between the old, traditional ways and the new requirements of the new political order, the tragedies produced in the city seem to draw on the vocabulary, issues, and power struggles of that developing civic language. Tragedy's moment, tragedy's force, is in the articulation of the struggles of the city's discourse.

The festival of the Great Dionysia, then, whatever its origins, has a special role in democratic Athens. Before the citizen body, the city's discourse was treated to the radical critique of tragedy, its divisions and tensions were explored. After the tragedies, the satyr play offered the immediate explosive gratification of buffoonery and ribaldry which led to the afternoon's comedy. There, too, in humour the city approached itself through transgression. In the fantastic plots of political and sexual reversal, in the *parabasis* where the comic poet stepped out of line to address his fellow citizens, in the lampooning of political figures, in the free play of obscenity and aggression, we see how the special circumstances of Dionysus' festival offer licence to escape the normal restrictions and delimitations of the ordered social life of the city. In comedy, you can do precisely what is normally not allowed. Although both comedy and tragedy involve Dionysiac freedom, comedy seems to flaunt the rules with more final safety than tragedy. Rather than the tragic conclusions of dissolution and death, error and disorder, its reversals and overturnings lead more to the other Dionysiac world of eating, drinking and liberated sexuality – pleasures attained, desires fulfilled.

But the two faces of Dionysus form the one festival: the tensions and ambiguities that tragedy and comedy differently set in motion, the tensions and ambiguities that arise in the transition from tragedy to comedy, all fall under the aegis of the one god, the divinity of illusion and change, paradox and ambiguity, release and transgression. Unlike the displays of civic rhetoric we have seen in such set pieces as Pericles' funeral speech over the citizens fallen in war, the Great Dionysia, Dionysus' festival for the city, offers a full range of Dionysiac transgression from the intellectually and emotionally powerful and dangerous tragedy, through ironic and subtle questioning, to the obscene, scatological uproarious comedy. The drama festival offers not just the powers and profundity of a great literature but also the extraordinary process of the developing city putting its own developing language and structures of thought at risk under the sway of the smiling and dangerous Dionysus.

4 · RELATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS

> If I had the choice between betraying my country and betraying my friend I hope I should have the courage to betray my country.
>
> E. M. FORSTER

In the last two chapters I have considered first how a series of terms concerned with civic order and relations within the city is placed at risk in the tragic arena, and secondly, in more general terms, how the city itself constitutes a specific ideology as well as a specific social organization. Now in this chapter I am going to investigate a particularly important system of ideas concerned with relations between people in the city and family, a system which is especially difficult for the modern reader to determine, namely, the notions constituting and surrounding the adjectives *philos* and *ekhthros*. I have left these terms untranslated as yet because part of the problem for the modern reader is the extensive semantic range of these and related terms, not just in the way that words in different languages are rarely coextensive in connotation, but also in the way that the force and direction of usage in this case are so varied. In much the same manner as one can say in English 'Shoshana loves ice-cream' and 'Juliet loves Romeo' to imply with the same word quite a different force and direction of emotion, so *philos* is a common term of address between the characters of a Platonic dialogue, where it is often translated 'my dear fellow' and the like, but at the same time *philos* is also used in the *Oresteia* to indicate the emotional relationship between Clytemnestra and her adulterer, Aegisthus, which Orestes despises and puts as a cause of her necessary death when he cries 'Die then, and sleep beside him, since he is the man you love (*philein*) / and he who you should have loved (*philein*) got only your hate' (*Cho.* 906–7).

As is clear from the above, one dictionary definition of the verb *philein* is 'love', apparently in the sexual or psychological sense that 'love' may be used today. Indeed, since the normal Homeric Greek for sexual intercourse is *philoteti migenai* 'to mix together in love' (*philotes*, a noun formed from *philos*) and *philema* (another noun formed from *philos*) means 'kiss', it is clear that this sexual sense is woven into the semantic range of the term. But to suggest that as a form of address *philos*, 'my dear chap', is somehow a weakened form

of the heady expressions of love (as one might with the sentence 'Shoshana loves ice-cream') would be seriously to distort the sense of the term *philos*. It might be more apposite to compare the meaning in a Victorian context of a sentence such as 'a daughter should love her father', where the connotations of 'duty', 'propriety', and 'devotion' with a backing of religious conviction come closer to many uses of the term *philos* and its opposite *ekhthros*. For as we will see, the values of these terms of sentiment cannot be separated from a range of social concepts and there is no English word or institution which can express the range of relationships implied.

To begin an investigation of these terms, I shall first have to go back to Homer (as so often in any study of Greek literature) and in this case I shall be following the guidance of the brilliant French scholar of linguistics E. Benveniste.[1] He begins by noting that in Homer all the vocabulary of moral terminology is strongly permeated with a force that is not personal but *relational*. What we often take as psychological or ethical vocabulary indicates rather a series of relations between the individual and the members of his group. This can be interestingly seen in the close connection made in Homer between the adjectives *philos* and *aidoios*, which often occur as a linked doublet in Homeric diction, as do the corresponding verbs *philein* and *aideisthai* and nouns *philotes* and *aidos*. Now the noun *aidos* is normally translated 'respect', 'shame', or 'reverence', and it is used particularly with regard to the proper attitudes to take towards members of one's own family or group. When a member of the group is in some way threatened or attacked by another member, it is *aidos*, 'shame', which may be appealed to both to prevent the outrage, and, if the outrage has taken place, to rally the other members of the group to assert its collective morality in revenge. In the wider context of the community at large *aidos* expresses a notion of the suitable maintenance and expression of the hierarchical bonds of association: 'Within a much larger community, *aidos* defines the sentiment felt by superiors towards their inferiors (regard, pity, mercy, sympathy in misfortunes etc.) as well as honour, loyalty, collective propriety, the prohibition of certain acts, of certain modes of behaviour – and it develops finally to the several senses of "modesty" and "shame".'[2]

The close connection between *philos* and this notion of respect, reverence helps to gloss in particular the relational aspect of the term *philos*: 'Relatives, "in-laws", servants, friends, all those who are linked by reciprocal duties of *aidos* are called *philoi*.'[3] *Philos* is used to indicate people linked by a bond of

[1] 1973. Some of Benveniste's conclusions were anticipated by Adkins 1963.
[2] Benveniste 1973, 278.
[3] Ibid.

'respect' in the community and here clearly implies a wider notion than one purely of sentiment.

The term *xenos* can help in a similar way to show how *philos* is concerned with reciprocal relations in society. *Xenia*, the bond between a *xenos* and a *xenos*, is an extremely important notion in Greek society of all periods. *Xenos* means both 'guest' and 'host' (a problem of translation in English, though less so in French where *hôte* has a similar sense); *xenia* is the regulated tie of 'guest-friendship' between stranger and householder. This is not just a question of polite rules between people, but an essential functioning of ancient society. The condition of a man in a foreign country or city, away from his friends and own family, was one of considerable risk. For 'human beings have no rights *qua* human beings in Homer, only in virtue of some definite relationship'.[4] The man away from his *oikos*, without rights, was without all protection and without any means of livelihood. The appeal to *xenia* was his only manner of proceeding, and a tie of *xenia* was passed on between families throughout generations. In a famous scene in the *Iliad*, two warriors, Glaucus and Diomedes, are about to fight when through the proud exchange of names and titles they discover that they have an inherited bond of *xenia* from their grandparents and thus instead of exchanging blows they exchange armour on the battlefield as a reassertion of that bond – an exchange that becomes legendary for its foolishness on Glaucus' part, since his armour was gold and Diomedes' was bronze and worth far less. But their tie of *xenia* proves stronger on the battlefield than their military opposition in war.

The exchange of gifts between *xenos* and *xenos* is the visible instantiation of the ties of reciprocity, and the collecting of such gifts is one of the distinguishing marks of the Homeric world, particularly as viewed through the travels of Odysseus in the *Odyssey*. Indeed, the theme of the treatment of guests[5] is played through many variations in that epic from the Cyclops' ironic offer to Odysseus that for a guest-gift he should be eaten last, to Odysseus' appearance as a disguised guest in his own house. The treatment of a *xenos* functions as a criterion between the different societies Odysseus visits, as his own playing of various guest roles goes toward the development of his character.

There are many close verbal links between *philos* and *xenos* and between the verbs *philein* and *xenizein*. Indeed, *philein*, which we have been translating as 'love', 'feel affection for', 'be friendly to', often has to be translated as 'play the role of host', 'give proper treatment to a guest'.[6] So Benveniste writes 'the notion of *philos* expresses the behaviour incumbent on a member of the

[4] Adkins 1963, 33. [5] Cf. Stewart 1976, passim.
[6] Cf. e.g. *Il.* 3.207, 6.15; *Od.* 8.208, 4.29.

community towards a *xenos*, the "guest-stranger" '.[7] Indeed, Benveniste has argued further that this relation of reciprocity between a *xenos* and *xenos* is the basic institutional foundation of the notion of *philos*. So, to be 'loved' of the gods is to be shown the regards and favours due to a *philos*, and we see the reciprocity of a military truce called a *philotes* (*Il.* 3.94) and accompanied with solemn exchange of vows and sacrifices. So the 'kiss' (*philema*) is a kiss first of recognition, greeting and acceptance. The notion of *philos* goes far beyond the sentiment of love or friendship. Indeed, as Adkins writes,[8] *philos* 'need not be accompanied by any friendly feelings at all'.

Philos, then, in these links with *aidos* and *xenos*, marks the close links between the head of the household and strangers as well as the members of the extended family itself. The mutual relationship entails a certain form of affection or at any rate a certain form of 'affectionate action' which is obligatory between two *philoi*, and thus there may grow an emotional colouring to the term *philos* through which a sense of feeling may develop beyond the bounds of the institution. The appellation *philos* is applied by the master of the house to all relations living in his *oikos*, and it is especially applied to his wife, who has been brought in as a stranger, as an object of exchange. Indeed, *philos* is one of the commonest adjectives applied in the Homeric poems to words for 'spouse', but 'dear', its usual translation, scarcely renders its connotations. The young girl who is given by her father to the young husband is a sign and means of a relation of reciprocity between households, and is a newcomer to her husband's household and family. As such, the term *philos* marks not only the tie of affection between husband and wife, but also the bonds and agreements of a social interaction.

Philos, then, may be summed up from these usages as a way of marking a person's position in society by his relationships.[9] The appellation or categorization *philos* is used to mark not just affection but overridingly a series of complex obligations, duties and claims. Although in fourth-century Greek, say, it may develop towards a more general notion of friendship or love that Dover describes as the 'affection strong or weak which can be felt for a sexual partner, a child, an old man, a friend or colleague',[10] in Homer it seems to have this wealth of connotations and expressiveness, and in fifth-century Athens, as we will see, it is a term closely involved with the development of a civic discourse, precisely because of the shifting of a person's sense of position in society and the shifting of relationships in the development of the fifth-century *polis*.[11] Rather than translating *philos* differently in the many

[7] Benveniste 1973, 288. [8] 1963, 36. See also Hands 1968, 26–48, especially 33.
[9] Benveniste also argues conclusively against the common translation of 'one's own' for some uses of *philos* in Homer. See especially 275ff.
[10] 1974, 212. [11] See Connor 1971, 3–136.

places that it will be referred to in the following discussion, I shall transliterate it in order to maintain some sense of this 'complex network of associations, some with institutions of hospitality, other with usages of the home, still others with emotional behaviour'.[12]

An *ekhthros*, as I have said, is the opposite of a *philos* – an 'enemy'. As much as *philos* implies positive ties and obligations, *ekhthros* implies equally binding requirements to be disobliging. This relationship may perhaps seem difficult for a 'modern mind' to conceive. Dover remarks 'while few of us nowadays can expect that no-one will ever deliberately do us harm, few of us expect to be involved for long in a relationship deserving the name of enmity, and a man who spoke of "my enemies" could fairly be suspected of paranoia'[13] – and that from a man well versed in academic politics! In Athens, however, *ekhthros* indicates a personal enemy (rather than an enemy in war), and such hatred is taken very much for granted as a fact of life. Like a bond of *philos*, enmity can be inherited through the generations, and long-standing feuds with accompanying provocation and retaliation can be discerned in many of the speeches from surviving law-cases. Indeed, such enmity was not only rarely disguised but also brazenly flaunted. Athene herself expresses to Odysseus in Sophocles' *Ajax* a far from strange or unpleasant sentiment when she says 'But to laugh at your enemies (*ekhthros*), what sweeter laughter can there be than that?' (79). *Philos* and *ekhthros*, then, are key terms for expressing in Greek the conjunctions and disjunctions of social intercourse, the interplay of relationships between people.

Now one of the main reasons why *philos* may be thought to retain a good deal of its force as a word involving a series of connotations concerning obligations is the fact that it is constantly used as a term in moral discussions or judgements. Aristotle in a famous and lengthy section of his *Nicomachean Ethics* attempts a definition of the word,[14] and in Plato's *Republic* the search for the just city starts as a matter of course from discussion and criticism of the position that justice is to be conceived of as doing good to one's *philos* and bad to one's *ekhthros*. For unlike any Judaeo-Christian notion of loving one's neighbour or turning the other cheek, perhaps the most basic and generally agreed position with regard to correct behaviour in the ancient world was 'to love one's friend and to hate one's enemy', that is, *philein philous ekhthairein ekhthrous*. The principle is seen throughout the range of Greek writing and is certainly not limited either to philosophical debate or to popular morality. Indeed, it is often an assumed common point in verbal exchanges in the tragedies I am considering in this book. For example, as Electra is preparing to offer prayer at the tomb of Agamemnon in the *Choephoroi*, she is concerned

[12] Benveniste 1973, 288. [13] 1974, 181. [14] Books 8 and 9 (1155a3ff.).

as to whether it is pious to pray for revenge (122). The chorus reply 'How could it not be pious to repay your *ekhthros* with evil?' (123). The chorus' assumption of the morality of 'do good to your *philos*, do bad to your *ekhthros*' offers for them a simple and direct justification of the prayer for revenge. At the same time, however, such a justification fails to take into account the fact that Clytemnestra is Electra's mother and thus must be treated as a *philos* by her daughter. Much of the build-up towards the matricide is concerned with the necessary redefinition of Clytemnestra as a possible *ekhthros* and impossible *philos*. For it is in strife within the family that the possible tensions in the traditional moral position are most clearly seen. At what point can members of one's own family cease to be *philos*?

At the extremely dramatic moment of tension before the matricide, Orestes asks 'Pylades, what am I to do? Am I to feel shame (*aidos*) to kill my mother?'. Is it possible not to feel *aidos* for one's mother and thus not treat her as a *philos*? Pylades answers with the only lines he speaks, which, as Kitto comments, come 'with the effect of a thunderclap':[15] 'What then becomes thereafter of the oracles declared by Apollo at Delphi? What of trusted oaths? Count all hateful (*ekhthros*) rather than the gods.' In answer to Orestes' question about *aidos*, Pylades offers a hierarchy of the relations of *philos* and *ekhthros*: the gods have priority. It is better to treat all, including your mother, as *ekhthros* rather than the gods. The tie of *philos* between mother and child is to be overcome. Thus the agents of matricide authorize themselves or are authorized by the divine. It is in the following speech, Orestes' acceptance of Pylades' pronouncement, that we read the lines that I have already quoted in this chapter, though now the insufficiency of the translation 'love' will be clear: 'Die then, and sleep beside him since he is the man you love (*philein*) / and he whom you should have loved (*philein*) got only your hate' (906–7). Following Pylades' authorization of the matricide in terms of *philos* and *ekhthros*, Orestes stresses the corruption of the ties of *philos* that his mother's adultery constitutes, her corruption of her social position and obligations as a wife – as he himself is forced to transgress that tie of *philos* between mother and son in order to rectify her transgression. Such are the paradoxical reversals of the tragic text of the *Oresteia* as the language of kinship attempts to deal with the family at war with itself.

It is interesting in this light to recall the recognition scene which follows Electra's prayer for revenge. Recognition plays an extremely important function in society and language. The systems of categorization of kinship, morality, social exchange depend on recognition not just in the epistemological sense that recognition is an inherent part of any process of categorization,

[15] 1961, 86.

but also in the more normative sense that a father recognizes a child as his own, or a state recognizes some institution's authority: recognition is also a process of legitimizing. It is not, then, by chance that in the tragic texts which so often revolve around uncertainty as to the legitimacy of particular relationships or obligations in the sphere of family relations and civic duties we see so many 'recognition scenes'. For these scenes – regarded by Aristotle as one of the two most powerful types of scene in tragic plots (*Poet.* 1450a32–4) – dramatize not just the moment of a sentimental rediscovery of a family member, but also the reaffirmation of the legitimacy or obligations of a particular tie. As much as the tragic texts seem so often to challenge the position of an individual in society, so the 'recognition scene' in different ways in different plays reasserts a relationship between people. Recognition is always of a *philos*, of a tie between *philos* and *philos*. As Clytemnestra must be redefined as an *ekhthros* through Electra's prayer and the following scenes of the *Choephoroi*, so we see the significance of the recognition scene between Electra and Orestes as reasserting a particular family tie between the children, set against the doubts and uncertainties surrounding their relationships with their parents. And as we have seen in Chapter 2, these family struggles lead towards the trial before the city's elders and the institutions of civic justice. *Philos* and *philia*, the bond between a *philos* and *philos*, as they mark relations of reciprocity and respect in the family and city, are constantly in play with the wider markings of the discourse of power and authority in society.

The texts of Sophocles often revolve around tensions in the morality of 'do good to your *philos* and do bad to your *ekhthros*', as indeed they regularly focus on conflicting claims of obligation in terms of *philos* and *ekhthros*. The *Ajax*, for example, opens with the situation of the hero Ajax having turned against the Greek army for whom he was previously a tower of strength, because they voted the honour of the prize of the arms of Achilles to Odysseus in preference to himself. With the sword of his erstwhile enemy, Hector, he has gone on the rampage, only to be tricked of his plan to kill the commanders of the Greek army by Athene, who has distorted his sense of sight. Ajax's consort, Tecmessa, explains the situation to the chorus of men from Ajax's ships, and she exhorts them to try and help their lord if they can; for he may listen to *philoi* (330). But as Ajax comes back to his wits, he decides his only recourse to preserve his honour and self-esteem is suicide. His reasoning is worth noting (457–69):

> And now Ajax – what is to be done now?
> I am hated (*ekhth-*) by the gods, that's plain, the Greek camp detests me.
> Troy and the ground I stand upon detest (*ekhth-*) me.
> Shall I go, then, from this place where the ships ride,

desert the Atreidae, and cross the Aegean to my home?
But when I'm there
what countenance can I show to my father, Telamon? . . .
. . . Shall I rush against the walls of Troy . . .
join with them all in single combat, do
some notable exploit and find my death in it?
But that might give some comfort to the sons of Atreus . . .

He sees his position as being an *ekhthros* to all. Athene's prevention of the success of his plan of murder marks clearly his position with regard to the divine; his plan itself was a sign of his hatred of the Greeks who had dishonoured him, and now that his plan has been made clear, he is himself matched with reciprocated enmity; and the Trojans against whom he has been fighting are in no way to be termed *philos*. Ajax, as well as being deprived of honour, has been deprived of the relationships of support and sustenance by which his position of honour in society was determined. He cannot even kill himself by killing Trojans lest it should in some way help his *ekhthroi*, the Atreidae – do good to your friends, but always harm your enemies.

Tecmessa in the moving speech which follows not only marks the total dependence of the family and community on the head of the household, but also shows the interrelations of terms of the dependence. For she appeals to her man to 'revere (*aidos*) your father . . . and revere (*aidos*) your mother'. The restraint she urges in the appeal to *aidos* also stresses the force of the mutual relations of *philia* between members of the household and particularly between the head of the household and his *oikos*. It is such ties that Ajax rejects.

In the famous 'deception' scene, Ajax appears to have relented, as in a speech constructed around a series of highly ambiguous statements he reflects on the changeability of things in a way quite alien to his previously obdurate attitude. The concluding section of this reflection concerns precisely the limits of the rigid opposition of *philos* and *ekhthros* (678–82):

. . . Have I not learnt this,
only so much to hate (*ekhth-*) my enemy (*ekhthros*)
as though he might again become my friend (*phil-*),
and so much good to wish to do my friend (*philos*),
as knowing he may not always stay so.

These lines echo Odysseus' earlier unwillingness to laugh at his *ekhthros* (121–6), and look forward, as we will see, to the final scenes of the play where the correct attitude towards an enemy is what is at stake. Despite (or perhaps because of) this insight into the changeability of things, Ajax is next seen on stage alone and about to kill himself. It is extremely rare in our extant

tragedies for a chorus to leave the stage in the course of a play, and this is the only occasion that I know of in our corpus of plays in which a mortal blow is struck on stage. For all the bloody and murderous stories of Greek myth that make up the stuff of Attic drama, in tragedy violence is verbal. The solitude of Ajax, as he turns his sword inward on himself, matches his desertion of the external ties of *aidos* and *philia*, as he has been rejected by the enmity of his surroundings. The self-destruction of Ajax is the concluding act of the stripping of the relations by which his self was defined.

The final scenes of the play are concerned with the treatment of Ajax's corpse. The body of an *ekhthros* may be tossed aside unburied for the dogs and birds to eat, whereas proper burial is the due care of *philoi*. Time and again in the *Iliad* the Greeks and Trojans fight over a corpse, and the final scenes of that epic are Priam's mission to recover from Achilles the mutilated corpse of his son, Hector, and bury it. Teucer, Ajax's brother, is the defender of his *philos* in the face of the Greek leaders. First, Menelaus, outraged that Ajax has turned out to be a worse enemy (*ekhth-*) than the Trojans (1054–5), exchanges violent words with Teucer, and then Agamemnon with an authoritarian argument demands obedience to his supreme command. Into this deadlocked debate Odysseus, who was previously Ajax's worst enemy, injects his own brand of rhetoric. Appealing all the while to his bond of *philia* with Agamemnon (e.g. 1327–8, 1351, 1353), he sets a series of moral qualities above the rigidity of opposition of *philos* and *ekhthros*. For him Ajax was 'good' (1345), 'noble' (1355), 'great' (1357) and these qualities outweigh his enmity. Finally, Agamemnon agrees (1371) out of respect for his *philos*, Odysseus, to let happen precisely what he said he would not let happen – namely, to allow the body to be buried. But he leaves it in no doubt how he regards Ajax (1372–3):

But as for him, whether on earth or in the underworld
he will be nonetheless the most hated (*ekhth-*) to me

Agamemnon will not accept any shifting in the way he terms Ajax but none the less changes his attitude to him. He no longer must do harm to even this most *ekhthros* man. The interchange between Agamemnon and Odysseus, then, not only marks Odysseus' undercutting of the rigid determination of the opposition of *philos* and *ekhthros*, but also introduces an uncertainty into the rigid application of the moral position of 'Do harm to your *ekhthros* and good to your *philos*.' And this argument takes place between two men professing the greatest *philia* for one another as a basis for their exchange of views!

The final irony of this play remains, however. Odysseus, professing his change of attitude towards Ajax, requests to be allowed to help with the burial

as a *philos*. But Teucer, while recognizing Odysseus as an unexpected and necessary benefactor, will not allow his assistance in the rite. For it may not be wanted by the dead man. Teucer will not accept on Ajax's behalf the shifting of *philia*, even though he calls Odysseus a good and noble man – the very terms by which Odysseus avoided the rigidity of determination of *philos* and *ekhthros* and procured the permission for burial. Odysseus replies with touching simplicity 'Well, I wanted to . . . But if it isn't *philos* to you for me to do this, I'll go, respecting your decision' (1400–1). *Philos* is here normally translated 'pleasing', 'dear', but after the debate concerning the implications of precisely *philos* and *ekhthros* and considering its use as a criterion for permission to take part in the burial rites (cf. 1413–14), it sounds an ironic echo of the doubts and changeability of its sense, particularly in juxtaposition to Teucer's refusal of Odysseus' offer of *philia*. The apparent simplicity of *philos* here ironically recalls the complexities of its meanings and implications in the play. The close of the play rather than reconciling all the strands and oppositions of *philos* and *ekhthros* ends in ironic juxtaposition and a recollection of the fracturing and dislocation of any traditional certainty as to the sense and force of the terms.

I have attempted to show, then, in these very broad outlines how a concern for the sense of *philos* and *ekhthros* is an essential dynamic of the *Ajax*. For the remainder of this chapter, I intend to look in more detail at these terms in the *Antigone*, which will offer us a further insight into the specific fifth-century nature of the workings of tragedy and the importance of *philos* and *ekhthros* as terms defining the individual's role in society.

Since Hegel's reading of the play, it has been difficult not to consider the text of the *Antigone* in terms of dialectic and opposition. Even critics who have added important qualifications to Hegel's interpretation have felt, like Reinhardt, that conflict in this play 'emerges finally as a kind of "dialectic" in spite of everything'.[16] The arguments between Creon and Antigone have been seen as struggles of right against right, idea against idea, individual against society, family against state, feminine against masculine, divine law against secular order, or, to give Reinhardt's formulation, 'on the one side, we have what is to our way of thinking a very diverse collection – family, cult, love for one's brother, divine command, youthfulness and unselfishness to the point of self-sacrifice; and on the other side, imperiousness, the maxims of the state, the morality of the *polis*, pettiness, rigidity, narrowness of heart, the blindness of age, insistence on the letter of the law to the point of breaking a divine commandment'.[17] As we will see, many of the terms of Reinhardt's description will need some modification, but already the juxtaposition of, say, 'unselfishness to the point of self-sacrifice' and the 'blindness of age' could itself be set in opposition to another juxtaposition of 'the self-destructiveness of youthful excess' and 'the wisdom of age overturned by fate and circumstance' which is how some other critics have characterized the clash of Antigone and Creon. It is difficult, in other words, to read the *Antigone* without making not only moral judgements but the sort of one-sided moral judgements that the play itself seems to want to mark as leading to tragedy. Indeed, as one could see from D. A. Hester's catalogue[18] of many such judgements with their proposers and opposers, to write a history of the interpretations of the *Antigone* would itself rapidly approach the questions of dialectic and opposition, authority and challenge![19]

The tendency of critical judgements to mirror the distorted and distorting idealisms of the play is given an extra twist for twentieth-century readers by the story of Anouilh's version of *Antigone*. This apparently subversive work was given permission to be performed in Paris during the German occupation of the Second World War, since Creon's appeals to law and order were thought sufficiently appealing by the authorities. Where politics and literature are so intertwined it becomes difficult to read without implicating oneself in the dialectic. It is always interesting to see for which readers Antigone is a noble idealist, a defender of individual liberties, a misguided, hysterical woman, an instrument of fate . . .

In choosing to approach the complexities of this play's debates through the notions of *philos* and *ekhthros*, which may seem at first sight a somewhat narrow opening to such poetry, I am aware that there is an apparent claim to approach the play through a Greek conceptual system rather than nineteenth-century metaphysics. It is true that I hope to avoid talking in terms of the clash of Will and Will or Idea and Idea, words which seem today to have less purchase on the fifth century B.C. But this is not to say that through such an approach a homogeneous, univocal response of the Original Audience can be reached or postulated. As much as critics of the past centuries cannot but be implicated in the dialectic of the play's dislocations and tensions, so it would appear that the postulation of a uniform body, The Audience, with a univocal response cannot but mirror Creon's and Antigone's and Haemon's assertions of the support of the whole city in their actions. Can the appeal to what The Audience (The City, The People) must have felt or believed be more than a gesture of appropriation to support a critical view? Why should a critic want to

[16] 1979, 66.

[17] 1979, 65. See Rosivach 1979; Hogan 1972 for extended treatments of the world of Creon and the world of Antigone. See also Knox 1964, 76–90; Musurillo 1967, 37–60.

[18] 1971, passim. He notes that while it was normal to leave a traitor's body unburied, the body would normally be left beyond the boundaries of one's own territory to avoid pollution. The tensions of the play are emphasized by having Polyneices' body left on the land of the city.

[19] For one form of such a history, see now Steiner 1984.

assume that Athenian society of the fifth century was so lacking in internal tensions, so without differences, so without the interplay of social forces that faced with a play which depicts a complex challenge to the order of things it would react, unlike so many critics since, with common accord and recognition? Is it inevitable that Sophocles' questioning of human certainty, authority, and knowledge should merely give rise to critics' assertions of certainty, authority, knowledge?

It is, then, more to determine the terms in which judgement might have been made than to decide on the judgement or judgements reached that I approach the play through the language of *philos* and *ekhthros*. As we saw in the *Ajax*, while *philos* and *ekhthros* may imply a moral imperative, the force, direction and application of that imperative may be far from fixed or certain.

The opening speech of Antigone immediately marks her concern with *philos* and *ekhthros*. Her address to Ismene in the first line strongly emphasizes the family connection. She uses a strengthened form of the word for sister, 'very sister', 'sister with the same mother and father', and an adjective implying both this joint link and also a common bond of interest through kinship. The translation of Jebb 'Ismene, my sister, mine own dear sister' captures the stress more than Wyckoff's 'my sister, my Ismene'. Antigone concludes her emotional questions to Ismene with 'Or don't you know that the foes' (*ekhthros*) trouble comes upon our friends (*philos*)' (9–10). Creon's proclamation is expressed by Antigone precisely in terms of its treatment of *philos* and *ekhthros*.

Ismene's response is interesting. Picking up Antigone's use of *philos*, she says first that she has had no news of their *philoi*, since the loss of their two brothers, Polyneices and Eteocles, who killed each other in combat the day before. This would appear to imply the tie of blood linking the four children of Oedipus as *philoi*, the claim which Antigone will go on to make regularly. But Ismene continues 'And since the Argive army went away this very night, I have no further news of fortune or disaster for myself.' The Argive army refers to the force led by Polyneices which was besieging the city. Her reference to the opposing military forces after her mention of her brother implies the wider political scenario of enemies and allies in which the family of Oedipus is involved. She widens the possible connotations of Antigone's 'news about *philoi*' away from the family alone.

As the argument between the two sisters proceeds, this juxtaposition of family ties and city politics is developed. Ismene's first reaction to Antigone's plan is the surprised question (44):

> Do you actually mean to bury him, when the city's forbidden it?

To which Antigone replies (45–6):

> My brother and yours, though you wish he were not.
> I shall never be found to be his traitor.

The term 'traitor', so often applied in the circumstances of the city in war is used in relation to what is hers and Ismene's, their brother. This tie Antigone opposes to the authority of the city. Ismene adds to her argument the dictates of the commander, their uncle, Creon (47):

> Ah! Too bold! When Creon has forbidden it?

But Antigone again places what is her own above the word of the king (48):

> It is not for him to keep me from my own.

In my discussion of the Homeric sense of *philos*, I argued that *philos* was used to express the relations of the individual with regard to the society of the *oikos*, or between *oikos* and *oikos*, or between man and god. These relations were closely involved with the notion of the individual Homeric hero, the household head, and with the establishment of the self-reliant *oikos* as the socio-economic unit *par excellence* of the Homeric world. It is in this sense of self-reliance that Antigone can appeal to what is hers and to a freedom to ignore a centralized, democratic or autocratic authority. As Achilles in the *Iliad* is at liberty simply to down arms and refuse to fight, or as Telemachus when he calls the council of Ithaca at the beginning of the *Odyssey*, is convening for only the first time in nearly twenty years this conglomeration of family heads, so Antigone asserts her dependence on her own, her own relationships, her own power, her own authority. It is not simply – though to a good degree – a question of kin and family, so much as a question of the individual, the self, in society. For what Ismene places against Antigone's basis of action in a long speech of persuasion (49–68) is the self-destructive inwardness of their particular family, the dependence of women on the authority of men, and the need to obey those in authority – a network of relations beyond the simple definition of 'one's own' which suggests quite a different positioning for the sisters. For Ismene, to be a woman in the city is to be set in a range of dependent relationships.

As we will see, this is the first of a series of challenges to Antigone's self-reliance. For in democratic Athens, an essential demand of the ideology of city life is the mutual interdependence of *citizens*. I emphasize 'citizens' because with that term comes a host of assumptions and qualifications lacking in the Homeric poems. As we saw in the previous chapter, and will see again from a different perspective in Chapter 6, the individual man is

related to other men in the city in ways quite alien to any Homeric ethos:[20] fighting together in the hoplite citizen army, voting together in policy and legal matters, taking part in community religious expressions, having communal social ties which cross simple family groupings. So Pericles is made to say in Thucydides: 'we do not say that a man who takes no interest in the affairs of the city is a man who minds his own business, we say that he has no business here at all' (2.40). Being a part of the city requires taking part in a wide range of corporate activities and obligations.

Antigone, however, in her self-reliance speaks and behaves more like a Homeric hero. Moreover, the duty of care for the body of a dead relative is duty especially for female kin throughout the Greek world. For this reason in particular, Lefkowitz writes 'Sophocles' audience would have seen Antigone's action as courageous, laudable, but risky . . . and certainly within the bounds of acceptable female behaviour.'[21] Lefkowitz, like Antigone, has to repress the fact that Polyneices is an enemy of the city – and what the status of enemy implies in and for the city. Indeed Ismene, although she will come to admire her sister and claim a part in her deed, challenges Antigone's attitudes and plan from precisely such a different social perspective which includes a recognition of the obligations of civic life and the dependent status of women. Because Antigone rejects what constitutes the position of a woman in the city, Hester, for example, suggests that a straightforward approval of Antigone must be excluded from an ancient audience's reaction,[22] and MacKay can write 'The question at issue between Creon and Antigone is not what constitutes piety but what constitutes citizenship.'[23] In the paradoxical tensions of this play where a brother can be enemy, where the heroic past and contemporary world clash, the various attempts to find a univocal audience reaction or univocal reading seem merely to repeat one strand of the text. How can such over-simplifications of both Audience Response and the problems of reading to do justice to the complexities of this drama?

Indeed, Antigone in her reply to Ismene's argument seems to mark the strangeness of her attitude with a ready acceptance of death[24] and an oxymoronic recognition of her 'holy crime' (72–4):

> . . . For me, the doer, death is best.
> Friend (*philos*) shall I lie with him, yes, friend (*philos*) with friend,
> when I have dared the crime of piety.

[20] See Forrest 1966, Davies 1978 for the rise of this sense of life in the city and its precedents in the Homeric world.

[21] 1983, 52. [22] 1971, 22–3. [23] 1962, 166.

[24] Daube 1972, 9 writes of Antigone's attitude: 'I would not have allowed her to drive me though I am fond of lifts.'

'Friend' is quite clearly insufficient here as a translation. Antigone is claiming an obligatory and joint relationship with her brother. It is as kin to Polyneices and in performing the duty of kin, particularly female kin, by completing the burial that Antigone is to be determined *philos*. Significantly, Ismene also rejects the dishonour to her brother but further says 'But to act against the citizens. I cannot.' For her, the authority of the citizen body cannot be outweighed by their ties to a brother. So Antigone retorts (80–1):

> That's your protection. Now I go to pile
> the burial mound for him, my dearest (most *philos*) brother.

The relationship with her brother is for Antigone the most *philos*, the bond of *philia* which cannot be passed over.

The last exchange of this scene stresses these conflicting claims of *philia* around which their debate has turned. Ismene has doubted once more that there is any point in Antigone's aim. Antigone retorts (93–4):

> If that's your saying, I shall hate (*ekhth-*) you first
> and next the dead will hate (*ekhth-*) you in all justice . . .

It is as if Antigone is implying that even to disagree with her attitude towards a *philos* is to make one an *ekhthros* (even though Ismene is a sister as much as Polyneices is a brother). The tendency towards binary opposition, always easy in Greek thought and syntax,[25] is especially marked in this polarizing language of *philos* and *ekhthros*. Ismene responds (98–9):

> Go, since you want to. But know this: you go
> senseless indeed, but loved (*philos*) by those who love you (*philos*).

Once again, the insufficiency of the translator's rendering of *philos* is patent. The emphatic last phrase of this scene is 'to those who are *philos* you are rightly, properly *philos*'. That is, Antigone is in a proper sense fulfilling her obligations of *philia* to those who are her *philoi*. Ismene, after Antigone's threat of enmity even of the dead, and her own refusal to help, and despite her belief that Antigone is 'senseless', asserts ironically enough that Antigone is in a strict sense (*orthos* is used of the correct application or the correct meaning of the word)[26] behaving as a *philos* should. She is not merely asserting her affection for her sister, but indicating something of Antigone's basis for action. The juxtaposition of 'senseless' and 'correctly *philos*' echoes the oxymoronic paradox of Antigone's 'holy crime'. From the opening scene,

[25] Cf. Lloyd 1966, passim.

[26] It is a key term in contemporary philosophical and linguistic debate. See e.g. Guthrie 1962–81, Vol. III, 204ff., and below, Chapter 9.

Antigone's actions are constituted in an uncertain blend of transgression and exaltation.

Creon's first speech, marking his assumption of office after the turmoils of war and announcing his decision concerning the burial of the bodies of Eteocles and Polyneices, further emphasizes the relations of *philos* and *ekhthros* in a civic context. I quote here a lengthy and important section from the middle of his address where he is both justifying his decision concerning the burials and explaining the basis of the authority he has assumed (182–91):

> And he who counts another greater friend (*philos*)
> than his own fatherland, I put him nowhere.
> So I – may Zeus all-seeing always know it –
> could not keep silence as disaster crept
> upon the town, destroying hope of safety.
> Nor could I count the enemy of the land
> friend (*philos*) to myself, not I who know so well
> that she it is who saves us, sailing straight,
> and only so can we have friends (*philos*) at all.
> With such good laws shall I enlarge our state (*polis*).

For statesman Creon, the man who could rate any relation of *philia* higher than the individual's duty to his own fatherland is to be discounted. He has no part in Creon's view of things. That is why Creon himself has taken up the duties of authority. It is not choice but necessity that involves him in the affairs of the city. Indeed, such is the strength of the ties of a man to his city that no personal relationship could be considered which might stand in some way in conflict with the fulfilment of civic obligations. The rejection of the possibility of an enemy of the land being counted as a *philos* is a thinly veiled remark towards the treatment of his nephew Polyneices. As a nephew, Polyneices should be regarded as a *philos* to Creon. As an enemy to the city, Polyneices has forfeited his claim on Creon's sense of duty. Such, once more, is the polarizing force of the vocabulary of *philos* and *ekhthros*. Indeed, for Creon the correct establishment of the state is the very condition of possibility of having *philoi* at all. Unlike Homer and unlike Antigone, for Creon it is the *polis* and not the *oikos* which offers the institutional basis of *philia*. The word for 'straight' in line 190 is once more *orthos*. As Ismene had suggested that Antigone was 'in a straight sense' *philos* to her *philoi*, so Creon places the possibility of the definition of *philos* dependent on the 'straight sailing' of the ship of state. It is the correct use of the term *philos* which is being set at stake. Time and again, it is to this notion of 'straightness', 'correctness' that Creon will refer.

Creon sums up his position in the phrase 'with such good laws . . . ' The published and debated laws of the city are one of the most important ways that

the culture of the city defines itself as civilized culture. A city cannot exist as a city without laws. Plato's last massive work of political philosophy, for example, is the *Laws*, a programme for the institution of a just state in the form of a series of laws, and the law-givers of each state were held in great renown. The sophists, however, as we will further see in Chapter 9, partly in reaction to the strength of this ideology, initiated an extremely influential debate concerning the relation of these established cultural laws to an inherent natural system, a debate which reflects in many ways the modern anthropological discussions of 'nature' and 'culture' and also the sociological concerns of 'environment' and 'inherited', 'genetic' causation. Many of their arguments strove to assert the arbitrariness of man-made laws, and the belief that such laws were repressive of the natural impulses of man. Partly for this reason, the sophists are often depicted as the dangerous enemies of the city, and Socrates was executed as such. But despite arguments such as the sophist Antiphon's that there is no need to follow the laws if there are no witnesses and punishment can be escaped, the belief in the establishment of laws as a fundamental sign of the development of society and the belief in obedience to the laws as a necessary part of the social contract are not simply the conservative argument of the powers that be, and for all the political strife and violence that dominates the histories of the Greek cities, there is surprisingly little evidence of the modern contention that an 'unjust law' should be disobeyed (as opposed to the many mutual accusations of 'injustice' between factions). Indeed, although that prime example of civic disobedience, Socrates, is made to say in his *Apology* that he would follow god rather than the court if they were to ban him from philosophizing, nevertheless in the *Crito*, a dialogue whose dramatic time and setting are the prison on the eve of his day of execution, Socrates elaborately defends his decision not to flee from prison on the grounds that the laws must be obeyed, as they are the parents, the nurturers and educators of the individual, that the laws are the contractual agreement which holds the city together.[27] Although he allows for the possibility of 'persuasion' as an alternative to 'obedience', 'disobedience' as such seems firmly rejected. By such an argument, Socrates rejects Crito's appeal, which, like Tecmessa's to Ajax, begged him not to desert his children and satisfy his enemies' desires to be victorious over him.

Creon's faith in the maintenance of law, then, does not in itself define him as an especially hard-line authoritarian or dogmatist, but very much as a man of the *polis*, a citizen. Indeed, when he first hears of the burial, he finds it hard to believe that anyone, least of all the gods, should want to do a good turn to a

[27] On this argument, and for further bibliography on breaking the law, see Woozley 1979, 28–61. See also now Kraut 1984, and Allen 1980.

man who 'came to burn their pillared temples and their wealth, even their land, and break their laws' (285–8). The citizen who could not imagine someone putting any obligation before his duty to the city, the man of law, rejects Polyneices, the aggressor against the city, the man who came to scatter the laws.

In the choral ode which follows this scene, the famous 'ode to man', the double-edged praise of man's endeavours in the progress of civilization[28] ends fittingly with that apogee of civilization, the *polis* (368–75):

> When he honours the laws of the land and the gods' sworn right
> high indeed is his city; but cityless the man
> who dares to dwell with dishonour. Not by my fire,
> never to share my thoughts, who does these things.

The upholding of the laws and the justice of the gods constitutes the man 'with high city'. The phrase translated 'gods' sworn right' is a very dense expression. Jebb suggests an expansive gloss: 'Justice, which men swear to observe, taking oaths by the gods'. This gloss need not conflict with the translation's emphasis on 'the justice from the gods'. For it was a commonly made assertion that civic justice was god-given or at least divinely inspired,[29] and that there should be no possible disjunction between the laws of the land and the unwritten laws of the gods. This link of the laws of the land and the gods' *dikē* looks forward, then, to the next scene where Antigone sets the laws of the gods *in opposition to* the laws of the land. It is through the terms of the chorus' praise of the city that the arguments of the following scene will progress.

The opposite of being 'with high city' is to be 'without a city', 'cityless'. Heidegger attempts a full translation in his inimitable style: 'without city and place, lonely, strange and alien . . . at the same time without statute and limit, without structure and order'.[30] To be without a city is to lack 'the historical place, the there *in* which, *out* of which and *for* which history happens'.[31] The immediate juxtaposition of 'high in his city' and 'without a city' in terms of the ability to uphold the ordering of the laws and justice stands, then, as the immediate and significant prelude to the entrance of Antigone, the law-breaker: it is not just the law that is at stake, but what the laws imply in and for the city.

The question which prompts one of the most famous and discussed speeches in western literature is precisely 'And still you dared to overstep these laws?', and Antigone's justification of her transgression opposes the 'unwritten and sure precepts (*nomima*) of the gods' to the pronouncements of

[28] See Segal 1964 for an analysis of this ode.
[29] See Guthrie 1962–81, Vol. III, 117–31 for examples.
[30] 1959, 152. [31] Ibid.

the ruler of the city, his *nomoi*,[32] and the meting of punishment (*dikē*) in human society (458–9) to the punishment of the divine (459–60). Antigone draws on traditional ideas of a common bond of agreed universal principle, a divine law assumed to include respect for the dead of one's family; but her arguments also echo and contrast with the contemporary sophistic debates which question exactly the terms of law, nature, unwritten law, state authority.[33] The very appeal to 'unwritten laws' by Aristotle's time at least seems to have been a common rhetoricians' gesture when the written law did not support a case,[34] much as the 'spirit of the law' is sometimes appealed to in our society. Antigone's authorization by a traditional and eternal law takes on a different light in comparison with Creon's contemporary arguments about law and order, as her 'heroic' behaviour contrasted with Ismene's reasons for restraint. For Antigone, it is as if Creon and the law he has passed are to be disobeyed because the treatment of a traitor and enemy is at odds with the divine law concerning the family, as if there were no problem in the definition of *philia* with regard to family members when the family wars with itself and with the city. For her, it is the fact that Polyneices comes from her mother (467–8) that justifies her action, and so she defines her action later as honouring 'the children of my mother's womb' (511), and giving 'my own brother funeral' (503). 'My own brother' is the masculine form of the word she applied to Ismene in her opening address, 'brother with the same two parents'. So Polyneices is 'Full brother, on both sides, my parents' child' (513). As Segal writes, 'the tie through blood alone, through the womb, Antigone makes the basis of her *philia*'.[35]

Creon's opposition to what he terms Antigone's hubris in breaking the law, as in his opening speech, comes down to his 'politicisation of burial'.[36] Polyneices is distinguished from Eteocles as a political enemy and treated as such. Creon's rejection of Antigone's appeal to *philia* relies on his appeal to the establishment of the law, as indeed the constitution of the city itself depends on the extension of ties of *philia* beyond the family or clan groupings, as well as on the laws. As before, the interplay of *philos* and *ekhthros* here implicates the

[32] On the difference between 'precepts' (*nomima*) and 'law' (*nomos*), see Ostwald, 1973.
[33] There is, for example, an interesting parallel to Antigone's argument in Xen. *Mem.* 4.4.14ff., where Socrates and the sophist Hippias debate the subject of the unwritten laws. Socrates suggests that the transgressors of man-made laws may escape punishment, but never those of divine law. Antiphon the sophist also argued about the advantages of breaking the law if one can escape notice (cf. e.g. fr. 44). Plato seems to be referring to these ideas when in his arguments in favour of doing justice he considers the extreme positions of a man who does injustice but is held in high esteem and the man who acts justly but is wrongly punished and reviled (*Rep.* 2, 357a1ff.).
[34] See Arist. *Rhetoric*, especially Ch. 13, which is interestingly analysed by Guthrie 1962–81, Vol. III, 124–5.
[35] 1981, 85. [36] Benardete's phrase.

claims of the institutions of law and the city. As much as the terms *philos* and *ekhthros* serve to place a man in society through his relationships, so they are interwoven with the terms of power and the hierarchical orderings of society. So Antigone is rejected by Creon not only as a transgressor of the law, but as a 'slave' (479), and as 'woman' (484–5). His exclusive allegiance to the city (as opposed to the house or family or blood-ties) is the allegiance also to the privileged autonomy of the male ruler. And so *philos* and *ekhthros* are defined by him in terms of that exclusive allegiance. Such exclusivity demands rigid determination of opposites. Polyneices as an enemy of the state remains an *ekhthros* and cannot be predicated with the opposite term (522):

> Never the enemy (*ekhthros*), even in death, a friend (*philos*)

To which with fine rhetoric, Antigone replies (523):

> I am not of a nature to share in hatred (*ekhth-*) but to share in love (*phil-*)

This is an interesting line which has provoked much argument. It has been called on the one hand 'her finest moment',[37] and on the other hand reviled as an obvious rhetorical exaggeration on the grounds that she was quick enough to threaten Ismene as an *ekhthros* when it suited (93–4) and will reject her sister as not a true *philos* twenty lines further on (543). That both verbs 'share in hatred' and 'share in love' occur nowhere else in extant Greek literature also makes it hard to judge the force of the line. Is the expression an attack on Creon's polarising vocabulary – as if one could determine *philos* without *ekhthros*? Or is it to mark Antigone's excessive reliance on the bond of *philia* much as Creon's exclusive allegiance to the city attempts to ignore totally the ties of family and blood? Creon's reply is equally rhetorical (524–5):

> Then go down there, if you must love (*phil-*), and love (*phil-*)
> the dead. No woman rules me while I live.

Her appeal to *philia* is turned to scorn which ironically echoes her own ready acceptance to lie in the tomb *philos* with her *philos*. His last gibe once more stresses the sexual and political connotations of the debate. As a man, he rejects the woman in terms of government, rule. As Ismene has warned, it is against her position as the weaker, the politically subordinate that Antigone acts.

Interestingly, that is the last direct conversation between Creon and Antigone in this scene;[38] the chorus spot Ismene approaching and the rest of

[37] Kells 1963, 51.

[38] Some editors have distributed the lines differently from the manuscripts here and given more lines to Antigone, because Creon appears to address her at 573. There can be little certainty, unfortunately, and I have followed the unanimous manuscript reading as does the translation from which I have been quoting.

the action is played around Ismene's and Antigone's further argument, and finally Creon's and Ismene's exchange. The juxtaposition of Creon's rigid separation of *philos* and *ekhthros* on political grounds and Antigone's rhetorical claim to share only in *philia* is left to stand.

The two characters' positions, however, are seen in juxtaposition to each other with regard to Ismene. Although at no point is there a three-way conversation, the subtleties and variations made available through the third actor are evident. For Creon immediately accuses Ismene in extremely aggressive terms (531–5) and when Ismene claims part responsibility she is rejected as forcefully by Antigone, who can find no affection for a *philos* who is a *philos* only in words (543). Antigone's willingness to die is repeated (555, 559–60) and Creon's devaluation of 'affection' even in his own household comes to the fore in his final argument with Ismene, where it is made clear that in condemning Antigone he is condemning his own son's fiancée. Even in this hostile silence towards one another, the opposition of Creon and Antigone continues in their respective arguments with Ismene.

The scene with Haemon and Creon is fascinating in light of these oppositions. It opens with Creon first appealing to his son's allegiance of *philia* (634):

> . . . are we friends (*philos*) whatever I may do?

For himself at least, Creon seems happy to claim the permanent family obligations whose validity he denied for Antigone and Polyneices. This relation, however, is not so much reciprocal as hierarchical: the son is expected to follow his father in all respects, especially those of personal relationships (641–7):

> It is for this men pray they may beget
> households of dutiful, obedient sons,
> who share alike in punishing enemies (*ekhthros*)
> and give due honour to their father's friends (*philoi*).
> Whoever breeds a child that will not help
> what has he sown but trouble for himself
> and for his enemies (*ekhthros*) laughter full and free?

Creon here draws on the full expression of a conventional morality: we have seen the common links between father and son as members of the *oikos* explicitly in terms of the inheritance of ties of *philia* and *xenia* already in our discussion of these terms in Homer. So, too, Creon draws on the wisdom of 'doing good to your friends and bad to your enemies'. These two precepts are readily adapted to his logic of hierarchical obedience. His argument is extended to the selection of a wife, the woman brought in from the outside to be the young man's consort (649–52):

> . . . well you know
> how cold the thing he takes into his arms
> who has a wicked woman for his wife.
> What deeper wounding than a friend (*philos*) no friend?

These lines find echoes in, for example, Hesiod's didactic poem the *Works and Days*, which warns about the wrong sort of woman to take as a wife, and Hesiod was held in a position of considerable authority throughout the ancient world as a poet and moralist. Moreover, as we saw earlier, *philos* is a term implying the obligations and duties of the social interaction of marriage which Creon suggests would be subverted by a 'wicked woman'. However, the general statement that to take a *philos* who is somehow bad or evil will lead to disaster also recalls Antigone's passionate appeal to 'share in *philia*' and Creon's rejection of such rhetoric. Set within the specific interplays of this work, as well as the inherited morality of earlier writers, Creon's general statements are also marked by the doubts and echoes of the earlier arguments, as now the man who claimed the rigid determination of *ekhthros* in political terms manipulates the language of family ties towards the necessity of obedience.

Creon's concern for the order of the household is explicitly linked to his concern for the ordering of the *polis* (659–663):

> If I allow disorder in my home,
> I'd surely have to license it abroad.
> A man who deals in fairness with his own,
> he can make manifest justice in the state (*polis*).

The word for 'one's own' is *oikeioisin*, the people, affairs and business of the *oikos*. The model of family obedience is the model for the hierarchies of the state: as he is father in his house, so he is father to the city, invested with the word of authority. The reverse of such order is disobedience and anarchy, which 'ruins cities . . . and tears down our homes' (673–4). In both spheres, the same structure of authority, the same threat of collapse obtains. As a further point of agreement between the two areas of action, Creon concludes with his unwillingness to be beaten by a woman. The hierarchy is a male, civic order.

Particularly after the clashes of the previous scene, the assumed continuity of family and state seems precisely to ignore the possible conflicts of interest which motivated the earlier arguments. Indeed, Haemon's reply focuses not on the requirement of subordinates to obey, but on that of leaders to yield and show flexibility. The possibility of the rigid application of one man's assumed wisdom which seems to be the conclusion of Creon's hierarchical model, is

precisely what his son questions. Creon seems to depend on his own individual judgement as much as Antigone (705–9):

> Then, do not have one mind, and one alone
> that only your opinion can be right.
> Whoever thinks that he alone is wise,
> his eloquence, his mind above the rest,
> come the unfolding, shows his emptiness.

The term for 'right' is once more *orthos*. The correct use of language, the correct running of the state, the correct attitude of the individual are linked in the search for demand for this quality of being *orthos*.

The reasoned positions of father and son in the vitriolic exchange that follows are quickly distorted. The respect for authority which Creon espoused turns towards the tyrant's principle of ignoring the people and relying solely on his own judgement. His wariness of female disobedience in particular tends towards more explicitly misogynistic bandying of the term 'woman' and finally the degradation of the insult 'woman's slave' (756). Haemon's argument in favour of yielding and flexibility itself bends towards rigidity under the pressure of the exchange, and with a threat that his father will never see him again, he rushes from the stage. With their mutual accusations of corruption of mind, or madness (754–5), the earlier reasoned debate about authority and flexibility has itself reached a point of exclusion and opposition in the same terms. Creon's assumption of an easy continuity of authority in the family and state has not only been set at odds with itself by the arguments within the family and by the conflicting claims of family ties and civic obligations, but has also been forced to an extreme position of tyrannical autocracy. Like Antigone, in relying on himself and his own, Creon the defender of the city puts the constitution of the city at risk.

The choral ode which follows this scene adds a further colouring not only to the previous action but also to the opposition of *philos* and *ekhthros*. For it sings briefly but with seductive beauty of the power of Eros and Aphrodite. The significance of Eros for the preceding scene is explicitly marked at the beginning of the second verse of the ode (791–4):

> You twist the minds of even the just. Wrong they pursue and are ruined.
> You made this quarrel of kindred before us now.

The word for 'kindred', *sunhaimon* (which means 'with shared blood'), puns on the name of the king's son, Haemon, stressing again the tension in Creon's family and not just in the ordering of the city, as the words 'minds' and 'just' recall the terms of their family quarrel. Although Haemon never mentioned it as motivation, the chorus take for granted that the force behind his argument and exit was desire, desire for the bride he has been denied by his father. This

explanation does not only stress the insistence of the role of irrational and indeterminate forces that was lacking in Creon's rationalist arguments and notably missing from the picture of civilization offered in the ode to man,[39] but also importantly qualifies the sense of both Eros and *philos*. For unlike Ismene's protestations against Antigone's punishment, Haemon, who begins by speaking for the city, and then speaks for the gods, 'ends by cherishing Antigone unto death'.[40] The force of Eros underlying Haemon's actions (in the chorus' view) qualifies and extends our sense of *philia* both by distinguishing Ismene's restraint and by emphasizing the strength – and strangeness – of Antigone's passion to do good to her *philos*, her dead brother. *Philia* and Eros overlap in certain areas but remain importantly distinct: as much as *philia* stresses the normally affectionate relationship between husband and wife or lovers in terms of the reciprocal obligations linked to the development of the house, the city and an individual's relations to social order, so Eros marks that relationship as one of a possible irrational and overwhelming force, a principle that threatens the principles of law and order. And indeed the 'playful goddess with whom none can fight', a paradoxical mixture of sport and lethal battle, will indeed lead to destruction in this play.

The verses to Eros also colour in an important way the funeral procession of Antigone, her mourning song, into which the ode develops. For as Antigone marches her lonely journey to the cave of her interment, she refers to herself repeatedly as the 'Bride of Hades'. Like Persephone, the bride of Hades in myth, Antigone goes down into the 'underground bridal chamber' of the cave (891–4), but unlike Persephone, Antigone cannot and will not return to give earth fruitfulness and growth. Creon in giving Antigone as a bride not to his son but to Hades allows her to live out the etymology of her name, which is 'instead of' or 'opposed to generation'.

Antigone's earlier willingness to die takes on a different force here. For although she has constantly depicted herself as supporting the ties of the family, of blood, of the same womb, as bride of death it is Antigone herself who denies for the *oikos* the possibility of its own continuation. Instead of her marriage constituting a bridge between the generations and aiming at the generational continuity of children, her marriage inters her as a virgin, sterile and unproductive. Her marriage to death, which recalls her regularly expressed desire to die,[41] tragically inverts the functioning of marriage in the

[39] As Kitto 1961, and especially Winnington-Ingram 1980, 91ff., have pointed out.

[40] Benardete 1975b, 44.

[41] Interestingly, when the Hippocratic Corpus talks of the 'hysterical' diseases of young unmarried girls, for whom marriage and pregnancy are a suggested cure, one symptom mentioned is 'desire (*eran*, to experience *eros*) for death' (*peri parth.*). King 1983, 114 translates this passage as 'take death for a lover'.

oikos. Unlike Persephone, whose story seems to offer an aetiological tale for the recurrence of the seasons and the perpetuation of fertility, Antigone, 'anti-generation', calls herself the lone remnant, the 'last of your royal line' (941).

As Oedipus and Jocasta stand to confuse the normal process of generational continuity in incest and patricide, so their daughter, acting, she claims, for the family's sake, is led to the death which destroys the family. Antigone, as Ismene had warned at the beginning of the play (48–60), has taken her place in the family history of self-mutilation and self-destruction. So the chorus say to Antigone in a telling phrase, not translated adequately by Wyckoff: 'but mistress of your own fate, alone among mortals you will descend in life to the house of Death' (821–3). The word I have translated with Jebb as 'mistress of your own fate' and which Wyckoff translates 'of your own motion you go', is *autonomos*. The construction of the term is simple: *auto-* indicates 'self' and *nomos* means 'law', a term which we have already discussed at some length. Antigone is 'under her own law', 'self-willed'. As she put herself above the law, it is on her own, by her own law, she is going to die. The girl who wanted to protect *philia* dies, as she cries repeatedly, without a *philos* to mourn for her. Antigone has completed the self-destructive, inward-turned fate of the incestuous family of Oedipus.

Teiresias has often been regarded as offering a divine authorization for Antigone, and he certainly does require Polyneices' burial in the name of the gods. But he does not mention Antigone at all and his words of reproach to Creon have also been seen as applicable to Antigone: 'Self-will incurs the charge of folly' (1027, Jebb). Nor does the seer in his prediction after he has been reviled by the king make any mention of the girl. He addresses himself rather to Creon's stubbornness and self-will. It is interesting in this light to read the lines in which Creon does finally relent, which seem a good example of Sophoclean irony. In his very change of heart, Creon foreshadows Antigone's death: 'I've come to fear it's best to hold the laws of old tradition to the end of life.' Creon's fear will be realized in Antigone holding to her principles precisely 'to the end of life'. But there is a further irony lost in Wyckoff's translation. Her phrase 'the laws of old tradition' would more accurately be translated 'the established laws', 'the laws as set up'. In this moment of yielding Creon cannot but echo his earlier argument. Unlike Teiresias, or the chorus, or Antigone, Creon does not speak of 'the gods' or 'tradition', but still of the need to obey the instituted laws. Creon's yielding, then, does not simply vindicate Antigone and question his earlier support of the law (here before the city in one of its dramatic festivals), but seems to stress again the terms of the earlier arguments, the questions as to what constitutes the established law,

should obedience be absolute, can the laws be adequate to conflicts of interest. As much as Creon's earlier use of apparently traditional wisdom, set within the context of the argument, belied its own 'good sense', so here Creon's retreat from his autarchical position ironically echoes his earlier defence of autarchy. As so often in Sophocles, the apparently simple statement – made apparently easier by insensitive translation – does not reflect in a simple way a traditional position.

Creon himself must march the same path to the cave. The messenger's tale of what happens there completes the imagery of the bride of death. Haemon is discovered in the tomb hugging Antigone, who has hanged herself. He wordlessly rejects his father, aims to strike but fails to kill and turns his sword upon himself: the patricidal, self-mutilating curse of Oedipus haunts this play. And the *Liebestod* is consummated (1237–41):

> While he was conscious, he embraced the maiden
> holding her gently. Last, he gasped out blood,
> red blood on her white cheek.
> Corpse on a corpse he lies. He found his marriage.
> Its celebration in the halls of Hades.

Creon's own son and heir, the continuation of his family, has been destroyed through Creon's attempt to maintain the order of the city and the hierarchy of the home. Significantly, this tale of the messenger is told to Eurydice, Creon's wife, the dear (*philos*) mistress of his household. Wordlessly, she leaves the stage. And in the course of the king's first lament for his son there comes the messenger with the news that she too has killed herself inside. The disaster is both in and for Creon's house: 'His home instead of being a locus of civilized values and the place that transmits new life from generation to generation, becomes like the house of Antigone and Oedipus, a place of death and savagery, a cavern-like "harbour of Hades".'[42] Creon has been stripped of the people of his family, as he had tried to suppress Antigone's claims of family ties, and now he himself can only wish for death and obscurity.

So Creon accepting his responsibility for their deaths and his own ignorance is led away. As he sought throughout the play for the *orthos*, the 'straight and true', so his final line marks the distortion of that desire (1345–6):

> My life is warped beyond cure, my fate has struck me down.

The desire for the accurate and upright has led to the warping of tragedy.

The critical view which has gained some of the authority of a tradition, namely, that Creon argues from and supports the ties and obligations of city

[42] Segal 1981, 187.

life, rejecting irrationality and what he can't fit into his male hierarchical structure, while Antigone argues from and supports the ties and obligations of family life, rejecting the laws and ordinances of the city in favour of the female *oikos*, needs some considerable qualification. The tragic text resists the stability of such oppositions.

Creon adapts the vocabulary of generation and the household to the order of the city in a single hierarchical model (which itself marks the impossible separation of the vocabularies of civic and household organization), but this systematization is split and challenged by the disasters in his own complex household. The city's opinions and order remain something of an uncertain murmuring in the background as Creon's house threatens to imitate its terrifying and chaotic double, the house of Oedipus, as Creon tumbles from his certain position as ruler, father, figure of knowledge. So his wife silently exits, like Jocasta, to kill herself. And the repetition of words indicating self-driven, self-performed actions joins the two houses in parallel self-destructive movements. As much as Creon attempts to support the city through the repression of the family, it is through his family that his whole life becomes warped. Teiresias, rather than simply vindicating Antigone, seems to warn against extremes, even of order. Indeed, the very household which Antigone claims and is claimed to support is also the source and transmission of the curse which she consummates in death. Her backward-looking support is for the house of the dead, the ancestors whom she places above the possibilities of procreation, marriage, and a future home, a future of the home – the logic of 'anti-generation'. Antigone seems to support 'civilized values', but she also seems to destroy them in the rejection of the *oikos*'s essential aim of continuity. As in the first scene, where we saw the uncertain blend of transgression and exaltation in Antigone's actions, so as the play progresses the paradoxical nature of her attitude to *philia* increases. As much as Creon's apparently traditional and rational support of obedience and order develops towards the tyrannical egoism of continual self-assertion, so Antigone's devotion to the house gives rise to death and destruction rather than the continuity of birth and generation. This, too, is a disturbing context in which to read her statement that she is of a nature to share in loving not in hate.

Within these distorted and distorting idealisms neither the city nor the household can be maintained as the locus of order, value or principle. As Creon's and Antigone's views of *philia* seem divided against each other, each seems divided against itself in the very strength of its formulation. Such divisions in the language of personal relationships and obligations constitute this play's tragic view of the terms *philos* and *ekhthros* and the positioning of the individual that they develop. The possibility of the secure positioning of

the individual within the conflicting claims of *polis* and *oikos* ideology is what this tragedy seems to put at risk. The *Antigone* works through the logic of the conventional moralities of the terms to the point of destruction. The secure conclusion of an Hegelian synthesis or *Aufhebung* at the end of this 'labour of the negative' seems notably absent. The questioning of the morality and obligations surrounding the terms of relations and relationships remains unresolved.

In the light of such questioning, is there not some need to qualify what might be meant by the epithet 'conservative' as traditionally applied to Sophocles? What sort of reading of *Antigone* can lead a critic to assert of Sophocles 'In his plays the ideas expressed are conventional and conservative and we are not invited to reject them'?[43] For it would seem rather that it is precisely through the limitations and contradictions of the conventional and conservative morality surrounding the terms of *philos* and *ekhthros* in juxtaposition to the values of the city that the tragedy of *Antigone* develops. After the complex interplays and dislocations of the moral language of relations we have read in this play, it seems to me difficult to see in what terms it would be possible to assert that Sophocles simply reflects a conventional or conservative attitude. As we have seen before and will see again in the course of this book, it is only for conservative and conventional critics that the texts of tragedy have lost their power to question and challenge.

[43] Hester 1971, 46.

5 · SEXUALITY AND DIFFERENCE

A woman is a sometime thing.
GERSHWIN

Time and again the line of argument in my discussion has approached the question of sexuality, and has been forced to restrain itself. In the *Oresteia*, I argued, the relations between the sexes are an essential dynamic of the trilogy and any discussion of language, politics, imagery in that work is forced always to reconsider its siting in a sexual discourse. I attempted to show further that in any description of how the Greek city might try to delimit itself the polarized realms of a male world and female world were an essential, if difficult, marking of that not entirely physical topography. With regard to those primary words of human relations in the family and city, *philos* and *ekhthros*, the sexual was explicitly interwoven in the semantic range – and dislocations – of such terms. In this chapter, I wish to focus on this topic of sexuality, which is so important to Greek tragedy, and after I have looked at some of the complex problems involved in approaching this subject, I shall be considering in particular Euripides' *Hippolytus*.

In Homer's *Odyssey*, which I will have cause to discuss in more detail in the next chapter, there is a continuing focus on the relations between the sexes.[1] In his journeys, Odysseus passes through a series of liaisons with various females, divine and mortal, which reflect (in a fractured manner) the relation between Penelope and himself towards which he is travelling. Part of the extended process of homecoming is this constant redefining of the male and female positioning in the home. Indeed, whereas Virgil's Aeneas sees in the underworld above all a procession of the future military and political heroes of Rome, Odysseus sees a procession of the famous women of the past – starting from his own mother. In both narratives, the journey to the underworld offers a sense of an insight into the truth of the epic.

Hesiod, too, in perhaps a more directly didactic manner, concerns himself with the role of women in the *oikos*. In his *Works and Days*, not only is there an extensive discussion of the sort of woman to marry, but this is also linked to a mythic narrative which places the origin of human woes in the hands of the

[1] See Goldhill 1984a, Foley 1978.

READING GREEK TRAGEDY

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