INTRODUCTION

My subject is Euripidean tragedy and how, in the cultural and dramatic context of war, it performs its didactic function. For the most part, and for reasons which will become clear, I have concentrated on *The Trojan Women* (*Troades*). Behind this enterprise lies a view of the nature of fifth-century Athenian tragedy, which it seems proper to enunciate in this introduction.[1]

Greek tragedy is a discourse of the fifth-century Athenian *polis*; it is a product of a culture distant in time and, in many ways, different in character.[2] Unlike any literary event we know in the modern western world, the tragedies were performed on an occasion of great political importance. The Athenian *polis* was involved in the production of tragedy both directly and indirectly. The invention of tragedy, of theatre, is dependent itself on the invention of politics. While politics was a panhellenic phenomenon, the development of democracy at Athens allowed in a more thoroughgoing way what

[1] References to classical texts follow by and large the system of abbreviation used in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. I have, however, referred to some plays of Aristophanes and some dialogues of Plato by their English titles or by abbreviations of those titles (e.g. *Clouds*, *Laws*, *Rep.* for *Republic*, *Prot.* for *Protagoras*). The tragedies of Euripides are referred to by title alone. With other texts the author is given except when the context makes authorship clear.

[2] We should emphasize the difference between the classical Greek *polis* and the modern state, which is neatly summarized by R. Osborne (1985), 8–9: 'One indication of the degree of difference between *polis* and state lies in the fact that we cannot, and feel no pressure to, identify "state" and citizens in the way that the *polis* was felt to be co-extensive with the citizen body ... Modern conceptions of the state may extend beyond the citizen body, as in those which stress the state as a hierarchical socio-political organization, which will, of course, embrace disenfranchised as well as citizens; or it may be divorced from the citizen body, as in "the distinctively modern idea of the State as a form of public power separate from both the ruler and the ruled".' The quotation is taken from Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*. Cambridge, 1978, p. 254. Also see Arist. *Pol.* 1252b27ff., 1276b1–2ff. For other work on the *polis*, see e.g. Ehrenberg (1960); M. Finley (1983). Kolb (1979), 530 is blunt: 'Das Theater war "die Polis".'

Geoffrey Lloyd has called the potential for radical innovation, access to debate, the habit of scrutiny and the expectation of rational justification for positions held.[3] In the democracy, the widening of the franchise was more extreme, the right to speak openly more acceptable, and the politicization of discourse more complete. Tragedy was such a discourse. For it was not merely an art form. The Greeks had no obvious equivalent for our concept of art, and the cluster of words which together approximate to what we might consider to be art have different, often political origins, meanings and applications (e.g. *sophia* – wisdom or skill, *technē* – art or skill, *poiēsis* – creation or production). Tragedy was, in fact, an institution, 'a new type of spectacle in the system of the city-state's public festivals'.[4]

Although tragedies were performed at many festivals throughout Attica, the most important was the Great Dionysia.[5] While the very appearance of tragedy at a festival marks its public nature, the city was also directly involved in selecting and funding the plays. It was the Council (*Boulē*) which, along with one of the chief magistrates (the *archōn epōnumos*), selected those who would judge the contests of both poets and protagonists.[6] It was that same *archōn* who chose both which poets were to be allowed the honour of having their plays performed,[7] and the plays' sponsors (*chorēgoi*), who would train and support the chorus.[8] But tragedy is not only to be seen as a discourse whose production was a matter of public

[3] On the relations between the developments of Greek thought and politics, and the role played by such factors as slavery and literacy, see G. Lloyd (1979), 226–64, esp. p. 258; (1988). On the Greek invention of politics, see M. Finley (1983).

[4] Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1988), 23. At Athens there were probably twice as many festivals in the fifth century as in any other city; see Ps. Xen. *Ath. Pol.* 3.2; Thuc. 2.38.1.

[5] Taplin (1977), 17 reminds us of the passage in Plato (*Rep.* 475d) where Glaucon talks of theatre-lovers going to both City and Rural Dionysia to see as many plays as possible.

[6] Pickard-Cambridge (1968²), 96–7. Gregory (1991), 5–6 has carefully discussed the democratic aspects of the Great Dionysia. My treatment of the issue is therefore brief. Connor (1990) argues that the Great Dionysia was instituted after the Peisistratid regime and was closely bound to the democracy.

[7] Pickard-Cambridge (1968²), 84.

[8] On this and the various duties of a *chorēgos*, as well as on the probable selection of the choruses themselves, see Pickard-Cambridge (1968²), 71–99.

concern; it must also be viewed as reflecting the aims and methods of the democracy. First, tragedy was funded either directly by the *polis*, which paid the honorarium to competing poets, or through the system called the liturgy (the funding of state projects by private individuals, a sort of indirect taxation; in the case of tragedy, it was called the *chorēgia*).[9] The *chorēgia* almost matched the trierarchy in expense and would thus seem to be valued almost as highly as the defence of fatherland or the extension of empire.[10] Indeed, it might be said that the enforcement of the liturgy, as a system of finance, powerfully illustrates the political power of the poorer citizens (*dēmos* in one of its senses: Ps. Xen. *Ath. Pol.* 1.13).[11] There are five other ways in which the production of tragedy manifests public and democratic features. (1) The selection of the judges was organized through the ten tribes, thus reflecting the formation of the state; and its method was sortitive, the electoral method basic to the democracy. (2) It was possibly followed by a special assembly which discussed the conduct of the officials organizing the festival, thus maintaining the democratic notion of accountability. (3) Public records were kept of the festival, noting *archōn*'s name and the various prizes awarded.[12] (4) Just as jury pay had the effect of allowing the non-propertied to participate in the legal processes of the democracy, so Pericles' establishment of subsidized theatre tickets (the *theōrika*) enabled the poor to see the plays (Plut. *Per.* 9.2–3). (5) Generally the dramatic festival shared the competitive nature of the public sphere as a whole. Tragedy was agonistic, and both dramatists and protagonists competed for prizes, just like athletes in the Olympic games (Plut. *Cim.* 8.7–9).[13]

[9] For the *chorēgia*, as well as for the trierarchy, an element of compulsion is attested in the existence of *antidosis*, whereby a citizen who claimed insufficient funds could indicate others better placed to pay for a chorus or a ship. See Lysias 24.9; Xen. *Oec.* 7.3; Dem. 21.156. On liturgies and taxes in the Athenian democracy, see Ober (1989), 199ff.; Christ (1990).

[10] Most expensive dithyrambic chorus 5,000 dr.; most expensive tragic chorus 3,000 dr., for which see Lysias 21.1. The trierarchy is estimated to have cost about a talent (6,000 dr.) in the fifth century; see Pickard-Cambridge (1968²), 77–8, 87.

[11] See e.g. M. Finley (1983), 36–40.

[12] Pickard-Cambridge (1968²), 71–3.

[13] Pickard-Cambridge (1968²), 93ff.

Finally, and most importantly, the plays were massively attended. Pickard-Cambridge estimated the size of the audience to be between 14,000 and 17,000; Taplin 15,000.[14] The importance of such large numbers can be gleaned from a comparison with the probable attendance figures for the Assembly in the fifth century, apparently about 6,000.[15] It would seem, then, that the audiences at the Great Dionysia represented a considerably greater proportion of the citizen population than either the Assembly or the law courts, although we must remember that foreigners and other non-citizens were present.[16] Whether women were present remains a problem. The fifth-century – mainly Aristophanic – evidence appears inconclusive, although the presence of boys (*Clouds* 537–9; *Peace* 50–3, 765–6), metics and foreigners (*Ach.* 502–8), and, for the fourth century, even prisoners is attested (Dem. 22.68; Pl. *Laws* 637b). The later evidence is doubtful too. The story of pregnant women giving birth after seeing the first appearance of the Eumenides can probably be put down to a desire to describe the theatrical effect in an extreme way (*Life of Aeschylus* 9; Pollux 4.110). The evidence of Plato – that tragedy was merely rhetoric which would appeal only to slaves, children and women (*Gorg.* 502b–d; *Laws* 817c) – could be understood as simply an insulting reference to a hypothetical audience of the least discrimination. However, a recent article by Jeffrey Henderson persuasively argues that women were not excluded from the festival. Briefly his argument is this: since other types of non-citizen are present, why should women be absent? The festival was not only a political event but a religious one as well: ritual occasions tended to be more inclusive. The general lack of acknowledgement of women's presence and the conventional addressing of the audience as male may be explained by the difference between a notional audience

[14] Pickard-Cambridge (1968²), 236; Taplin (1977), 10.
[15] Hansen (1976); M. Finley (1983), 73ff. Hansen (1987), 14–18 makes the point that Athenian ideology regularly claimed that all citizens attended the Assembly meetings.
[16] Gregory (1991), 5. Henderson (1991), 145 speculates that citizens may have been outnumbered by non-citizens. This seems highly unlikely in the fifth century but may possibly have been true by Menander's time; see Wiles (1991), 15.

composed only of citizens and the actual one. Once these three arguments are accepted, what evidence there is of women's presence can be viewed more positively. Still, whether women attended the plays or not, the point remains that the audience was very large and did represent a significant proportion of the citizen body.[17]

The ceremonies which preceded the plays also demonstrate the political nature of the festival.[18] The generals, the highest officers of state, sacrificed to various deities; the tribute from the allies was displayed (there were representatives of those allies in the audience); crowns were awarded to citizens who had served the city conspicuously well; finally, there was a procession of the orphans of war, educated at state expense as far as adulthood. This celebration of democratic ideology – a festal equivalent of the Funeral Oration – has been well described by Goldhill: 'It was a demonstration before the city and its many international visitors of the power of the *polis* of Athens... It was a public display of the success in military terms of the city. It used the state to glorify the state.'[19] The Great Dionysia, then, to its audience of Athenians and allies alike, was a central event of civic discourse. The ceremonies show that civic discourse championing itself; they show the self-image of Athens at its most potent, but also at its most complex. For the tragedies which follow represent the tensions and ambiguities of the very ideology of which tragedy is a product.

An event of great civic importance in fifth-century Athens was also inevitably of religious significance. Just as Athens honours itself at the festival, so, unsurprisingly, it honours

[17] Henderson (1991). Henderson also argues that if women were present they would have been seated in a separate area.

[18] The evidence for the pre-play ceremonies is collected in Deubner (1959), 138–42; Pickard-Cambridge (1968²), 57ff. The significance of the ceremonies is discussed in detail in Goldhill (1987); Meier (1988), 62–74.

[19] (1987), 61. Meier (1988), 69–70 argues well that the ceremonies express the power of the Athenian state and the sacrifices which individuals must make in its service. Phalluses were also sent by the allies, 'the surrender of their masculine force to Athens' (Reckford (1987), 22). It should also be noted that the seating in the auditorium was divided into tribes, forming 'a kind of map of the civic corporations' (Winkler (1985), 30).

Dionysus. In the orchestra of the theatre stood the *thumelē*, the stone altar at which libations were offered to the god. The priest of Dionysus had a reserved seat. Before the festival in the theatre began, ephebes enacted the advent of Dionysus by carrying his statue from near where the Academy later stood to Eleutherae (where sacrifices were performed and hymns sung) and then back to the theatre.[20] But, even in antiquity, there was some consternation about the precise relation between Dionysus and tragedy, indeed between Dionysus and the *polis* (Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 1.1.5 [615a]). For, if 'tragedy could be said to be a manifestation of the city turning itself into theatre, presenting itself on stage before its assembled citizens',[21] then the connection between Dionysus and tragedy is one of political importance. Since the tragedies were performed in a context of ceremony which glorified Dionysus as well as the city, I think we have to assume that tragedy itself was a performance in honour of the god. But in order to understand more precisely what the relation between the god and the theatre was, it is necessary to look briefly at Dionysus and his religion.

There is no very good evidence about how Dionysus was worshipped or the nature of Greek Maenadism in fifth-century Attica. Five important features can be extracted from the scholarly discussions.[22] First, Dionysus' position among the Olympian gods is somewhat anomalous. He is often called a new god, or a late addition to the pantheon, or foreign to established Greek religion (whatever that may be), mainly because of his general absence from Homer.[23] Second,

[20] Pickard-Cambridge (1968²), 60–1; Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1988), 182.

[21] Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1988),185; see also Seaford (1984), 1ff. on the relations between Dionysus, satyr drama and tragedy. Winkler (1985), 51 believes that there was nothing Dionysiac about tragedy – see also Taplin (1978), 162 – which was performed instead 'to display the *polis*' finely tuned sense of discipline and impulse, of youth's incorporation into a competitive harmony of tribes and age classes. It so happens, *ex post facto*, that Dionysus can be seen as an appropriate patron for such a display.' This rather misses the point: whatever the origins of tragedy, what we are trying to explain is why Dionysus was an appropriate patron, *ex post facto* or otherwise.

[22] See e.g. Henrichs (1978), (1982), (1984); Daraki (1985).

[23] Farnell (1909), 85–9, 134; Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1986), 38–9, who also make the point that Dionysus is mentioned in the Linear B tablets.

although Dionysus had his effects on men – satyrs were male, drinking at the symposium and participation in the Dionysiac Mysteries were male activities – the most spectacular and subversive Dionysiac behaviour seems to have been perpetrated by women.[24] Perhaps, then, we should not be surprised by the number of transgressive and dangerous women in tragedy. Third, Dionysus is an ambivalent god, though perhaps polyvalent would be a better word. Commonly known as a god of wine, he is also attached to the fig (Ath. 78c);[25] by his association with wine, he stands as a god both of cultivation and of ecstasy and wildness. At his most potent, Dionysus is a god whose powers transgress cultural boundaries.[26] Fourth, Dionysus is a god who oversees a number of festivals. Apart from the Great Dionysia, we know about the Anthesteria, the Lenaia, the Rustic Dionysia and the Agrionia.[27] Finally, Dionysus, as one might expect of the god of the theatre, is a god associated with the mask. There is evidence which suggests that he was not always represented anthropomorphically and was sometimes worshipped as a mask hung on a pillar.[28]

All of the features described – the strangeness, the relation with women normally excluded from the public space of the city, the doubleness and ambivalence, the transgressiveness, the association with the mask – indicate a profound and appropriate relation between Dionysus and tragedy. The god of illusion, deception, ecstasy and transgression sits very well as the patron of the theatre. The relation of the god to the mask and the fact that Dionysus was always worshipped in theatrical ways[29] also stress the appropriateness of the relation. But

[24] Winnington-Ingram (1948), 155; Kraemer (1979).
[25] Farnell (1909), 118–20; Burkert (1985), 166.
[26] As C. Segal (1982), 4 puts it: 'The Dionysiac includes the dissolution of limits, the spanning of logical contradictions, the suspension of logically imposed categories, and the exploration of the inbetweenness and reversibility in spirit that may veer abruptly from play and wonder to unrestrained savagery.'
[27] Burkert (1985), 163; Deubner (1959), 93–123.
[28] Burkert (1985), 162; Foley (1985), 253; Calame (1986); Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1986), 38–9; Frontisi-Ducroux (1989); Adrados (1975), 256–7, 333 (Dionysus as 'the only god who retained mimetic characteristics').
[29] Goldhill (1986), 273: 'theatre is itself an essentially Dionysiac experience, where men play roles of others'; see also (1986), 78; (1987); Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1988), 181–206.

it is not only the attributes of the god which focus our attention on tragedy as Dionysiac; it is also the effect that his worship has on his followers.

Here, we are limited in what we can say because the evidence is slim and rests, for the most part, on Euripides' *Bacchae*. Still, it can be reasonably asserted that the Dionysiac involves an ecstatic loss of self, a transgression of mundane perceptions: 'The whole point of Dionysism [*sic*] ... is to become other oneself.'[30] One can see that the experience of watching strange fictional figures on stage, of identifying with some of those figures, of becoming involved in the drama, could be said to be Dionysiac. As Vernant has said, the connection between tragedy and Dionysus is based on the opening up of a 'new space in Greek culture, the space of the imaginary'.[31] Also important here is the fact that before the Great Dionysia a statue of Dionysus was carried to and from Eleutherae (later, certainly, by ephebes).[32] The enactment of the advent of Dionysus is of interest, not only because it marks one feature of the god, namely that he is always arriving from outside (unlike other gods), but also because it marks the city's attempted appropriation of this strange and troublesome divinity.[33] But this is always something of a problem. The festival attempts to incorporate the irrational elements embodied by Dionysus, and tries to present that incorporation as a successful taming of the wild god, attempts which are undermined by tragedy's representation of extreme transgression (e.g. Medea, Oedipus). This apparent inconsistency is especially sharp in the case of *Bacchae*, where the play 'denies what the ritual context affirms'.[34] A flux is established between the ritual and tragic Dionysus. But, then, that is not

[30] Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1988), 204. See also Simon (1978), 251–9; Detienne (1986); Bruit Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel (1992), 198.
[31] Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1988), 187; see also 205.
[32] Pickard-Cambridge (1968²), 59–61; Goldhill (1987), 59.
[33] Bérard and Bron (1986). For apparent Athenian reluctance to accept Dionysus initially, see sch. ad Ar. *Ach.* 243; though note that at Heraia Dionysus had the epithet *politēs*, and in Tralles, Teos and Magnesia, *dēmosios*; see Farnell (1909), 135.
[34] C. Segal (1982), 14; see also Seaford (1981).

inappropriate for the festival of Dionysus, which was a sacred and carnival time.[35] Modern study of the carnival, which began with Bakhtin, has something to offer.[36]

In the work of Bakhtin, the carnival is the scene of inversions and transgressions, the scene of the other; it 'challenges god, authority and social law'.[37] It 'plays its games in an inbetween time of temporary chaos and anarchy';[38] it is 'a populist, utopian vision of the world which provides through its inversions of hierarchy a critique of dominant culture'.[39] It is a place where prohibitions tend to disappear, and where culturally determined distinctions become problematic. But, in adopting this model of the carnivalesque festival, the language of critics has sometimes slipped into unnecessary hyperbole. Girard, for instance, claims that in a festival all distinctions are 'swept away', 'destroyed', 'effaced'.[40] If distinctions are effaced or destroyed – and it is not clear that they are – the effect is temporary. A happier description is that they are inverted, subverted or perverted. But the power of all these three processes depends on some persistence of the distinctions which are being so treated. Also, on the one hand, the carnivalesque is not uniquely Dionysian; and, on the other, not all festivals were modelled on carnivalesque reversal (e.g. the Panathenaea).[41] Indeed, Plato can even think of festivals as edifying public occasions without any hint of disorder (*Laws* 653c7ff.). When using the idea of carnival, we must be careful to be historically specific. Carrière has noted the carnivalesque origins of Dionysiac ritual but has quite rightly also insisted on its politicization in such festivals as the Great Dionysia.[42] While the Bakhtinian model sees carnival as the inversion of hierarchy, this cannot quite apply to the Great

[35] Reckford (1987), 20.
[36] There is a very good discussion of Bakhtin in White and Stallybrass (1986). See now Goldhill (1991), 176–88 on the application of Bakhtin to fifth-century Attic comedy.
[37] Kristeva (1981), 79–80.
[38] Reckford (1987), 100–1; see also Adrados (1975), 371–4.
[39] Goldhill (1991), 178.
[40] Girard (1977), 126–8; Foley (1985), 234 uses similar terminology.
[41] Adrados (1975), 245; Buxton (1987), 199.
[42] Carrière (1979), 22ff.; see also Goldhill (1991), 182–3.

Dionysia, where authority and hierarchy were explicitly celebrated and where the audience – the citizen body – represents authority.[43] Still, the emphasis on challenge and inversion taking place at a special time is useful for the study of tragedy. To describe carnival at its most general, we can say that it is a challenging and festive release from the everyday, from the self. Tragedy, with its transport of the audience into a fictional world of role-playing, masks and the transgressive behaviour of figures from another time and place, offers such a release.

I believe that approaching tragedy as civic discourse is fruitful, and that stressing its significance as a specific discourse arising out of a specific politics and religion different from our own will yield something more interesting than the reduction of tragedy to a literary form.[44] More was – and is – at stake than such traditional interests of literary criticism as the unity of the text, or the consistency of the author's use of imagery. And the Athenian audience was probably aware of this too. For it was blessed – some would say burdened – with a degree of political responsibility which most of us will never experience.[45]

Without taking on board the conclusions drawn by Marxists about the production of literature,[46] one can assert that to ask about the production of tragedy helps to evaluate its nature as a discourse of the *polis*. By production I mean

[43] Goldhill (1991), 176–88.

[44] Heath (1989) argues, rightly, that we must be careful not to impose anachronistic categories of thematic unity on classical texts. He claims to find, principally in Plato and Aristotle, that, in fact, the Greeks had a 'centrifugal' rather than 'centripetal' notion of unity. However, Plato and Aristotle are not necessarily (or even probably) representative of a fifth-century consensus about the unity of works of literature. Nor is it self-evident (and Heath has no fifth-century evidence) that the 'coherence' of a work of literature (Heath's initial alternative) is applicable to tragedy. Also, the application of the term 'literature' to tragedy (which Heath maintains) could be as anachronistic as the search for a particular idea of unity; see Loraux (1986), 245; Longo (1990).

[45] This is the emphasis of M. Finley's work; see (1973), (1983). Goldhill (1987), 69 rightly warns that we must not be tempted to construct a uniform, homogeneous audience response.

[46] I.e. that literature must compete in a market, that it is a form of social and economic production and a producer of wealth for its publisher; see Williams (1977); Macherey (1978); Macherey and Balibar (1981). There were, of course, no publishers in fifth-century Athens; see Baldry (1971), 6ff.; Knox (1985).