disastrous pattern of erotically-charged men being led on by hope and fortune is especially prevalent among states, "because the stakes played for are the highest, freedom or empire, and, when all are acting together, each man irrationally magnifies his own capacity" (3.45.6).

We need not search very far to find evidence of the tectonic consequences of this kind of behaviour. When Thucydides speaks dramatically of the Athenian defeat in Sicily as constituting "the greatest reverse" to befall any (Greek) army in history (7.76.7), one wonders what he would have made of the Soviet capture of Berlin or the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Some of the immediate effects of World War II were just as extreme: decolonisation and an increase in the number of states in the international system, a corresponding increase in the incidence of conflicts fuelled by extremist ideology (including but not limited to nationalism), the emergence of superpowers, and all of the problems these immediate effects have given rise to. Indeed, the aftershocks of this war are still reverberating on every continent.

This points to a second area in which erotic political theory may be of relevance to the discipline. Felix Wasserman perceptively wrote that "while already affecting the individual as part of nature," the motivational dynamics that Thucydides saw at work among his fellows in their day-to-day lives played an even more important part in their politics; "here the controls and restraints of reason are even more endangered by the pressures of group psychology – a field which was one of the great discoveries of Thucydides – and of issues far beyond any private concern, such as the force we have been used to call 'nationalism' for the last two centuries, implying both the will to rule over others and the freedom

from foreign domination" (1956: 39). We have seen in Chapters Four through Six how central and powerful the emotional appetite of *eros* was in this regard for Thucydides; the myth of Aristogeiton and Harmodius, Pericles' vision of citizenship, the revolt of Mytilene, and the disaster in Sicily – all of these were products of erotic politics, of patriotism and imperialism and the lust for power that undergirds both.

Morgenthau had a similar understanding of the matter:

> The disillusion of differently constituted minds communicating the same words, which embody their most firmly held convictions, *deepest emotions*, and *most ardent aspirations*, without finding the expected sympathetic response, has driven the members of different nations further apart and strengthened their conviction of incompatibility of their moral values and political interests. (1971b: 202, emphasis added)

All too often, the conviction that one's own moral values and political interests – one's ideology, so to speak – are incompatible with others leads to the belief that they are superior to others (and, as such, that one has the right or even the duty to impose them on those who disagree, especially those whom it is in one's perceived interest to control). According to Morgenthau, this is, almost always, an erroneous and dangerous conclusion. It is, indeed, "the very sin of pride against which the Greek tragedians and the biblical prophets have warned *rulers and ruled*" (1978b: 13). Whether among the powerful or the powerless, chauvinistic ideologies tend to induce "the blindness of crusading frenzy [that] destroys nations and civilizations" (*ibid*.). This is a predictable, if tragic, outcome of the will to power and there is almost nothing that can be done to stop it from happening at one point or another in the long march of time.

Others too have noted the role of affection – romantic or otherwise – in cementing social bonds in the context of conflict and nationalism. Morgenthau quotes

the letter of John Durie to the British Ambassador in 1632 regarding the dire situation of Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden in his fight against the Catholics: "his authority is lost, and his abode will be no longer: for the love [of his subjects for him] which was at first is gone" (1962a: 250). Edmund Burke also mourned the loss of affection for a leader as a motivating factor in conflict (in this case the French Revolution):

> It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France … glittering like the morning star, full of life and splendour and joy. Oh! What a revolution! And what an heart must I have, to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream, when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom! Little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour, and of cavaliers! I thought ten thousands swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult … Never, never more shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom! The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise is gone! It is gone … the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded: and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever. (1790: 112-3)

Burke correctly understood that institutions can be "embodied" in persons, "so as to create in us love, veneration, admiration or attachment" (*ibid*: 115) to or for them, and he recognised that discourse was a central means of achieving this. This insight was, in fact, one of the main reasons he wrote about Marie Antoi-

nette in the way that he did (cf. Furniss 1993; Locke 2006). Burke also correctly noted that the kind of reasoning with which some people attempt to banish the emotions from politics, either philosophically or practically, cannot by itself fully replace them (Burke 1790: 115).

Burke's conclusion that 'the glory of Europe' had disappeared for good after the French Revolution therefore comes as something of a surprise; his own logic suggests that the privileged position royalty enjoyed as the object of men's political affections could be replaced by something else without necessarily changing the terms of affective behaviour in any substantial way. And indeed, as Morgenthau would later observe, over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the secular state (or more precisely, the secular *nation*-state) would become the most exalted object of loyalty for most individuals as well as the most effective organisation for wielding power over them. The results of this transformation, he noted, were catastrophic, especially in those instances in which nation-states were ruled by tyrants, by some sort of 'beloved leader' (Morgenthau 1945; 1962a; 1978b).

In the post-modern West, where economic models and calculators *are* in fact the general rule, the influence of the emotions in politics has recently begun to regain serious attention. Of these emotions, pride, shame and the desire for revenge inspired by humiliation are the most relevant to erotic theory. This is because they are rooted in cultures of honour, which are, at least in the case of the Greeks, bound up with *eros* and its implicit masculinity.

Notions of honour are characteristically gendered; in almost every society in which such systems function, the honour of men is qualified differently to the honour of women (Spierenburg 1998). Honour systems are also typically hierarchical; the various groups and individuals which belong to them are expected to play their assigned social roles and remain in their assigned social places. As in most other societies, men are expected to be 'proper' men, and women are ex-

pected to be 'proper' women. 'Proper' here means the 'hegemonic' identities ranked above other identities widely considered 'deviant' or otherwise less acceptable (although women as a category are usually ranked as inferior to men; 'deviant' men are often semantically and conceptually assimilated to women). Those who do not play their proper part in society – those who act *dis*honourably – are shamed, marginalised or otherwise punished by the community.

Cultures of honour are often most pronounced in societies characterised by weak law enforcement, portable (and hence vulnerable) wealth, and economic uncertainty. This is because male individuals in such societies by and large have to fend for themselves, and are responsible for protecting and exploiting their productive and reproductive resources; insults and other challenges to their reputation must be met forcefully in order to maintain the image that they and their property are not 'easy prey' (Cohen and Nisbett 1997). Accordingly, the issue of 'manliness' plays a crucial role in most honour cultures (Casimir and Jung 2009). Given the environmental context in which such societies usually exist, corporeality, physical bravery, and a willingness to use (and skill in using) violence are often important factors in the construction of honour and 'manliness.' From ancient times, particularly honourable and powerful members of society (such as royalty) have been associated with awe-inspiring or aggressive animals such as lions, jaguars, rams, cocks and eagles (Blok 1981; Csapo 1997; McNellen 1997; Saunders 1998; Spierenburg 1998).

Honour, of course, is related to shame. To feel shame is to recognise that "one's image is vulnerable in some way, a reaction which focuses on the conspicuousness of the self" (Cairns 1993: 2). Shame is related in complex ways to humiliation. One of these relations is the tendency of those who are ashamed to look down and away from others: the term 'humiliation' stems from the Latin *humus* ('earth'); to be humiliated is to be 'treated like dirt,' 'tread upon', 'looked down upon' or 'dragged through the mud.' The term is etymologically related to 'humility' (having a low estimate of one's own importance), a quality that closely

resembles the emotion of shame. Humiliation, it follows, tends to afflict most profoundly those proud, 'lofty' selves who can be 'put down' or forced 'off a high horse' (Miller 1993; Lindner 2006).

Humiliation, then, relies on real or assumed rank, and is related to shame insofar as it relies on self-conscious social visibility; somebody who is humiliated is thereby moved from one psychosocial position (honourable, higher) to another (dishonourable, lower). Honour is the baseline condition from which one is moved, and it is this baseline that forms a reference for action. Millers sums the issue up well:

> Honor is above all the keen sensitivity to the experience of humiliation and shame, a sensitivity manifested by the desire to be envied by others and the propensity to envy the success of others. To simplify greatly, honor is the disposition which makes one act to shame others who have greatly shamed oneself, to humiliate others who have humiliated oneself. (Quoted in Casimir 2009: 287)

Consider, for example, the Greek adulterer from Chapter Two: having committed outrage, the adulterer was publicly subjected to sexual assault by the man whose honour he had infringed. Such a punishment was considered an appropriate and effective social control for the offender's *hubris*, his self-assumed and self-asserted superiority. The offender was 'put down' from his psychosocial position as 'better' or 'higher' than the man whose wife he had defiled to a correspondingly 'worse' or 'lower' position as a sexual pathic (as a 'woman' or 'satyr,' so to speak). He was thereby not only shamed (his inappropriate behaviour was exposed to the eyes of the community); he was also humiliated. His punishment was a like-for-like trade for the degradation of his victim; it was the return of honour taken. What the community meted out to him was just retribution.

Evelin Gerda Lindner has argued convincingly that "the very core of humiliation is the process by which human beings subject aspects of their environment to control. This has the effect of subordinating that part of the natural or human environment to the judgements and wishes of the subjugator" (2001: 52). Subjugation, she says, leads to the instrumentalisation of that 'piece of nature' being subject to power (e.g. tilling a plot of land, domesticating an animal, punishing a person, enslaving a group of people). The exercise of power thereby denies or severely restricts agency to individuals who ordinarily would claim independence and self-sovereignty for themselves. This, in turn, makes these individuals feel less than human (or, in societies such as Athens, less than a man): "one of the defining characteristics of humiliation as a process is that the victim is forced into passivity, acted upon, made helpless" (Lindner 2000: 5).

As we have seen in Chapter Two, this active/passive distinction was central also to Athenian constructions of gender and sexuality. Sexuality in ancient Athens was largely a masculine phenomenon; the sexual deed was considered an action performed by one person on another, which took its meaning from the active (dominant, masculine) instrumentalisation of a passive (submissive, feminine) substance. This distinction was both reflected in and reproduced by *eros* as a broader social practice. *Eros*, to recall, was an all-powerful emotional appetite in its control over both the soul and the body; in the pursuit of beauty it destroyed its enemies in the individual's mind – rationality and self-control – and commanded his obedience, as a man would break his wife. *Eros*, a male god who held sway over no less of an authority than Zeus, was the quintessential conqueror; and, indeed, over time, in pictorial representations he took on the attributes of Heracles (the manliest of men). *Eros* was, in short, the definition of 'activity'; he was the divinised mirror image of Greek hyper-masculinity, of the 'superman.'

In a world of men in which *eros* was an active force, humiliation was a common occurrence. Any act that 'womanised' a man, that psychosocially 'screwed' and 'transgendered' him, so to speak, was an act of humiliation. In a society in which honour (and the masculine identity with which it was deeply intertwined) was considered a zero-sum good such acts were frequent. Given conventional ideas of justice as a 'like-for-like' exchange between equals, such humiliation often requited vengeance that made the humiliating 'actor' the passive recipient of another's action (which was often violent, as Aristotle's advice to lecherous tyrants attests). The 'actor,' that is, was acted *upon* by his victim, who reaffirmed his masculinity in the eyes of society by feminizing his aggressor. This is precisely the reason why the adulterer in Athens was punished in the way that he was. It is no exaggeration to conclude that humiliation and vengeance in ancient Athens were essentially 'homoerotic'; those men who had been humiliated – who had been, as it were, 'screwed' and 'transgendered' – regained their masculinity by publicly emasculating their enemies, by making sure it was known that they had given their enemies 'the finger' (or the radish, as it were).

All this is important because there are a number of societies in which ancient Greek views of gender and sexuality have very clear parallels in the Mediterranean region, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa:

> All traditional Arab cultural regimes concur in considering the sexual order both binary and hierarchical at one and the same time. This order revolves around two poles: one pole, which is superior, active, and dominating, is made up of men, and the other pole, which is inferior and passive, is made up of wives, children, slaves, homosexuals, and prostitutes. One of the fundamental characteristics of this asymmetrical polarity between the single sexual active and the multiple sexual passives is the construction of all sexual

passives in the image of the woman. (2005: 17; cf. Dunne 1998; Uhlmann 2005; King 2008)

Honour and violence related to honour are, predictably, particularly pronounced in these societies (cf. Schneider 1971; Odeh 2010). Erotic theory, with its focus on extreme psychological states and its foundation in honour culture, seems to be in a good position to illuminate some of the motivations and dynamics of some contemporary violent conflicts, particularly in the Middle East. At least this holds insofar as the feeling of humiliation is "the atomic bomb of the emotions" (Lindner 2006: xiii) on account of the lust for vengeance it provokes.

Of course, humiliation and the desire for vengeance are not the sole (nor often even the primary) causes for political violence, and concerns about masculine honour are by no means confined to the Middle East. The US Military, for example, self-consciously draws on the literature and culture of ancient Athens (including tragedy and Thucydides) for the education of officers and for the definition of its honour code (cf. Cook 2006; U.S. Department of Defense 2007). A number of scholars have in fact argued that concerns about (implicitly male) honour are pervasive influences in the international system and the relations between states (Lebow 2008; Tsygankov 2012; cf. Harkavy 2000; Callahan 2004; Löwenheim and Heimann 2008). Furthermore, it is unfortunately the case that "everywhere, in every known culture, women are considered in some degree inferior to men" (Ortner 1996: 23), and this inequality is reflected in gender relations across the globe. However, despite the ubiquity of gender hierarchies, and "while honor and shame are prime motivators in many societies, [the] confluence of high gender differentiation and situational emasculation puts Middle Eastern Islamic nations [in particular] at high risk for in-group male pushback against a humiliating international dominance hierarchy" (Thayer and Hudson 2010: 48).

Of course, Islamist movements are as much a reflection of the transition towards globalised modernity and the social conflicts this has produced – "over the roles, rights, and privileges of men and women as well as the structure and status of the family" (Moghadam 2001: 126) – as they are responses to perceived political humiliations. But the anxieties of many men in the Middle East in regard to their experiences of and participation in international politics is tied up with concerns about masculinity. This fact is reflected clearly in the speeches of Osama bin Laden, who was (and still is) considered a hero for many people across the Muslim world (Bergen 2002), and whose actions have done much to shape the international political landscape of the 21st century.

In a 1998 televised interview with Al Jazeera, bin Laden complained that the United States wanted to deprive Muslim men of their manhood. "We believe," he said, "that we are men, Muslim men who must defend … the Holy Ka'ab … The rulers in [the Middle East] have been deprived of their manhood. And they think that the people are women. By God, Muslim women refuse to be defended by these American and Jewish prostitutes" (quoted in Ramazani 2001: 122). Shortly after the attacks of September 11, bin Laden repeated this logic when he said that what the United States was now experiencing was "but a fraction of what we have been tasting for decades: the *umma* [the global Muslim community] has been tasting this humiliation and contempt for over eighty years. Its sons have been slain, its blood has been shed, and its sacred places have been defiled" (2007: 193).

As Ruth Seifert points out, in many cultures the female body is a metaphor for the community; an attack on the nation's women is often considered an attack on the community itself, and vice versa (1996: 39). Such attacks usually carry with them serious consequences for men; a man's failure to adequately respond to these outrages is to implicitly admit that he has 'become a woman' himself. This kind of gendered rhetoric is common in Arab politics, and bin Laden's is no ex-

ception (Momani, Badarneh and Migdadi 2009; Smiles 2008). In his view, being a 'Muslim man' means physical fighting: for the Ka'ab, the *umma*, the women of Islam; against injustice, humiliation, and emasculation at the hands of tyrants.

The Abu Ghraib scandal (in which a significant number of imprisoned Iraqi men and women were sexually abused, raped or otherwise tortured by American guards) and Islamist responses to it dramatically illuminates the issue. Take 'Fatima's letter', for example; allegedly written by a female detainee abused at Abu Ghraib, this widely circulated letter described the humiliations of imprisonment and called upon Muslim men to avenge Fatima's disgrace. Her plea wsa not ignored; in one video produced by the Mujahedeen Shura Council in Iraq entitled *Fatima's Fiancée*, a young Saudi suicide bomber is shown praying that upon his impending arrival in paradise God will "marry [him] to Fatimah, who was martyred after [the tyrants and apostates] had violated her honor." Smiling and patting his explosive-packed vehicle, he tells the viewer that this is "Fatima's dowry" (quoted in Hafez 2007: 108; cf. Tosini 2010: 281). Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the (late) leader of al-Qa'eda in Iraq, appealed to similar sentiments when, having sawed off the head of his struggling American victim, he held up the grisly trophy to the camera and declared that "the dignity of men and women in Abu Ghraib and [elsewhere] is not redeemed except by blood and souls" (The Independent 2004). Many young Muslims from the around the world followed in these footsteps.

Abu Ghraib was an enormous propaganda coup for al-Qaeda insofar as the outrage it caused helped to focus and mobilise violent opposition to the Allied occupation of Iraq. But invoking the imperatives of Arab and Muslim masculinities remains a key recruiting strategy of radical jihadists, and with the Middle East still a hotbed of violent extremism these masculinities are forged 'in the heat of battle' and disseminated over the internet (Awan 2007; Hafez 2007; Tosini 2010). The effects of this are already spilling over into other regions; the

individuals in the Buttes-Charmont terror cell responsible for the January 2015 attacks in France, for example, seem to have engaged with this discourse, trained with jihadists in Syria, and socialised with other young French Muslims who "said they felt humiliated by the West. They never spoke of wanting to commit acts of terror but of being freedom fighters … The Kouachi brothers and Amedy Coulibaly are [part of this] new generation of radicals" (Boubekeur quoted in The Telegraph 2015; cf. Lindner 2006; Awan 2007; Nesser 2011: 186-7).

While an individual's motivations for engaging in Islamic terrorism are usually multiple and overlapping (Pape 2005; Hoffman 2006; Kruglanski et al. 2009), it is nevertheless clear that a contributing factor to much of this violence is a sentiment similar to Aeschylus's Furies: "a mother's blood upon … the ground is gone," they shriek at Orestes, "and you must allow me in return to … feed on you – a gruesome drink!" (*Ag.* 260-66). This is the sentiment of pride and honour, of shame, humiliation and the lust for revenge – and as Aeschylus knew well, it has extremely destructive, self-perpetuating effects. An old hubris, as he said, tends to bring forth a new one; just as imperialism, like other political extremes, has its blowback (cf.; Cohen and Nisbett 1997; Johnson 2004; Ling 2004; Danchev 2006; Saurette 2006; Limon 2007; Steele 2008; Fattah and Fierke 2009).

This leads us to one final consideration. Responding to Hans Morgenthau's tragic vision of politics, Michael Oakeshott wrote that human life "is not tragic, either in part or in whole: tragedy belongs to art, not to life" (quoted in Rengger 2005: 326). Nicholas Rengger supports Oakeshott's position and suggests that "the best ways of dealing with the dissonances of the world depend upon us accepting human life and its vicissitudes as it is and they are, neither trying to wish them out of existence … nor overly [romanticising] them … by talking of the 'tragic' character of existence" (2005: 327).

As I hope to have shown in the body of this dissertation, tragedy does not, or more appropriately *did* not, belong only to art – Oakeshott was mistaken in this regard. Tragedy represented and explored real, live political issues in ancient Athens, one of which was the question of political *eros*. Thucydides, too, identified and represented tragic patterns of behaviour. Morgenthau likewise. As the foregoing discussion has made clear, such patterns of behaviour are also observable in the world today.

Nevertheless, I agree with Rengger that the best way of dealing with the destructive behaviour we see repeated so often in the world is neither by trying to wish it away, nor by talki   ng of its tragic character. I disagree, however, that we should resign ourselves to 'accepting human life and vicissitudes as it is and they are.' There is, I believe, another option available, and this is the transcendence of tragedy. This transcendence is (very slowly and perhaps ultimately only partially) achievable in light of the facts that erotic politics neither necessitates a love of power nor is it an inevitable outgrowth of human nature.

That the first claim is so is attested to even by ancient logic. Sappho, for instance, wrote that "some men say an army of horse and some men say an army on foot and some men say an army of ships is the most beautiful thing on the black earth. But I say it is what you love" (quoted in Kurke 2009: 161). If we were to accept Sappho's claim that the definition of beauty varies among individuals (as is demonstrably the case), then we must also accept the idea that it is possible for people to love objects other than weapons and the power they bring. Thus Aristophanes suggests that it is possible for human beings to surrender to the "lust for peace" (*eirene eros*, *Ach.* 32). Socrates, too, rejected freedom and rule as the sole concern of love; wisdom, he argued in the *Symposium*, was much more beautiful than the worldly power represented by Alcibiades (and his body) could ever be.

Socrates believed that good men should devote their lives to the pursuit of wisdom, not power. His attempt to convince his beloved Alcibiades and the rest of the Athenians of this failed, however, and quite miserably so; Alcibiades became a reviled traitor (for a while) and Socrates himself was condemned to death for corrupting the youth. On the face of it, the irony of this outcome seems rather troublesome for the current argument; Socrates, driven by *eros*, led on by the hope that Alcibiades and the Athenians might change, and indulged by the good fortune of Alcibiades' reciprocated affections, ended up forced by his outraged countrymen to put a cup of hemlock to his lips. Thucydides and Morgenthau would have found this all too predictable.

Plato, however, seems to put a lot of the blame for this 'tragedy' on the tragedians themselves. By encouraging identification with tyrannical and subversive (as well as democratic and normative) points of view among the audience of spectators (which, of course, included Alcibiades), Plato believed that "those clever enchanters and tyrant-makers" planted in democratic men "a powerful erotic love, like a great winged drone, to be the leader of those idle desires that spend whatever is at hand" (*Rep.* 9.572-3). Plato believed that tragic drama produced certain kinds of behaviour in its spectators and performers that were extremely damaging to the *polis*. The poets, he said, were dangerous; all they did was "draw crowds, hire people with fine, big, persuasive voices, and lead their constitutions to tyranny and democracy" (*Rep.* 8.568).

While Plato's estimation of tragedy may have been harsh and exaggerated, it was not without some merit. Like Plato, we too must be wary of political drama.

Erotic politics, as we know, is built upon the grounds of gender, sexuality and honour. *Eros* itself is a hyper-masculine emotional appetite, characterised by its psychological and physical domination of the subject experiencing it as well as the controlling behaviour that it produces in the subject toward the object of his or her desire. *Eros*, in short, is culturally represented as *warlike*. This is impor-

tant insofar as the social representation of an emotion helps to shape what the emotion actually *is*. As ancient Athenian children learned the vocabulary of *eros* and the specific contexts in which it could be applied, they also learned particular ways of evaluating, feeling, and behaving with regard to it.

Describing the ancient reality of erotic political behaviour as an eternal and immutable 'tragedy' therefore actually helps to ensure that it remains one. As constructivists have long pointed out, the notions actors have about themselves and their actions matter insofar as they shape social reality and, hence, foster certain patterns of belief and behaviour. And so it is that as long as we consider the dynamics of erotic politics represented by tragedy not as 'tragic' but simply as *tragic* – as inevitabilities rooted in the 'imperfection of man' – they will, inevitably, remain so.

Eros led on by hope and chance in pursuit of freedom and rule; the will to power; shame, humiliation, and revenge – none of these are *tragic*, and to claim that they are does indeed romanticise them. Nevertheless, all of them are certainly 'tragic.' They are, in other words, both real *and* artifice; they depend for their actualization on certain socially constructed concepts and norms regarding identity, interest, reason and justice, particularly as they are manifest in the ancient idea of 'man' (cf. Paipais 2013). Herein lies the problem with the work of those who speak of 'the tragedy of man.'

J. Ann Tickner observes that "Morgenthau's definition of power, the control of man over man, is typical of the way power is usually defined in international relations" (1988: 434). As we have seen, Morgenthau's definition of power (and the desire for it) is rooted in the ancient conception of *eros*, understood as masculine domination. *Eros* was the ultimate possession, the ultimate power; it was both the means and the end of Greek hyper-masculinity, which itself was deeply intertwined with Greek sexuality. Tickner's observation that issues most clearly related to Morgenthau's idea of power (such as conflict and security) tend to be

prioritised in the study of international relations and in foreign policy therefore seems a logical outcome of the Greek conceptions of masculine identity, sexuality and power that undergird Morgenthau's tragic philosophy of power and the work that has taken it for granted.

Kimberley Hutchings has convincingly argued that the intelligibility and normalisation of war as a social institution – around which international relations theory and practice revolves – are dependent on certain properties of masculinity and discourse; "to the extent that masculinity becomes identified with a substantive set of properties that are grounded in the unchanging requirements of war and the military," she says, "the formal properties of masculinity become subsumed in a particular story about its substantive content. The result is a focus on both masculinity and war as outcomes, rather than processes, as fixed and reified, rather than flexible and shifting" (2008: 394). And it is indeed the case that militaries, and in particular the images of 'the warrior' they produce, have historically had a strong role to play in the construction of hegemonic masculinities around the world (Connell 1993; Barrett 1996; Hagemann 1997; Gill 1997; Sasson-Levy 2003; Godfrey 2009). As Burke noted, such constructions provide 'the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise.' They are, as such, particularly useful for states (Goldstein 2001; Streets 2004).

But, as Hutchings (2008) argues, masculinities are not fixed and unchanging entities. Take the case of hegemonic masculinity in England, for example. In most of pre-industrial England, "male honour depended on a reputation for violence and bravery" (Spierenburg 1998: 6). Over the last three hundred years, however, honour seems to have moved in the direction of 'spiritualisation' – that is, it has come to depend "on an evaluation of a person's moral stature or psychological condition" rather than the physical response he or she gives to insults (*ibid*.). Robert Shoemaker (2002) has shown how the violence characteristic of the tradition of London duelling, for instance, was (despite an increase in the lethality of the weapons with which it was conducted) dramatically reduced over the

course of the eighteenth century. This was due not only to the growing role of print culture in conducting disputes, but also – and more importantly – to changing norms of honour and masculinity that helped to delegitimise violence as a method of settling conflicts between men.

Despite their noble intentions, previous contributors to the debate have failed to recognise this. They have failed to see that the erotic politics at the heart of 'tragic' action is based upon a socially constructed system of gender, sexuality, and honour. By talking of 'tragedy' as a reality (whether eternal or even as one that might be possibly overcome), they implicitly validate and reproduce the discourse in which the identities and behaviour that undergird erotic politics make sense. In other words, they recreate the semantic and normative conditions in which 'tragedy' is bound to repeat itself. The 'tragic vision of politics,' in this sense, actually represents a kind of myopia, the unfortunate irony of which is of a pair with Thucydides' view of the Athenian 'tragedy' as I outlined it in Chapter Five: the historical blindness of the Athenians, Thucydides suggests, led them to repeat the same mistakes they swore to avoid every year at the Great Dionysia, and this had terrible consequences for them all.

Directions for Further Research

This conclusion leads us to briefly consider the question as to the directions in which our findings might be taken by further research. We best do so by returning to themes introduced at the beginning of this dissertation.

"If the pacifist wants to see the truth," Gilbert Murray wrote, "he must face the essential tragedy of life. Biologically the whole animal creation, or at any rate the carnivorous part of it, kills in order to live" (1929: 15). On Murray's view the killing and exploitation that lies at the heart of every ecosystem is reproduced in the human species not only in its diet but also in its inter- and intragroup relations. People kill one another for pleasure and power as well as for self-protection. For many people there is also even glamour in war, because in

prehistoric conditions, in which the deeper feelings of humankind were forged, competition ordinarily "took the form of physical battle of man against man, or man against beast, for the protection of himself or his group; and this ancient fact still naturally dominates our emotions and imaginations, and produces instinctively the supreme admiration of the soldier" (*ibid*: 33). In the tragedy of life there is not only predation and destruction, therefore, but also an "element of love, of love and sacrifice, love that will die to save its object […], a plain biological fact and necessity" (*ibid*: 16-7). In other words: the she-wolf will lay down her life to defend her cubs just as she will tear the lamb to pieces in order to feed them. It is this distinction, the distinction between different forms of love and desire, which provides a direction for further research.

Eros is an emotion that is largely socially constructed, but it would be a mistake to conclude from this that it is "merely a construct, even a modality of power" (Wohl 2002: 127). It is, rather, based on biological impulses relating to sex and aggression; it is the social conditioning of such. Other forms of love and desire are in many respects the same. Filial love, for example, is clearly a crucial evolutionary adaptation necessary for the coherence (and hence the success) of small groups of humans with very slow rates of infant maturation. Experiences and expressions of filial love, however, often differ greatly between epochs, societies, family units, households and individuals (cf. Wheaton 1975). Cousin-marriages (or the lack thereof) are a case in point (cf. Anderson 1986).

Individuals have biological needs, and these biological needs translate into desires and emotions which are deeply conditioned, structured, and in some instances perhaps even produced by society (Röttger-Rössler and Markowitsch 2009). Some desires may be more socially conditioned than others (compare the craving for carbohydrates to the craving for peer recognition), but all are experienced and expressed within the context of humanity as a natural phenomenon.

One individual's or one collective's needs and desires can and clearly often do conflict with the needs and desires of others. There can be no disputing this 'tragic' fact. But such conflict does not, necessarily, lead to cruelty and violence. Nor does it necessarily lead to domination and exploitation. Selfish aggression and violence among humans may, in some instances, have biological roots (Palmer 1989; Caspi et al. 2002; Nell 2006; McDermott et al. 2012). Similarly, hierarchical relations are, to a degree, necessary and unavoidable experiences in the life cycle (as in, for instance, the relation of very young children to their primary carers). But among humans there is, as Murray points out, a capacity for experiencing and expressing different kinds of love and desire which have not been socially conditioned to be consistently hierarchical and warlike. Reinhold Niebuhr recognised this, and argued that there is a 'beyond tragedy' in which qualities such as hope, faith, filial love and forgiveness render pessimism penultimate rather than ultimate (Niebuhr 1986, 2013; cf. Rice 2006).

What further research needs to explore, then, are such alternatives to *eros* as the primary model for human relationships and social interaction. While the existence of humanity's natural *capacity* for predatory aggression, cruelty and domination is inescapable and must be recognised as such, the social conditions that encourage such behaviour are not so determined. Interactions based on love can never be completely freed from considerations of interest, it is true, but it is equally clear that the weaker members of society are not different species to be preyed upon. We humans are not wolves, nor necessarily cannibals nor even carnivores. Indeed, as Milgram's famous experiments demonstrated, if anything we are mostly sheep in wolves' clothing.

While Pandora may have long ago shut the lid on Hope, even if hidden from view it still continues to exist; if we wedge the jar back open, it might be goaded out (if only inch by inch). Many of the tools for achieving this are there. The duel, as we have seen, can be transformed into a law court. It is even possible to

imagine that the law court, as it were, might one day in the far distant future be transformed into a community of care and mutual respect, in which cooperation and deliberation are valued as highly as fruitful competition. The normative and institutional changes in Western Europe following the Second World War are, in some respects, a step in this direction. Humanity need not, and should not, remain mired in a world drenched by the blood and tears of tragedy. As Nietzsche once said: "One repays a teacher badly if one remains only a pupil."

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