SPEAKING AFTER SILENCE:

PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC IN THE WAKE OF CATASTROPHE

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines eulogies President Barack Obama delivered after instances of human-perpetrated catastrophe: violent events so cataclysmic that they rendered the rhetorical arena unsafe and thus impeded productive communication. Each chapter explores one of Obama's speeches delivered after instances of gun violence—his speech in 2011 in Tucson, Arizona after the attempted assassination of Representative Gabrielle Giffords; his speech in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015 after the shooting at Emanuel AME Church; and his speech in 2016 concerning common-sense gun safety reform—through the lens of what I argue are the three primary functions of post-catastrophe eulogy: pedagogical, deliberative, and unifying.

Obama's speeches recall the classical Athenian funeral oration (*epitāphios lōgos*) and, in particular, Pericles' *epitāphios* in Greek historian Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. This dissertation explores how Obama negotiated classical and contemporary models of democratic citizenship, and illustrates how Obama's post-catastrophe speeches are a model of one possible process of rebuilding communication on a national scale, the aim of which is the continued deferral of reactive violence. This dissertation reveals how approaching ancient and modern political rhetoric from a comparative perspective highlights the ostensibly shared mission of such rhetoric, while

also uncovering sites where the presidential rhetorical tradition subordinates and suppresses nonwhite, non-masculine identities in its establishment of a single national identity.

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INTRODUCTION

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>
> W.H. Auden
>
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On April 20, 1999, two students of Columbine High School fatally shot one teacher and 12 of their peers before ultimately committing suicide. One month later, on May 20, President Bill Clinton and First Lady Hillary Clinton attended a memorial service at Dakota Ridge High School in Littleton, Colorado. Speeches, interspersed with triumphant cheers of "We are Columbine!", were delivered by the superintendent of Jefferson County Schools, Jane Hammond; the principal of Columbine High School, Frank DeAngelis; the student body president of Columbine High School, Heather Dinkel; the First Lady; and, finally, President Clinton. President Clinton's speech was markedly optimistic and focused on healing, and he praised the students of Columbine for their faith and community. Near the end of the speech, he described an ideal future in which "every person is committed to doing something better and different in every walk of life, beginning with parents and students and going all the way to the White House"

(“President Clinton Delivering Remarks”). He emphasized that the students in the audience were in the unique position to “reach across all the political and religious and racial and cultural lines that divide us” because the students had “already touched our hearts.” Clinton told the students, with signature Arkansas drawl and paternal smile, “You've got to help us here. Take care of yourselves and your families first. Take care of the school next. But remember, you can help America heal, and in so doing you will speed the process of healing for yourselves.”

A month earlier on April 25, 1999 in Littleton, Colorado, Vice President Al Gore also delivered a eulogy in honor of those who had been murdered at Columbine High School. He began his speech for those who died in what is now referred to as the Columbine High School massacre by stating stoically, “Nothing that I can say to you can bring comfort. Nothing that anyone else can say can bring comfort”(“Columbine High School Memorial Address”). He described the emotional pain caused by the shooting as “agony,” and the aftermath of the shooting as an “ashen moment.” Clinton only briefly referenced scripture in his speech—he urged the students not to lose their faith by way of Saint Paul’s instruction that “we must walk by faith, not by sight”—but Gore cited scripture directly more than ten times in his 12-minute speech. Although Gore cited instances of heroism displayed during the shooting, the tone of his speech was overwhelmingly solemn and sorrowful.

The speeches delivered by Clinton and Gore after the shooting at Columbine High School, though different in style and content, may both be categorized as examples of national eulogy. Presidents, and sometimes vice presidents, of the United States frequently deliver eulogies in honor of those whose lives have been lost, and such

eulogies are termed "national eulogies," a phrase coined by Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. Campbell and Jamieson define a national eulogy as a speech that contains a "unique blend of eulogistic content and elements that reconstitute the nation" after tragic events, and offers an interpretation of the meaning of those events for the citizenry (75). Campbell and Jamieson specify four characteristics of national eulogy: in a national eulogy, presidents take on a priestly role, explain what meaning the tragedy has for the nation, describe those who have died as symbolizing "the best of the nation," and explain how the government will see to it that such tragedies are prevented in the future (80). Clinton and Gore's respective speeches display all four characteristics of national eulogy, though the orators fulfill these criteria in disparate ways.

National eulogies delivered after instances of catastrophe rely on a formulaic structure. Such structure may ultimately be traced to the classical Athenian funeral oration of the fifth century BCE, the *epitāphios lōgos* (ἐπιτάφιος λόγος). As will be explored further in Chapter III, Pericles' *epitāphios*—the only extant version of which exists in Greek historian Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*—influenced prominent political figures of the U.S. such as President Abraham Lincoln, and, as Garry Wills argues, Pericles' speech "became the most famous oration of its kind, a model endlessly copied, praised, and cited" (41). This dissertation considers three speeches delivered by President Barack Obama after instances of gun violence; two of the speeches are considered in the context of Athenian *epitāphioi* and, in particular, Pericles' *epitāphios*, and one speech is considered in the context of Pericles' final speech. By studying ancient *epitāphioi* and modern national eulogies in conversation, we may uncover the similar impulses behind such speeches, and in their divergences discover

how U.S. democratic republicanism allows for a greater range of post-catastrophe political speech than does the democracy of ancient Athens, but also relies on the relegation of non-white, non-masculine voices to maintain a single, united national identity.

In this dissertation I describe the violent and emotionally upsetting events that precipitate national eulogies as instances of catastrophe. National eulogies may be delivered after events that are not the direct result of human intent, such as natural disasters; however, I focus my attention on speeches delivered after human-perpetrated acts of violence. The term "catastrophe" in this context refers to a human-perpetrated violent event so cataclysmic that it renders the rhetorical arena unsafe and thus impedes productive communication after such an event. I focus specifically on human-perpetrated catastrophe, as such acts are intentionally performed as a way of closing off conversational possibilities. Instead of continuing to work through political and personal differences, engaging in discourse and attempting to convince one another of our positions, catastrophe effectively shuts down rhetorical exchange. Thus, after a catastrophe, the notion of "speaking after silence" becomes pertinent: what can the eulogist say after such an event that will begin to rebuild successful communication that defers, or even prevents, future violence?

I have chosen the word "catastrophe" to describe human-perpetrated violence in part because of its ancient Greek origins. The word *katastrophē* (καταστροφή) derives from the preposition *kata*, here meaning "downwards," and the word *strophē*, meaning "turn" (*Liddell-Scott Greek Lexicon*). *Katastrophē* refers to an overturning, a conclusion, or depending on context, even death. In drama**,** "catastrophe" can refer to the event in a

play that leads to its resolution; thus, a catastrophe is both an end of the main plot and the beginning of the dénouement. It is fruitful to consider national eulogies in a similar light; the eulogy memorializes those whose lives have ended, and marks the beginning of a resolution. In essence, the eulogist dialectizes death: that is, one goal of national eulogy is to put into conversation a set of varying, often contrasting, experiences in order to engage with and explain the ultimate unknowable experience, death itself. Although the speaker of a given eulogy does not engage in a dialogue *per se*, the speaker acts as a mouthpiece both for those who have died and for those who are in mourning, and acts as a kind of medium between the past and the future.

While many rhetoricians have discussed presidential rhetoric and its relationship with classical oratory and, specifically, Greek funeral oration, this dissertation links these genres not only structurally and thematically, but also functionally. Ultimately, the overarching questions that drive this project are how, why, and to what extent does presidential rhetoric—in particular, national eulogy—rely on and borrow from classical eulogistic conventions?

Classical Athenian Funeral Oration: Function and Form

Eulogies, whether delivered before private or public audiences, may be categorized as epideictic rhetoric. Book I of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* contains the philosopher's examination of what he believed were the three species of public speech—deliberative, epideictic, and forensic—and the time with which each species corresponds:

> The kinds of Rhetoric are three in number, corresponding to the three kinds of hearers. For every speech is composed of three parts: the speaker, the subject of

> which he treats, and the person to whom it is addressed, I mean the hearer, to whom the end or object of the speech refers. Now the hearer must necessarily be either a mere spectator or a judge, and a judge either of things past or of things to come. For instance, a member of the general assembly is a judge of things to come; the dicast, of things past; the mere spectator, of the ability of the speaker. Therefore, there are necessarily three kinds of rhetorical speeches, deliberative, forensic, and epideictic. (I.1.3)[1]

For Aristotle, each type of public speech corresponds to a particular time: forensic or juridical rhetoric concerns past events and seeks to accuse or defend; deliberative rhetoric is used to debate what action ought to be taken and therefore concerns the future; and epideictic rhetoric, speech that praises or blames, concerns the present state of affairs.

Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca describe epideictic rhetoric as the "kind of oratory…which is most in danger of turning into declamation, of becoming rhetoric in the usual and pejorative sense of the word" (51). Since the purpose of epideictic speech is ultimately "to increase the intensity of adherence to values held in common by the audience and the speaker," epideictic speech risks pandering to the audience (51). Additionally, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca describe the speaker of epideictic as "very close to being an educator" (52). As I will show in Chapter II, one of the national eulogist's responsibilities is to assume the role of community educator, and to retell the story of instances of violence in such a way that diffuses communal anger

[1] ἔστιν δὲ τῆς ῥητορικῆς εἴδη τρία τὸν ἀριθμόν: τοσοῦτοι γὰρ καὶ οἱ ἀκροαταὶ τῶν λόγων ὑπάρχουσιν ὄντες. σύγκειται μὲν γὰρ ἐκ τριῶν ὁ λόγος, ἔκ τε τοῦ λέγοντος καὶ περὶ οὗ λέγει καὶ πρὸς ὅν, καὶ τὸ τέλος πρὸς τοῦτόν ἐστιν, λέγω δὲ τὸν ἀκροατήν. ἀνάγκη δὲ τὸν ἀκροατὴν ἢ θεωρὸν εἶναι ἢ κριτήν, κριτὴν δὲ ἢ τῶν γεγενημένων ἢ τῶν μελλόντων. ἔστιν δ' ὁ μὲν περὶ τῶν μελλόντων κρίνων ὁ ἐκκλησιαστής, ὁ δὲ περὶ τῶν γεγενημένων ὁ δικαστής, ὁ δὲ περὶ τῆς δυνάμεως ὁ θεωρός, ὥστ' ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἂν εἴη τρία γένη τῶν λόγων τῶν ῥητορικῶν, συμβουλευτικόν, δικανικόν, ἐπιδεικτικόν. Throughout this dissertation, Greek of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* from Oxford Classical Texts edition, edited by Ross. All translations of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* adapted from Freese.

and promotes nonviolent communication. Thus, such speeches assume and establish a "community of minds, which, while it lasts, excludes the use of violence" (55). Scholars such as Cynthia Sheard defend epideictic rhetoric, a genre which has been criticized as self-indulgent and opportunistic; she maintains that, "By bringing together both the real—what *is* or at least *appears to be*—and the fictive or imaginary—what *might be*—epideictic discourse allows speaker and audience to envision possible new, or at least different worlds" (770). Similarly, Jeffrey Walker defines epideictic rhetoric as:

> that which shapes and cultivates the basic codes of value and belief by which a society or culture lives; it shapes the ideologies and imageries with which, and by which, the individual members of a community identify themselves; and, perhaps most significantly, it shapes the fundamental grounds, the "deep" commitments and presuppositions, that will underlie and ultimately determine decision and debate in particular pragmatic forums. (9)

Epideictic rhetoric, then, has the potential either to achieve sublimity—to "[act] with an imperious and irresistible force" and "[sway] every reader whether he will or no,"[2] as Longinus defines—or to fall into the realm of the hyperbolic, grandiloquent, and bombastic.

Epitāphios lōgos is a subcategory of eulogy that originated in classical Athens, a period lasting for much of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. Nicole Loraux, in her seminal text *The Invention of Athens*, describes the *epitāphios* as "[a]t once a eulogy of worthy men, an honor accorded to the dead, and a stock of instructive examples" that provides "a lesson in civic morality intended for the living" (98). Therefore, such

[2] …ταῦτα δὲ δυναστείαν καὶ βίαν ἄμαχον προσφέροντα παντὸς ἐπάνω τοῦ ἀκροωμένου καθίσταται. (I.4). Greek and English translation from Roberts.

speeches should not be classified as merely epideictic, in which orators' sole purpose was to praise the men who had fallen in battle. Such speeches also contained deliberative elements, instructing viewers about how they should act in the future. Athens' history was told and retold by means of this specific genre of oratory, and with it, as Loraux argues, "Athens establishes herself…in a history whose privileged instrument [was] rhetoric" (142). Jonas Grethlein notes that "the funeral speeches presented a semi-official polis-history in which Athens' past appears as an uninterrupted chain of great deeds," which supports Loraux's suggestion that funeral orations reinforce what she calls a durable reality (221). At least within the world of the funeral oration, Athens was a political body that had always existed and would persist endlessly into the future, even if that future outside of the world of the funeral oration remained uncertain.

The earliest, most famous, and, for the purposes of this dissertation, most important extant funeral oration is Pericles' *epitāphios lōgos*. In his *History*, Thucydides catalogued and interpreted the events of the fifth-century war between Sparta and Athens and their respective allies. Much of the *History* is narrative, but Thucydides famously intersperses his historical account with direct speech, which he explains were:

> delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said. (I.22.1)[3]

[3] καὶ ὅσα μὲν λόγῳ εἶπον ἕκαστοι ἢ μέλλοντες πολεμήσειν ἢ ἐν αὐτῷ ἤδη ὄντες, χαλεπὸν τὴν ἀκρίβειαν αὐτὴν τῶν λεχθέντων διαμνημονεῦσαι ἦν ἐμοί τε ὧν αὐτὸς ἤκουσα καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοθέν ποθεν ἐμοὶ

Thucydides' speeches are, at times, syntactically curious and even obscure, and are written in a style distinct not only from the rest of Thucydides' work, but from all other (extant) Greek prose. The peculiarity of the speeches led Dionysius of Halicarnassus in the first century BCE to compose *On the Style of Thucydides*, in which he describes in detail the grammatical and stylistic reasons for Thucydides' opacity. Of the speeches, Dionysius wrote disparagingly:

> One could find many other episodes throughout the history as a whole that have been treated with supreme craftsmanship, to which nothing could be added and from which nothing could be taken away, while others are treated with careless superficiality, bearing not the slightest sign of his genius. This inconsistency is to be found especially in the speeches, the dialogues and the other rhetorical passages. (16.1-6)[4]

The reason for the speeches' presence in the historical text remains a debatable issue. As George Kennedy notes:

> Clearly Thucydides' speeches cannot simply be labeled ornaments primarily intended to make the history more readable or to bring out the characters of the actors in events. Occasionally that may result, but in general the speeches are too difficult, too highly intellectual, too rarely personal. Are they perhaps best seen as expositions of the issues of the times or even as Thucydides' own comments? Certainly they are part of his attempt to write a history which will be useful to

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ἀπαγγέλλουσιν: ὡς δ᾽ ἂν ἐδόκουν ἐμοὶ ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστ᾽ εἰπεῖν, ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων, οὕτως εἴρηται. For the sake of brevity, throughout this dissertation, when I refer to Pericles' speech, I refer by necessity to Thucydides' version.

[4] Πολλὰ καὶ ἄλλα τις ἂν εὕροι δι᾽ ὅλης τῆς ἱστορίας ἢ τῆς ἄκρας ἐξεργασίας τετυχηκότα καὶ μήτε πρόσθεσιν δεχόμενα μήτ᾽ ἀφαίρεσιν, ἢ ῥᾳθύμως ἐπιτετροχασμένα καὶ οὐδὲ τὴν ἐλαχίστην ἔμφασιν ἔχοντα τῆς δεινότητος ἐκείνης, μάλιστα δ᾽ ἐν ταῖς δημηγορίαις καὶ ἐν τοῖς διαλόγοις καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις ῥητορείαις. Greek and English translation from Usher.

future readers trying to understand events. But what method has he followed? What is the relationship of these speeches to what was actually said at the time? (*Speeches of Thucydides* xi)

In Book II, the Athenian general Pericles was selected to provide the *epitāphios* to memorialize the Athenians who had died during the first year of the war, in 431 BCE.[5] According to Thucydides, a prominent Athenian statesman was chosen to deliver the yearly funeral oration during wartime—we are told this practice was the "custom of their ancestors"—and this was the case most likely since the 470s during the Persian War (II.34.1).[6] It should be noted that Pericles made no mention in his oration of the Battle of Marathon, which Loraux describes as a "compulsory topos of national history" in *epitāphioi* (*Invention of Athens* 156). While Pericles' oration is the most influential surviving *epitāphios*, especially considering its influence on American presidential rhetoric—see Chapter III for its relationship with Abraham Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*—it represents a subversion of expected elements of such speeches while still, according to Loraux, "exhorting the citizens to die for the city, whatever euphemisms are used to disguise the appeal" (98).

Athenian *epitāphioi* also functioned to create and maintain collective memories. While collective memories can be fictitious or distorted remembrances of past events, as Bernd Steinbock maintains, "they are real to the remembering community," and thus constitute the reality of history for the group of people for whom these memories exist

[5] ἐπὶ δ' οὖν τοῖς πρώτοις τοῖσδε Περικλῆς ὁ Ξανθίππου ἠρέθη λέγειν. "Meanwhile these were the first that had fallen, and Pericles, son of Xanthippus, was chosen to pronounce their eulogium" (Thuc. II.34.8). Throughout this dissertation, all translations of Thucydides adapted from Crawley, and Greek from Oxford Classical Texts edition, edited by Jones and Powell.

[6] τῷ πατρίῳ νόμῳ χρώμενοι.

(8). The structure of the Athenian *epitāphios* included an opening *captatio benevolentiae* (winning of good will), in which the speaker lamented the "nearly impossible task to do justice to the deeds of the fallen"; a middle section, which "[celebrated] the manifestation of timeless Athenian ἀρετή [virtue] from the origin of the city to the recent battles in which the heroes of the day have lost their lives"; and usually ended with "a consolation of the relatives and an exhortation of the entire polis community" (85). In the *epitāphios*, the city of Athens was always described as an unchanging entity, and the oration always picked up *in medias res* so that the city and its history appeared to persist into the distant past and endlessly into the future. Athenian *epitāphioi* were highly formulaic, and according to Kennedy, such speeches were formulaic not only in organization, but also in that "the topics to be mentioned became traditional in the way that gradually happened in other forms of oratory and poetry" (*Art of Persuasion* 154). Such speeches became a kind of civic rite, and the formula of *epitāphioi* speaks to the nature of rhetoric itself: namely, that "an oratorical problem…[will] be supplied with a fixed answer" (154).

Oral culture was paramount to writing for most people living in Athens during the fifth century, and Rosalind Thomas contends that, unlike in modern society, which privileges writing as the primary method of communication, "most Greek literature was meant to be heard or even sung—thus transmitted orally," while there was also "a strong current of distaste for the written word even among the highly literate" (3). The result of this skepticism surrounding written documents was that such documents "were not adequate proof by themselves in legal contexts" until the latter half of the fourth century BCE (3). In classical Athens, the "written word was more often used in the service of the spoken," and, as Thomas explains, even when there was a written text, it was most often

read aloud to disseminate the information more effectively, as not everyone was able to read and few had access to written texts (4).

With this skepticism surrounding writing in mind, it is tempting to categorize Thucydides as a writing-focused historian, especially when contrasted with his precursor, Herodotus, born a quarter-century before Thucydides. Herodotus wrote of the Persian Wars of the early fifth-century in his *Histories*, a text famous for its winding narrative and fantastical elements. Thomas points out that Thucydides' prose style "is usually classified as the product of writing and a different 'literate' mentality, intended to be read rather than heard" like Herodotus' *Histories* (103). However, Thomas reminds us that we should not associate a "written" style to Thucydides simply because Thucydides' language is noted "for its denseness and difficulty even in antiquity, and [that] it is hard to believe it could be readily understood on a single hearing (or perhaps several)" (104). Most fascinatingly, Thomas suggests that Thucydides' style is similar to that of the Sophists, whose works were, in fact, commonly read to an audience (104). As a result, it is not safe to assume that Thucydides privileged the written word over oratorical practices because of his writing style, and that Herodotus and Thucydides are polar opposites with respect to the oral or written nature of their texts. Herodotus' and Thucydides' approaches to the cataloguing of history were not entirely dissimilar; this is important to remember when considering the function of Pericles' funeral oration in the larger schema of Thucydides' text because there is inherent in the historian's writing a certain anxiety about what may be the best way to transmit historical information.

In addition to Pericles' *epitāphios*, there are five extant funeral orations by ancient orators and rhetoricians. Of the ten orators in the Alexandrian "Canon of Ten," there are

extant funeral orations by Hyperides, Lysias, and Demosthenes, though the speeches of Lysias and Demosthenes are of questionable authenticity (*Invention of Athens* 8). There is also a funeral oration by Gorgias, and the *epitāphioi* of Gorgias and Hyperides were probably delivered before an Athenian audience, though not by the authors themselves, and were likely written for an Athenian politician to deliver (8). Extended fragments of Hyperides' oration remain; his speech honored Athenians who had died during the Lamian War of 322 BCE against Macedon and Boetia. Its focus on the general Leosthenes, as Vassiliki Frangeskou explains, "shows obvious signs of the gradual move from the collective Attic funeral oration to the private *epitaphios* of late antiquity" (316). The final funeral oration is a parodic example in Plato's *Menexenus*, which will be explored in further detail Chapter II.

It is worth mentioning that the Roman tradition of the *laudatio funebris* differed greatly from that of the Greek *epitāphios*. In a noble Roman funeral in the Republic and Empire, a funeral procession marched through the city and paused at the forum, and a pre-appointed speaker offered a eulogy to honor the deceased person for his or her service to Rome. Gathered around the speaker were either family members—in the sense of *familias*, which included clients and enslaved people—or, later, actors, wearing wax *imagines maiorum*, the funeral masks, of deceased male family members. In turn, the primary orator gestured to each representative and spoke of the deceased individual as though to and about the deceased person himself, recounting the noble past deeds of each family member. The ceremony served as a public spectacle that elevated the status of the surviving family members, and transmitted the history of the family throughout the city. One crucial difference between *epitāphioi* and *laudationes* is that Athenian *epitāphioi*

focused on the illustriousness of the collective, while Roman *laudationes* focused entirely on the individual and his or her accomplishments, as well as the past accomplishments of individual family members. I will explore this relationship—or, from another angle, tension—between the individual and the collective in Greek funeral oration in Chapter IV in light of the rhetorical use of anger. For now, in sum, Greek *epitāphios* is a subcategory of eulogy, which is itself a type of epideictic rhetoric, and in these formulaic speeches the world of classical Athens was depicted as enduring and ever-present, a constant source of strength in the unpredictable present.

Classical Funeral Oration and National Eulogy

In each of the following three chapters, I explore examples of national eulogy delivered by Obama in light of post-catastrophe classical Athenian speeches delivered by Pericles. As it is pertinent, I discuss the role of presidential speechwriters in the writing of particular eulogies. For the sake of simplicity, I attribute the presidential speeches I analyze to Obama, though I acknowledge that the speeches are not, for the most part, the work of a single person. Similarly, though I consider the text of the speeches to a certain extent as written literary artifacts, ultimately the content and performances of such speeches are historical artifacts that must be discussed in the past tense rather than solely as literary artifacts to be discussed in the present tense. The use of the past tense is meant to underscore the importance of the historical performance of eulogistic speeches, in addition to the speeches' structure and content.

I argue that the process of rebuilding communication after catastrophic events by means of eulogistic speech requires three steps: analyzing the event from a rhetorical

perspective, dismantling previously held ideas and beliefs concerning language and communication, and rebuilding an understanding of functional communication. This process Jacques Derrida termed deconstruction, a process explored further in Chapters II and V, and the goal, in the context of eulogy, is a continual deferral of reactive violence. I relate these three steps to the primary functions of eulogistic speech. Onto these three steps I map three primary functions of national eulogy: pedagogical, deliberative, and unifying. Each of the chapters that follow focus on one of these functions. Their order is important: only by teaching the audience about recent events (pedagogical) can the orator ask them to perform certain tasks (deliberative) that are aimed at bringing the public together (unifying).

Chapter II, "Silenced Victims Speak: Education and Deferral in Obama's Tucson Eulogy," focuses on the process of analysis, dismantling, and rebuilding. This chapter explores the speech Obama delivered after the attempted assassination of Representative Gabrielle Giffords in Tucson, Arizona in 2011, a speech which was both a eulogy for the six victims of the attack and an exhortation for Giffords, then in critical condition, and other members of the American citizenry. Obama demonstrated the pedagogical function of national eulogy through his performance of his "internal dialectic," a process of questioning oneself to locate the best course of action after tragic events and potentially delay further violence. In this speech, Obama spoke on behalf of Giffords, a woman active in the political sphere temporarily silenced by violence. By considering the Tucson speech in the context of *epitāphioi* and the lack of space for women's voices, we may better understand the way Obama strategically and respectfully channeled Giffords, both echoing and rewriting the genre of funeral oration.

In Chapter III, "The President, the Preacher, and the Citizen-Orator in Obama's Eulogy for Reverend Pinckney," I consider Obama's eulogy after the shooting at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015. I argue that the success of Obama's deliberative statements rested on his successfully performing the role of citizen-orator, a role exemplified by Pericles in his *epitāphios*. However, prior to Obama, the presidential role of citizen-orator inherently excluded African Americans; as a result, Obama was required to navigate the white tradition of presidential rhetoric by invoking President Abraham Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*, and thereby connected himself to the classical ideal of the citizen-orator, even and especially in a speech delivered specifically to members of the Black Church. Ultimately, this connection to the mythic past of the United States was meant to mobilize white Americans to support gun control initiatives.

In Chapter IV, "Unifying Audiences through the Redirection of Anger: Obama's Speech on Common-Sense Gun Safety Reform and Pericles' Final Speech," I explore speeches delivered not after a single violent event, but in light of a series of destructive occurrences. Obama delivered his speech on common-sense gun reform in 2016 after a series of catastrophic events due to gun violence, and Pericles delivered what would be his final speech after a plague killed many Athenians. This chapter traces how, by expressing anger, both political leaders attempted to unify their audiences and humanize themselves. However, while Pericles unified his audience by getting angry *at* them for losing faith in him as a political leader, Obama unified his audience by getting angry *alongside* them because the American people—Obama himself included—had been up to that point unable and unwilling to protect its citizens from continued gun violence. Their respective expressions of anger were also part of their performances of citizenship,

performances which were ultimately determined and limited by their respective systems of government.

Chapter V, "Rhetorical Scholarship and Material Change," concludes this dissertation by enumerating the rise of two strikingly similar demagogues: Trump, who came to political power as president after Obama completed his second term; and Cleon, who attempted to appeal to the Athenians after Pericles died from the plague. I also trace future iterations of this project, and consider the potential material effects of studying political rhetoric.

CHAPTER II

SILENCED VICTIMS SPEAK:

EDUCATION AND DEFERRAL IN OBAMA'S TUCSON EULOGY

In her 2009 commencement address at Scripps College, Representative Gabrielle Giffords, class of 1993, said the following regarding the namesake of the school:

> …there is something else among the most important responsibilities for women today, something that Ellen Browning Scripps did not talk about, to the best of my knowledge, probably because she was up to her ears fighting for some of the most basic women's rights here in America, but I just know that she would mention if she were with us today. She would expect and want that most elusive thing for you: to be happy, to find contentment in this life that we have that is far too fleeting.

Just shy of two years later, on January 8, 2011, Gabrielle Giffords, a Democrat who represented Arizona's 8th congressional district, survived an assassination attempt at a political event in a Safeway parking lot in Tucson, Arizona. President Barack Obama delivered his speech in response to the shooting on January 12, 2011, a speech that was praised by a long list of politicians and political commentators that included figures often critical of Obama—among them Senator John McCain, Glenn Beck, Bill O'Reilly, and Pat Buchanan—and brought national attention to Obama's speechwriter, Cody Keenan. The speech was part eulogy for the six people who died in the spray of gunfire; part encouragement for Giffords, who remained in critical condition at a nearby hospital; and

part exhortation for those in the audience to continue to participate in politics and the democratic process, despite the violent events that had just transpired.

Obama bookended this speech with two figures: he began with Giffords and ended with Christina-Taylor Green, who, at nine years old, was the youngest victim of the shooting, and who had attended the "Congress On Your Corner" event with a neighbor (Friedman). In the aftermath of the shooting, Giffords and Green were both unable to speak on their own behalf. Giffords was in a medically-induced coma, and she has suffered from speech aphasia since. Green, of course, could not speak because she had been murdered by the shooter.[7] Giffords' and Green's speech had to be mediated through other figures, most notably by Obama himself. Obama emphasized that all Americans had the right to participate in this "democracy of and by and for the people," calling Giffords' Congress on Your Corner event an updated version of Lincoln's vision of democracy in the *Gettysburg Address*, and he lamented how this "quintessentially American scene" had been "shattered by a gunman's bullet."[8] This chapter argues that the prominent placement in this speech of Giffords and Green functioned to diffuse the audience's anger and reinforce Obama's call for a renewal of rhetorical and civic engagement that might prevent this kind of violence in the future.

Obama's speech fulfilled the fundamental requirements of national eulogies in that he addressed "the nation about the meaning of events that [had] shaken the citizenry" (Campbell and Jamieson 75) and he connected "the present to the future with a central line of argument: that those who died exemplify the best of a nation that will survive this

[7] For further information concerning the shooter, see Engels.

[8] All quotes from Obama's speech in Tucson adapted from "Remarks by the President at a Memorial Service for the Victims of the Shooting in Tucson, Arizona."

moment because its ideals cannot be undermined by events such as those that took their lives" (77). However, the Tucson speech is exceptional among national eulogies;[9] Obama took advantage of the pedagogical opportunity provided by the occasion to model the sort of dialogue between individuals and governmental bodies that he believed was needed to prevent vengeful reactions and promote more positive change. He performed what I term an "internal dialectic" to educate the audience about how to rhetorically forestall reactive violence and, ultimately, how to engage in more productive debate in the wake of national tragedy. Although the Tucson speech lacked concrete policy proposals, I maintain that it did provide useful guidance for both individual and governmental responses to such events.[10] By modeling his own internal dialectic, Obama encouraged the audience—both those present for the speech at the University of Arizona and those watching the speech from afar—to engage in similar conversations internally and with one another. Obama instructed the audience to consider metacognitively their own responses to the shooting, encouraging them to eschew vengeful reactions and instead engage in thoughtful reflection and communication.

Obama's rhetorical performance in Tucson had three primary goals designed to discourage reactive violence and encourage productive rhetorical exchanges: first, he described the tragic event in a manner that did not promote or inspire vengeful action; second, he analyzed and critiqued the ineffective and dangerous models of communication that prevailed before the shooting; and third, he began the process of identifying more successful models of communication and demonstrating how they might

[9] For example, Cody Keenan explained that journalist and historian Gary Wills compared the Tucson eulogy to the *Gettysburg Address*, an extremely high honor. Personal interview, 27 Sept. 2018.

[10] For an extensive analysis of the Tucson speech and its effect on policy, see Frank.

work to forestall further violence. As Obama performed each of these functions in the speech, he provided an important lesson in the ethical use of rhetoric after instances of seemingly senseless violence.

I situate the Tucson eulogy in the classical funeral oration tradition to illuminate how and to what end Obama departed from this tradition: Obama employed a woman's voice to educate the audience about how to rhetorically forestall and possibly prevent violent retaliatory action in response to human-perpetrated catastrophe, a practice that was unlike that of Athenian funeral oration and traditional national eulogy. I emphasize women's roles in Greek funeral orations and public funerals because national eulogies of the U.S. are always written in the shadow of their most famous predecessors, among which is the funeral oration attributed to Pericles. Before the shooting in Tucson, Giffords had been able to engage in political life, but her voice was silenced, and was by necessity replaced by Obama's. Analogously, at one point in the archaic Greek past, women's voices had a well-defined and valued place in public funeral proceedings, and by extension in political life, but those voices were gradually replaced by men's voices until, in the public and private funeral proceedings of classical Athens, women were effectively silenced. Obama employed Giffords' voice to inspire gratitude in his audience and diffuse anger, and his speech did not contain the intentional silencing of women that marks classical Athenian funeral oration. This comparison between classical and modern funerary speech further explains why it was so powerful for Obama to begin his Tucson eulogy with Giffords: although he emphasized that the American people have the right to engage in "democracy of the people, by the people, for the people," echoing the

Gettysburg Address, this right is all too often taken away from women who dare to engage publicly in democratic activity.

In this chapter, I consider funeral oration in the United States in light of the classical tradition of *epitāphios lōgos*. After offering a brief overview of this genre of epideictic rhetoric, I then perform a close reading of Obama's speech, indicating where and how he fulfills the three requirements of post-catastrophe rhetoric that aims to forestall retaliatory violence. Finally, I explore how Obama's speech departs from the classical funeral oration tradition and emphasizes in what ways the audience should learn from Obama's pedagogical example to reflect on their own responses to violent events.

The Pedagogical Possibility of Epideictic Rhetoric

As alluded to in Chapter I, *epitāphioi* and epideictic speech in general were not unanimously considered to be worthwhile or valuable rhetorical exercises. In Plato's *Gorgias*, Socrates insults Polus for having studied rhetoric more than dialectic, and explains that "rhetoric, it seems, is a producer of persuasion for belief, not for instruction in the matter of right and wrong" (454e-455a).[11] On the contrary, dialectic and the resulting opportunity to be cross-examined are the most valuable and virtuous pedagogical approaches. As the Eleatic stranger declares in Plato's *Sophist*:

> we must assert that cross-questioning [*tōn ēlenchon*] is the greatest and most efficacious of all purifications, and that he who is not cross-questioned, even though he be the Great King, has not been purified of the greatest taints, and is

[11] ἡ ῥητορικὴ ἄρα, ὡς ἔοικεν, πειθοῦς δημιουργός ἐστιν πιστευτικῆς ἀλλ᾽ οὐ διδασκαλικῆς περὶ τὸ δίκαιόν τε καὶ ἄδικον. For further exploration of the relationship between rhetoric and dialectic, see Murray. Greek and English translations of Plato's *Gorgias* adapted from Lamb.

> therefore uneducated and deformed in those things in which he who is to be truly happy ought to be most pure and beautiful. (230d-e)[12]

The value of national eulogy—a genre which offers a political leader the opportunity to educate the audience about how one's verbal response to violence can channel anger away from retaliation and toward productive communication—may be appreciated by investigating its pedagogical possibilities. Obama demonstrated the value of interrogating oneself by means of his performance of internal dialectic, which was meant to inspire the audience to question their own post-catastrophe communication.

Aristotle was more pragmatic than Plato with respect to the functions of rhetoric in a pedagogical sense. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle famously enumerates how dialectic is concerned with general questions, while rhetoric is concerned for the most part with particular topics (I.2.1).[13] Regarding the morality of forensic, deliberative, and epideictic rhetoric, he explains that "what makes the sophist is not the faculty but the moral purpose" (I.1.14).[14] Rhetoric of any genre, then, is a tool which may be used for good or questionable purposes, and it is the responsibility of the audience members to judge whether arguments are logically and morally sound. In the ideal scenario, the orator possesses knowledge of what is virtuous and good and communicates this knowledge by means of the oration. However, if the orator is uninformed or does not have ethical intentions, the resulting "education" cannot instruct the audience about ethical responses to violent events. By productively mediating Giffords' speech, Obama educated his

[12] καὶ τὸν ἔλεγχον λεκτέον ὡς ἄρα μεγίστη καὶ κυριωτάτη τῶν καθάρσεών ἐστι, καὶ τὸν ἀνέλεγκτον αὖ νομιστέον, ἂν καὶ τυγχάνῃ βασιλεὺς ὁ μέγας ὤν, τὰ μέγιστα ἀκάθαρτον ὄντα, ἀπαίδευτόν τε καὶ αἰσχρὸν γεγονέναι ταῦτα ἃ καθαρώτατον καὶ κάλλιστον ἔπρεπε τὸν ὄντως ἐσόμενον εὐδαίμονα εἶναι. Greek and English translations of Plato's *Sophist* adapted from Fowler.

[13] ἔστω δὴ ἡ ῥητορικὴ δύναμις περὶ ἕκαστον τοῦ θεωρῆσαι τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν.

[14] ἡ γὰρ σοφιστικὴ οὐκ ἐν τῇ δυνάμει ἀλλ᾽ ἐν τῇ προαιρέσει….

audience about the potential harm of post-catastrophe communication. Further, he made manifest his instruction by means of his performance of internal dialectic, through which he taught the audience to reflect on their own words and actions.

Women's Voices in *Epitāphioi* and National Eulogy

The tradition of national eulogy in the United States is influenced by the funeral oration tradition in classical Athens, and Athenian democracy itself holds a significant place in the American imaginary because it is often viewed as the ancestor of democracy in the United States. Obama himself, in a speech delivered in Athens in November 2016, described how the United States is "indebted to Greece for the most precious of gifts—the truth, the understanding that as individuals of free will, we have the right and the capacity to govern ourselves" ("Remarks by President Obama at Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center"). He offered a mythical tale: "25 centuries ago, in the rocky hills of this city, that a new idea emerged," that of "*Demokratia*. *Kratos*—the power, the right to rule—comes from *demos*—the people". Obama admitted in this speech that classical Athenian democracy was "far from perfect" because it did not include women or slaves, a situation quite different from that of 21st-century democracy in the U.S. But he further reinforced the relationship between the two democratic governments when he stated:

> …through all this history, the flame first lit here in Athens never died. It was ultimately nurtured by a great Enlightenment. It was fanned by America's founders, who declared that "We, the People" shall rule; that all men are created equal and endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights.

Obama's emphasis on democracy's genealogical fable, which appears to lead directly from Athens to the contemporary United States, reinforced the significance of Athenian democracy and the classical world generally in contemporary political traditions.

In the U.S., national eulogy is influenced by the tradition of ancient Greek *epitāphioi lōgoi*, but also departs from this tradition in significant ways, especially with respect to the lack of space for women's speech and intentional silencing of women in *epitāphioi*. This silencing can be found in the funeral orations themselves, but also traced through Athenian funerary practices, which I will review in brief. In Athens in the archaic and classical periods, adult men and women were expected to express their grief publicly but in diametrically opposed ways. Women were known for performing wails and laments at funerals, and, according to Margaret Alexiou, the Greek words *thrēnos, gōos,* and *kommōs* originally referred to specific funeral lamentations delivered by women at a Greek funeral (102). It is likely that, in the archaic period, *thrēnos* referred to "the set dirge composed and performed by the professional mourners," *gōos* "the spontaneous weeping of the kinswomen," and *kommōs* a "specific type of tragic lament" probably accompanied by frenzied gestures (103). By the classical period, *thrēnos* and *gōos* became interchangeable, especially in tragedy, suggesting that "there was a tendency to treat as synonymous the different terms for a poetic lament, which had originally denoted distinct aspects of the ritual lamentation of the women" (103). As for the *kommōs*, there is little scholarly record of its development outside of tragedy after the archaic period (103). By the classical period, as rhetorical speeches delivered by men became more popular and central to the funeral proceedings, women's lamentations were subordinated, and the public space available for their voices progressively diminished. As Alexiou

explains, elegiac poetry, *epitāphioi lōgoi*, and epideictic speech, all of which developed from "the social and literary activity of the men," gradually replaced the lamentations performed by women in rituals honoring the dead (108). Thus, in the archaic period women played a significant role in funeral proceedings, but by the classical period their role was diminished and subordinated. The very foundation of the *epitāphioi* of classical Athens—and national eulogy of the U.S.—relies on the relegation of non-masculine voices.

We may understand the origins of Athenian *epitāphioi* as having developed from poetry originally performed by both men and women. Jeffrey Walker speaks to these poetic origins when he advocates for complicating the traditional binary of rhetoric and poetics. He suggests that, what comes to be known as rhetoric "in fact originates not from the pragmatic discourse of the fifth-to-fourth-century *rhêtôr* but from an expansion of the poetic/epideictic realm to include, first, various kinds of epideictic prose and, ultimately, epideictic imitations of pragmatic prose" (18). Unlike approaches to rhetoric that separate it entirely from the poetic tradition, "[p]oetry *always was* 'rhetorical,' and always was composed according to whatever understandings of discursive art and suasive eloquence were available to poets and their audiences" (277). If epideictic rhetoric and, specifically, *epitāphioi* developed from poetic performance, then we may see the once-prominent place of women in this tradition that is eliminated almost entirely by the time Pericles delivered his funeral oration.

Plutarch, a Greek writer and historian of the first century CE, in his biography *Life of Solon*, describes how Solon, an Athenian statesman of the sixth century BCE, first regulated the ways in which Athenian women were permitted to mourn the dead.

According to Plutarch, Solon "subjected the public appearances of the women, their mourning and their festivals, to a law which did away with disorder and license,"[15] and forbade a number of practices that had previously been permitted, including "Laceration of the flesh by mourners, and the use of set lamentations, and the bewailing of any one at the funeral ceremonies of another" (21.4).[16] Further still:

> The sacrifice of an ox at the grave was not permitted, nor the burial with the dead of more than three changes of raiment, nor the visiting of other tombs than those of their own family, except at the time of interment. Most of these practices are also forbidden by our laws, but ours contain the additional proviso that such offenders shall be punished by the board of censors for women, because they [men] indulge in unmanly [*anāndrois*] and effeminate [*gunaikōdesi*] extravagances of sorrow when they mourn. (21.5)[17]

With these policies, Solon limited the scope of the Greek funeral: he regulated the most significant aspects of women's participation in funerals, including their vocalizations. Plutarch notes that women's practices such as wailing were so disparaged that men of his own time were punished for acting in such "unmanly" ways. The changes made by Solon were ostensibly for the purpose of limiting extravagance and display in the democratic *pōlis*. However, as Nicole Loraux argues, by controlling the scope and practices of funerals, the city regulated both mourning and "the role played by women in the context

[15] ἐπέστησε δὲ καὶ ταῖς ἐξόδοις τῶν γυναικῶν καὶ τοῖς πένθεσι καὶ ταῖς ἑορταῖς νόμον ἀπείργοντα τὸ ἄτακτον καὶ ἀκόλαστον…. Greek and English of Plutarch's *Life of Solon* from Perrin.

[16] ἀμυχὰς δὲ κοπτομένων καὶ τὸ θρηνεῖν πεποιημένα καὶ τὸ κωκύειν ἄλλον ἐν ταφαῖς ἑτέρων ἀφεῖλεν.

[17] ἐναγίζειν δὲ βοῦν οὐκ εἴασεν, οὐδὲ συντιθέναι πλέον ἱματίων τριῶν, οὐδ᾽ ἐπ᾽ ἀλλότρια μνήματα βαδίζειν χωρὶς ἐκκομιδῆς. ὧν τὰ πλεῖστα καὶ τοῖς ἡμετέροις νόμοις ἀπηγόρευται: πρόσκειται δὲ τοῖς ἡμετέροις ζημιοῦσθαι τοὺς τὰ τοιαῦτα ποιοῦντας ὑπὸ τῶν γυναικονόμων, ὡς ἀνάνδροις καὶ γυναικώδεσι τοῖς περὶ τὰ πένθη πάθεσι καὶ ἁμαρτήμασιν ἐνεχομένους.

of mourning"; in other words, by means of regulating women's participation in funerals, the city effectively regulated women (*Mothers in Mourning* 19).

By the fifth century BCE, Athens strictly regulated funeral proceedings and, by extension, the decidedly feminine, and woman-performed, act of mourning. Anne Carson describes the potential impulse behind such regulations: namely, that "Putting a door on the female mouth has been an important project of patriarchal culture from antiquity to the present day," and that its "chief tactic is an ideological association of female sound with monstrosity, disorder, and death" (121). Carson's assertion emphasizes the disparity between the explicit and implicit intentions behind Athenian funerary legislation. However, as Kerri Hame argues, "in seeking to recognize some contribution by women in a male-dominated society such as ancient Greece, scholars have overplayed the evidence of women's activities in funeral rites as a way of giving voice to a collective body of people who have virtually no voice" (2). Whether women were truly the primary actors in a Greek funeral is a secondary matter; the links among women, grief, and the Greek funeral were strong enough to warrant regulation, even if those regulations were based on an imagined, rather than real, threat to the *pōlis*.

Greek men and women were expected to perform their grief in classical Athens in diametrically opposed ways. Karen Stears suggests that central to the ideology of both the gender construction and ethnic identity of Athenian men was their self-control of public emotional display (121). She contends:

> Excessive emotionalism, of which mourning was a manifestation, was considered a typical female trait associated with lack of self-control. It was regarded not only

> as unmanly but also un-Greek and something undertaken by those who were opposite to both constructs, namely women and barbarians. (121)

While this paradigm does not necessarily map onto gender dynamics at play in U.S. national eulogy currently, we may see such a paradigm if we consider the history of national eulogy. Jeffrey Steele describes how, regarding antebellum United States, women primarily performed the emotional work of mourning and remained in a state of mourning for much longer than men; he argues that it was women's lack of agency and political power that caused them "to locate and control their pain by displacing the prevalent signifiers of mourning from specific losses to a more general sense of grievance" (97). These expectations also reflect classical Athenian expectations of female grief and conduct; I suggest that echoes of those expectations also influence national eulogy, precisely because it is a genre with roots in the classical past.

In Athens from the fifth century BCE onward, one man was chosen each year to deliver the *epitāphios* at a public funeral over the war dead. At the end of his *epitāphios* Pericles emphasized the appropriate role for women in Athenian society:

> …if I must say anything on the subject of female excellence to those of you who will now be in widowhood, it will be all comprised in this brief exhortation. Great will be your glory in not falling short of your natural character; and greatest will be hers who is least talked of among the men [*en toīs ārsesi*] whether for good or for bad. (II.45.2)[18]

While men were expected to admire and emulate the war dead, widows were given one task: in order to achieve glory (*klēos*) they should do nothing that will cause them to be

[18] εἰ δέ με δεῖ καὶ γυναικείας τι ἀρετῆς, ὅσαι νῦν ἐν χηρείᾳ ἔσονται, μνησθῆναι, βραχείᾳ παραινέσει ἅπαν σημανῶ. τῆς τε γὰρ ὑπαρχούσης φύσεως μὴ χείροσι γενέσθαι ὑμῖν μεγάλη ἡ δόξα καὶ ἧς ἂν ἐπ᾽ ἐλάχιστον ἀρετῆς πέρι ἢ ψόγου ἐν τοῖς ἄρσεσι κλέος ᾖ.

the subject of gossip *en toīs ārsesi*, not simply "among people," but more specifically "among men." The use of the word *klēos* here reads somewhat ironically; though *klēos* can refer to a rumor or a report, it is also the word used to describe what heroes in Greek epic will achieve for performing heroic actions: remembrance after death. Unlike in the archaic period when women had some vocal authority and ritual place in the funeral, as Karen Stears notes, women in classical Athens were silenced, especially because they had "no corpse to care for (the dead were cremated on the battle-field)" and "their lamentations [were] effectively suppressed by the institution" of the *epitāphios* (123). Though women had some significant vocalized role in the Greek funeral during the archaic and into the classical period, by the mid-fifth century that role had nearly disappeared entirely.

At the classical Greek public funeral, women's utterances were strictly mediated, and their silence, above all, was to be prized.[19] As noted in Chapter I, the tension between women and the public funerary speech of classical Athens is expressed in Plato's *Menexenus*, in which the character of Socrates explains that Aspasia of Miletus, a non-Athenian companion of the historical Pericles, taught Socrates a funeral oration, and Socrates asserts that she wrote Pericles' funeral oration herself: according to Socrates, Aspasia "is by no means weak in the art of rhetoric," and she "has turned out many fine orators, and amongst them one who surpassed all other Greeks, Pericles, the son of Xanthippus" (235e).[20] Although it may appear that Socrates, and by extension Plato, elevates the status of women's speech by attributing the funeral oration to Aspasia, in

[19] See also Dunham on the perceived relationship between Greek female discourse and emotion.

[20] καὶ ἐμοὶ μέν γε, ὦ Μενέξενε, οὐδὲν θαυμαστὸν οἴῳ τ᾽ εἶναι εἰπεῖν, ᾧ τυγχάνει διδάσκαλος οὖσα οὐ πάνυ φαύλη περὶ ῥητορικῆς, ἀλλ᾽ ἥπερ καὶ ἄλλους πολλοὺς καὶ ἀγαθοὺς πεποίηκε ῥήτορας, ἕνα δὲ καὶ διαφέροντα τῶν Ἑλλήνων, Περικλέα τὸν Ξανθίππου. English and Greek of Plato's *Menexenus* from Bury.

reality Plato asserts this parodically in order to undermine the value of *epitāphioi* and other forms of epideictic speech. Socrates describes how he had been:

> listening only yesterday to Aspasia going through a funeral speech for these very people. For she had heard the report you mention, that the Athenians are going to select the speaker; and thereupon she rehearsed to me the speech in the form it should take, extemporizing in part, while other parts of it she had previously prepared, as I imagine, at the time when she was composing the funeral oration which Pericles delivered; and from this she patched together sundry fragments. (236b1-5)[21]

As Cheryl Glenn explains, as a non-Athenian, Aspasia was subject to Athenian law, though she was not a citizen (27). As a result, she also had more freedom than Athenian aristocratic women, "whose activity, movement, education, marriage, and rights as a citizen and property holder were extremely circumscribed by male relatives" (27). The *Menexenus*, Glenn argues, recognizes "Aspasia's reputation as rhetorician, as philosopher, and as influential colleague in the sophistic movement, a movement devoted to the analysis and creation of rhetoric—and of truth" (41). However, as Susan Jarratt and Rory Ong argue, "Menexenus' wonderment that Aspasia, who is only a woman, should be able to compose such a speech…ironically emphasizes the Platonic disdain for the foreigner/woman/sophist who would presume to have knowledge about the virtues of Atheno-androcentric citizenship" (20). This suggests that, had Aspasia had composed Pericles' funeral oration, she had only able to do so by filling the speech with generic

[21] …Ἀσπασίας δὲ καὶ χθὲς ἠκροώμην περαινούσης ἐπιτάφιον λόγον περὶ αὐτῶν τούτων. ἤκουσε γὰρ ἅπερ σὺ λέγεις, ὅτι μέλλοιεν Ἀθηναῖοι αἱρεῖσθαι τὸν ἐροῦντα· ἔπειτα τὰ μὲν ἐκ τοῦ παραχρῆμά μοι διῆει, οἷα δέοι λέγειν, τὰ δὲ πρότερον ἐσκεμμένη, ὅτε μοι δοκεῖ συνετίθει τὸν ἐπιτάφιον λόγον ὃν Περικλῆς εἶπεν, περιλείμματ' ἄττα ἐξ ἐκείνου συγκολλῶσα.

platitudes rather than genuine knowledge. This interpretation seems likely because, early in the *Menexenus*, Socrates openly mocks funeral orations and their producers:

> …They [orators] praise in such splendid fashion, that, what with their ascribing to each one both what he has and what he has not, and the variety and splendor of their diction, they bewitch our souls; and they eulogize the State in every possible fashion, and they praise those who died in the war and all our ancestors of former times and ourselves who are living still; so that I myself, Menexenus, when thus praised by them feel mightily ennobled, and every time I listen fascinated I am exalted and imagine myself to have become all at once taller and nobler and more handsome. (234c-235c)[22]

Menexenus, hearing the sarcasm in Socrates' voice, responds, "You are always deriding the orators, Socrates" (235c).[23] Though Aspasia is described as an adept rhetorician, her skills are those of cleverness and persuasion rather than philosophy. As Jarratt and Ong suggest, "Socrates, at first transfixed by the oration, gradually comes back to his senses—an indication that any transformation by rhetoric must necessarily be temporary" (20). Most importantly, Aspasia would never have been allowed to deliver the funeral oration Socrates purports that she wrote; her position as both a non-Athenian and as a woman required that Pericles mediate her speech.

I wish to underscore that Greek funerary traditions were not at the forefront of Obama and his speechwriters' minds as they composed his Tucson speech, though there

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[22] … οἳ οὕτως καλῶς ἐπαινοῦσιν, ὥστε καὶ τὰ προσόντα καὶ τὰ μὴ περὶ ἑκάστου λέγοντες, κάλλιστά πως τοῖς ὀνόμασι ποικίλλοντες, γοητεύουσιν ἡμῶν τὰς ψυχάς, καὶ τὴν πόλιν ἐγκωμιάζοντες κατὰ πάντας τρόπους καὶ τοὺς τετελευτηκότας ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ καὶ τοὺς προγόνους ἡμῶν ἅπαντας τοὺς ἔμπροσθεν καὶ αὐτοὺς ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἔτι ζῶντας ἐπαινοῦντες, ὥστ᾽ ἔγωγε, ὦ Μενέξενε, γενναίως πάνυ διατίθεμαι ἐπαινούμενος ὑπ᾽ αὐτῶν, καὶ ἑκάστοτε ἐξέστηκα ἀκροώμενος καὶ κηλούμενος, ἡγούμενος ἐν τῷ παραχρῆμα μείζων καὶ γενναιότερος καὶ καλλίων γεγονέναι.

[23] ἀεὶ σὺ προσπαίζεις, ὦ Σώκρατες, τοὺς ῥήτορας.

is evidence that the classical Athenian tradition of funerary speech has long influence that of the U.S. For example, Allison Prasch offers evidence of presidents' and speechwriters' familiarity with ancient funeral oration. She discovered that an unidentified author had scribbled a few lines from Pericles' funeral oration in a note found in files from the White House Office of Speechwriting concerning Ronald Reagan's Pointe du Hoc speech. As Prasch explains, "the author of these notes obviously knew his or her history enough to recognize that Reagan's speech at Pointe du Hoc followed the ancient Athenian tradition of memorializing the dead through public speech" (255). Like Reagan's Pointe du Hoc speech, Obama's Tucson speech was influenced by the tradition of national eulogy of the United States, a tradition influenced by that of Greek funeral oration involving the delivery of an epideictic speech in the wake of tragedy that publicly honors the dead and exhorts the living to remain engaged in and supportive of the civic cause.

Though at some point in the archaic past Athenian women were able to speak publicly and participate in political life, in both classical Athenian funeral orations and Obama's Tucson speech, women were markedly unable to speak. Although the tradition in which he orated grows from the Athenian tradition of *epitāphioi*, he departed from the funeral oration tradition to educate the audience about how to prevent such violence in the future, violence that had, at least temporarily, silenced Giffords.

Obama's Eulogy in Tucson

During the 2008 election cycle, the National Rifle Association (NRA) spent 15 million dollars on an ad campaign against then-presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Obama (Todd). In a closed-door fundraiser in April 2008, Obama was quoted as

having described small-town Pennsylvanians as "bitter" (Arena) and as people who "cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them" (Pilkington). This did not mitigate his perceived elitism among both Democrats and Republicans, and in response to his comments, the NRA ran two ads. In the first, titled "Hunter," Karl Rusch of Virginia scoffed that Obama had "probably never been hunting a day in his life." He went on to explain that "you don't have to be bitter to know Barack Obama isn't the kind of change we need." In the ad "Way of Life," Scott Siefert of Michigan stood by a pickup truck and said to the camera, "Barack Obama says I'm bitter. Well I'm not bitter. I'm blessed." After Obama was elected president in November 2008, the United States saw an increase in gun sales, as some gun owners feared stricter gun laws and new restrictions on gun ownership once Obama took office (Bohn). However, this fear proved largely unfounded; during his first term, the only major pieces of gun legislation to be passed were two bills, one that allowed Amtrak train passengers to carry unloaded guns in their luggage (Glass), and the other allowed loaded guns in national parks ("A quick guide to gun regulations").

Hours after the shooting at the military base in Fort Hood, Texas on November 5, 2009, during which a U.S. Army major and psychiatrist murdered 13 people and wounded more than 30 others, Obama made a previously-scheduled appearance at the Tribal Nations Conference hosted by the Interior Department. Some considered his banter at the beginning of his remarks at that event tonally inappropriate, and his statement overall was criticized as brief and insensitive (George). On November 10, 2009, he delivered a eulogy at a memorial service at Fort Hood, and while some hailed this speech as among his best, others were unimpressed. The speech was approximately 15 minutes

long and was called a "small masterpiece" by John Dickerson, who felt the speech was compelling in part because Obama relied primarily on storytelling, his "best talent," when he described the lives of each victim. However, Elizabeth Williamson called Obama's delivery of the speech "largely unemotional"—contrasting his performance with President George W. Bush's "rallying cry" at Ground Zero, President Bill Clinton's "shared grief and call for restraint" after the bombing in Oklahoma City, and President Ronald Reagan's "wrenching tribute" after the Space Shuttle Challenger explosion—though she noted that the "most personal part" was Obama's descriptions of the victims and their lives.

In 2010, Sarah Palin—who had served as governor of Alaska from 2006 to 2009, and had previously run as the Republican nominee for vice president, alongside Arizona Senator John McCain, in the 2008 presidential election—posted a map on her Political Action Committee (PAC) website that "marked seventeen winnable congressional districts held by Democrats with gun sights," including Giffords' district (Engels 122). Criticized in the aftermath of the Tucson shooting for encouraging violence against her political opponents, Palin released a video statement to Facebook on January 12, 2011, anticipating the speech Obama was to deliver later that day. In her statement, she called the accusations "reprehensible," and argued that "especially within hours of a tragedy unfolding, journalists and pundits should not manufacture a blood libel that serves only to incite the very hatred and violence they purport to condemn" (Berman and Lawrence). Thus, the stage was set for Obama's speech in Tucson, a speech that was expected to be "a defining moment in his presidency" that was "sure to contribute to forming the discourse" of his 2012 reelection campaign (Emanuel). In a politically and

emotionally charged climate, Obama faced the challenge of delivering a eulogy that appropriately commemorated the tragic events of the preceding days while also encouraging open dialogue among politicians and constituents about the difficult and divisive issue of gun ownership and use.

"What is best in America": Recounting Catastrophe

Representative Gabrielle Giffords' "Congress on Your Corner" event on January 8 was supposed to be an opportunity for Giffords to meet her constituents face-to-face and listen to their concerns. At 8:58 that morning, she tweeted, "My 1st Congress on Your Corner starts now. Please stop by to let me know what is on your mind or tweet me later" (@gabbygiffords). Just over an hour later, Jared Lee Loughner, an Arizona resident, shot Giffords in the head and ultimately killed six other people. Although it is still unknown exactly why Loughner committed this crime, his intention was to murder Giffords, a woman with political power, while she participated in one of the most fundamental and celebrated activities in the U.S. democratic system: a face-to face meeting between an elected representative and her constituents.[24]

Obama began his remarks by likening himself to those who were mourning, declaring that he had "come here tonight as an American who, like all Americans, kneels to pray with you today and will stand by you tomorrow." The contrast of kneeling and standing emphasized the gravity of the speech: before the community could stand united, it must first pause as a group to reflect, and even the president himself participated in this custom. Obama admitted that words often failed in the wake of such violence, and he confessed that "There is nothing I can say that will fill the sudden hole torn in your

[24] See Engels for an overview the immediate aftermath of the shooting.

hearts." The shooting had rendered the arena of political communication—those public sites where people could engage openly in politics—unsafe. By admitting that words were not all-powerful nor even sufficient after such an event, Obama took the first step toward renewing the political dialogue after such a silencing event.

Obama further signaled his humility when he made reference to scripture by quoting Psalm 46:

> There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
>
> the holy place where the Most High dwells.
>
> God is within her, she will not fall;
>
> God will help her at break of day.

In the aftermath of the shooting in Tucson, Obama relied on both his speechwriters and spiritual advisors to help him find an appropriate biblical reference for this speech (Parsons). The opening of this psalm is often cited in funerary settings because it begins with a reminder that God offers refuge and strength in times of difficulty, and Obama himself read Psalm 46 in full in honor of the 10th anniversary of the September 11 attacks. In his speech in Tucson, Obama recited a middle section of the psalm, which highlighted the fact that there was hope for the future, not only for the salvation of the dead but for the protection of the living. Quoting scripture is a common convention of eulogy because it emphasizes the president's position as the "national priest of our civil religion" (Campbell and Jamieson 80). Moreover, linking the notions of justice and God permits "presidents to tie their responses to terrorist attacks to the notion that justice will triumph," which serves to comfort those listening to the speech and defray their anger at the injustice of the preceding violent event (84).

After quoting scripture, Obama considered the circumstances of the shooting and described how and why it took place. He began by setting the scene of the shooting:

> On Saturday morning, Gabby, her staff, and many of her constituents gathered outside a supermarket to exercise their right to peaceful assembly and free speech. They were fulfilling a central tenet of the democracy envisioned by our founders—representatives of the people answering questions to their constituents, so as to carry their concerns back to our nation's capital. Gabby called it "Congress on Your Corner"—just an updated version of government of and by and for the people.

Obama described the event as a decidedly democratic activity, and he positioned the victims and survivors of the shooting as exemplars of public engagement who were taking part in noble civic work. The president then called it a "quintessentially American scene" which was ultimately "shattered by a gunman's bullets." This succinct description of the shooting is one of the few mentions of the violence itself in the 34-minute speech. Obama did not name the shooter in the entirety of the speech, describing him only as "a gunman." By recounting the shooting in this passive voice, Obama deemphasized Loughner's identity and agency.

Rather than focus on the shooting itself, Obama concentrated his remarks on the six victims who were fatally wounded because, he said, they "represented what is best in us, what is best in America." He began his eulogy of the individual victims with Judge John Roll, who had "served our legal system for nearly 40 years," and whose "colleagues described him as the hardest-working judge within the Ninth circuit." Roll was returning from Mass, which he attended "every day," when he "decided to stop by and say hi to his

representative." Obama made no mention of the shooting here, only that Roll was "survived by his loving wife, Maureen, his three sons, and his five beautiful grandchildren." When he honored Dorothy "Dot" Morris, the President described how she had been "traveling the open road" in an R.V. with her husband, George, and together they were "enjoying what their friends called a 50-year honeymoon." Once again, his narration of the shooting is focused on the victims rather than the shooter: when the gunfire began, "George, a former Marine, instinctively tried to shield his wife. Both were shot. Dot passed away." Although here Obama mentioned the violence that took place, it was only for the purpose of emphasizing the couple's love for one another.

Obama's descriptions of the four other victims were similar. Phyllis Schneck, originally from New Jersey, enjoyed spending time with her family during the summers when she returned to the east coast, and she had attended the event because "she took a liking to Gabby, and wanted to get to know her better." Dorwan Stoddard attended with his wife, Mary, and together they could be found either "on the road in their motor home" or "helping folks in need at the Mountain Avenue Church of Christ." According to Obama, Dorwan's "final act of selflessness was to dive on top of his wife, sacrificing his life for hers." Gabe Zimmerman, Giffords' outreach director, was characterized as having "died doing what he loved—talking with people and seeing how he could help." And, finally, Obama described Christina-Taylor Green, a precocious and compassionate nine-year-old, to whom he returned at the end of his speech. Obama focused on the achievements and admirable qualities of each of the victims and, when he did mention the shooting, it was only in the context of the victims' heroism and "quintessential Americanness." In this way, he acknowledged that "Our hearts are broken by their

sudden passing," but also that "Our hearts are full of hope and thanks for the 13 American who survived the shooting," including Giffords. In his description of the shooting, his focus was not on the perpetrator but on admiration and respect for the victims.

Obama continued this tone of admiration as he eulogized Green. After describing her as an A student, a dancer, a gymnast, a swimmer, and the only girl on her Little League team, Obama recounted how "She'd remind her mother, 'We are so blessed. We have the best life.'" Although Green's words were necessarily mediated—first by her mother, and then by Obama himself—he offered her a platform to inspire gratitude in the audience, although she was not present. He then directed this gratitude toward Giffords, who "courageously fights to recover even as we speak." The president described how, earlier that day, "a few minutes after we left her room and some of her colleagues in Congress were in the room, Gabby opened her eyes for the first time" since the shooting. This story of Giffords opening her eyes was also mediated by two people: her husband, Mark Kelly, and Obama himself. Kelly had granted Obama permission to transmit the occurrence.[25] Giffords, unable to speak on her own behalf, had to have her communication translated and conveyed by others, and her message suggested optimism and gratitude rather than anger and revenge.

Obama next directed his appreciation toward a number of other people for their acts of heroism. He began with Daniel Hernandez, a volunteer in Giffords' office, who "ran through the chaos to minister to your boss, and tended to her wounds and helped

[25] See Kornblut. According to those in the hospital room at the same time as Obama, including Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand, and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, Giffords opened one of her eyes five times and reached out for Kelly's hand when prompted.

keep her alive." Obama also gave thanks to "the men who tackled the gunman as he stopped to reload," along with "petite Patricia Maisch, who had wrestled away the killer's ammunition and undoubtedly saved some lives." He also acknowledged the first responders who came to the aid of those who had been injured. Obama emphasized that heroism does not require any special training, but rather lived "here, in the hearts of so many of our fellow citizens, all around us, just waiting to be summoned—as it was on Saturday morning." Obama ended his retelling by encouraging his audience to stand in awe of the courage shown during the shooting by everyday Americans, both those who survived and those who did not. The narrative was not intended to invoke vengeance or inspire retaliatory action, but rather, to mitigate the audience's anger by inspiring admiration and gratitude for both the victims and those who came to their aid.

Healing the Wound: Analyzing Communication

After paying tribute to the victims, Obama turned to analyzing and dismantling preexisting models of communication that he believed impeded addressing the issue of gun violence in America. He did so in a way that did not lay blame on the victims or survivors of the shooting, nor on the larger community. Arguing that the tragedy "poses a challenge to each of us," he reflected on its larger significance: "It raises a question of what, beyond prayers and expressions of concern, is required of us going forward. How can we honor the fallen? How can we be true to their memory?" These rhetorical questions marked a moment for public assessment and regrouping. The shooting in Tucson effectively silenced Giffords, Green, and the other victims, but it also threatened the sanctity of public discourse. When Obama asked how we might "be true to their

memory," he rejected immediate retaliatory action in favor of communal processing and dialogue. He explained that, "when a tragedy like this strikes, it is part of our nature to demand explanations—to try and pose some order on the chaos and make sense out of that which seems senseless." According to Obama, the debate surrounding "what might be done to prevent such tragedies in the future" was in fact "an essential ingredient in our exercise of self-government." However, he cautioned that "at a time when our discourse has become so sharply polarized—at a time when we are far too eager to lay the blame for all that ails the world at the feet of those who happen to think differently than we do—it's important for us to pause for a moment and make sure that we're talking with each other in a way that heals, not in a way that wounds." In short, he urged reflection rather than immediate reaction, and he encouraged his audience and the nation-at-large to consider what effect their own speech has on others.

Obama cautioned against looking for easy explanations for such tragic events. Although searching for the causes of the shooting might be tempting, he warned the audience, "Bad things happen, and we have to guard against simple explanations in the aftermath." Because "none of us can know exactly what triggered this vicious attack," he continued, it was not possible to know "what might have stopped these shots from being fired, or what thoughts lurked in the inner recesses of a violent man's mind." And though he acknowledged that "we have to examine all the facts behind this tragedy" and not "be passive in the face of such violence," he also warned that it might be necessary to "challenge old assumptions in order to lessen the prospects of such violence in the future." In the process, he concluded, it was important that we not "use this tragedy as one more occasion to turn on each other." "That we cannot do," he repeated. "That we

cannot do."

Obama thus discouraged people from "pointing fingers or assigning blame" as they talked about the facts of the tragedy. Instead, he encouraged them to "use this occasion to expand our moral imaginations, to listen to each other more carefully, to sharpen our instincts for empathy and remind ourselves of all the ways that our hopes and dreams are bound together." These hortatory statements lent themselves to an inherently pedagogical performance. Obama commanded but also performed the sort of discourse he called for, teaching the audience by example.

He continued with a list of questions that all Americans asked after such "sudden loss"—questions that caused us to "look backward" but also to "look forward; to reflect on the present and the future, on the manner in which we live our lives and nurture our relationships with those who are still with us." His performance of this internal dialectic included asking whether "we've shown enough kindness and generosity and compassion to the people in our lives," and "whether we're doing right by our children, or our community, whether our priorities are in order." According to Obama, "what matters is not wealth, or status, or power, or fame—but rather, how well we have loved—and what small part we have played in making the lives of other people better." He maintained that this "process of reflection, of making sure we align our values with our actions," was "what a tragedy like this requires." By necessity, this reflection also involved questioning preexisting models of communication, because the "reflection and debate" such tragedies inspired needed to be "worthy of those we have lost." Urging his listeners to avoid "the usual plane of politics and point-scoring and pettiness that drifts away in the next news cycle," Obama called for a more civil yet substantive public debate over gun violence—a

debate worthy of those who died in Tucson:

> And if, as has been discussed in recent days, their death helps usher in more civility in our public discourse, let us remember it is not because a simple lack of civility caused this tragedy—it did not—but rather because only a more civil and honest public discourse can help us face up to the challenges of our nation in a way that would make them proud.

Obama did not blame the people of the United States for the shooting, but he did hope the shooting might inspire them to take a hard look at the quality of public discourse in America and work toward a more civil and productive debate over gun violence.

"We can be better": Rebuilding Communication

Finally, after critiquing the prevailing norms of discourse, Obama returned to the figures he honored earlier, describing how Roll and Giffords "knew first and foremost that we are all Americans, and that we can question each other's ideas without questioning each other's love of country and that our task, working together, is to constantly widen the circle of our concern so that we bequeath the American Dream to future generations." Once again channeling the voices of those he had eulogized, Obama stated that "They believed—they believed, and I believe that we can be better." He then summarized what they—and he—thought might bring about that better world: "We may not be able to stop all evil in the world, but I know that how we treat one another, that's entirely up to us."

This reflection on the need for civility and mutual respect in turn rested on Obama's faith that, "for all our imperfections, we are full of decency and goodness, and

that the forces that divide us are not as strong as those that unite us." Obama claimed to believe this "in part because that's what a child like Christina-Taylor Green believed." Again, mediating Green's thoughts, he devoted the entire last section of his speech to the lessons to be learned from the life of the shooting's youngest victim:

> Imagine—imagine for a moment, here was a young girl who was just becoming aware of our democracy; just beginning to understand the obligations of citizenship; just starting to glimpse the fact that some day she, too, might play a part in shaping her nation's future. She had been elected to her student council. She saw public service as something exciting and hopeful. She was off to meet her congresswoman, someone she was sure was good and important and might be a role model. She saw all this through the eyes of a child, undimmed by the cynicism or vitriol that we adults all too often just take for granted.

By encouraging his audience members to place themselves in Green's shoes, Obama invited them to return to a time when rhetoric did not involve "cynicism or vitriol." His voice rose as he declared, "I want to live up to her expectations," working to make "our democracy" and "America to be as good as she imagined it." He then invited the audience to participate in that effort, emphasizing that "All of us—we should do everything we can to make sure this country lives up to our children's expectations." The audience applauded for nearly a full minute before Obama continued by noting that "Christina was given to us on September 11, 2001, one of 50 babies born that day to be pictures in a book called *Faces of Hope*." He described how, "On either side of her photo in that book were simple wishes for a child's life," including "I hope you help those in need" and "I hope you jump in rain puddles." Obama then closed on a plaintive note: "If

there are rain puddles in Heaven, Christina is jumping in them today." Green, the "face of hope" born on one of the darkest days in American history, embodied Obama's optimism that new modes of politics and communication might someday bring an end to such senseless violence.

Obama concluded his speech with a pledge to the youngest victim of the violence in Tucson: "And here on this Earth, here on this Earth, we place our hands over our hearts and we commit ourselves as Americans to forging a country that is forever worthy of her gentle, happy spirit." And with a prayer: "May God bless and keep those we've lost in restful and eternal peace. May he love and watch over the survivors. And may he bless the United States of America. Placing his hand over his heart as he spoke, he invited the audience to share in his pledge and his prayer, encouraging them to devote themselves to creating a world that was worthy of generations of Americans to come.

Gabrielle Giffords' and Christina-Taylor Green's involuntary silence after the shooting in Tucson offered an opportunity for Obama to speak on their behalf while emphasizing the horrific costs of gun violence. By unpacking, analyzing, and rebuilding communication after the violent event, Obama hoped to inspire the audience to engage productively and peacefully in civic discourse. Bookending his speech with the stories of Giffords and Green highlighted the exigency of this process, and he used the voices of those who had been silenced to advocate action that might prevent the deaths of other innocent victims.

In the years following the shooting, Giffords suffered from the language impairment disorder aphasia. Initially, Giffords was unable to speak without the help of her husband, and more than six years after the shooting he still was sometimes called

upon to translate her words and gestures. At the 2016 Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, both Giffords and her husband delivered speeches in support of democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton. Both speeches focused on Clinton's support for more stringent gun control measures, and Giffords' speech in particular marked a powerful moment of the DNC: she walked onstage unassisted and delivered a speech without the help of her husband. In halting but deliberate speech, Giffords stated:

> I have a passion for helping people. I always have. So does Hillary Clinton. Hillary is tough. Hillary is courageous. She will fight to make our families safer. In the White House, she will stand up to the gun lobby. That's why I'm voting for Hillary! I know what hate and division can do to our communities. Let's stand up for responsibility. Together we can make sure that respect, hard work, and progress win in November. In Congress, I learned an important lesson: strong women get things done! Let's work together to make Hillary our president. I'm with her! And I know you are too. Speaking is difficult for me. But come January, I want to say these two words: "Madam President." (qtd. in Millstein)

The final words of Giffords' speech were heavy with significance: Giffords supported Clinton's candidacy and hoped that she would win, but Giffords exerted much effort to articulate her though. Giffords' condition continued to improve after her speech at the DNC. However, Clinton's loss in the presidential election to Donald Trump in effect silenced women in the public political sphere once again.

Obama's Tucson speech was an exercise in both memorializing and educating the audience about the ethical uses of rhetoric after violent events. He encouraged the audience "to sharpen our instincts for empathy and remind ourselves of all the ways that

our hopes and dreams are bound together" after such a tragedy, and he resisted placing blame or encouraging immediate action in the speech itself. Obama posed a series of rhetorical questions, performing before the audience the "process of reflection" that ensures that we "align our values with our actions." This performance was inherently pedagogical: Obama performed the introspective examination he believed was necessary after the shooting in order to inspire the audience to do the same, and that exercise functioned both to diffuse anger and to delay or prevent retaliation. Even as Obama mediated Giffords' and Green's thoughts and words, he did so in a way that was designed not to promote retribution, but to encourage more productive, honest conversations in the wake of such national tragedies.

Gun Violence and National Eulogy after Tucson

Although Obama's initiatives were relatively modest and had widespread support, newly elected President Donald Trump revoked some of these executive actions within months of taking office. He rescinded legislation that made it more difficult for people with certain mental illnesses to purchase guns, for example—a decision that was praised by the NRA (Vitali). He also became the first sitting president since President Ronald Reagan to address the organization itself (Keneally). In this address, Trump emphasized that the "eight-year assault on your Second Amendment freedoms has come to a crashing end," and he pledged that the government would no longer be "trying to undermine your rights and your freedoms as Americans" (qtd. in Gorman). After the shooting in Las Vegas on October 1, 2017, during which 58 people were murdered in just ten minutes during a country music festival, Trump promised that the United States would "be talking

about gun laws as time goes by" (Landers). Yet he also declined to comment on a bill, then in the House of Representatives, that would have made it easier to purchase gun silencers.

Debates over gun laws in the United States are far from over. Obama's speech in Tucson marked a moment in his presidency when he was tasked with eulogizing victims of gun violence while avoiding accusations that he was somehow "politicizing" the tragedy. In the process, he proved himself to be among the most articulate orators in American history. As the political waters continue to ebb and flow, and people in the United States struggle with how best to respond to and address gun violence, this sentiment from Obama's Tucson speech remains true: if the victims' deaths "usher in more civility in our public discourse, let us remember it is not because a simple lack of civility caused this tragedy… but rather because only a more civil and honest public discourse can help us face up to the challenges of our nation in a way that would make them proud."

Obama's rhetorical abilities in Tucson were not unanimously praised. Though as president he represented "all Americans," as a Black man Obama spoke from a position of paradox: as president, he was the ultimate example of the citizen, but his racial and ethnic identities had been historically marginalized by the very tradition of presidential rhetoric in which he spoke. In the next chapter, I investigate his speech in Charleston after the shooting at Emanuel AME Church, a speech delivered in a surrogate Black Church by a member of the Black Church on behalf of deceased members. In his Tucson speech Obama did not make any strong policy statements, and he primarily educated the audience about how to engage in productive discourse after violent events. He did not

need to address issues of racial inequality, though issues of gender inequality were, as addressed above, the subtext of the speech. In Charleston, however, he directly addressed issues facing the Black community and spoke unequivocally in favor of such policies as removing the Confederate flag from governmental buildings with the goal of rhetorically navigating among his multiple audiences and effectively encouraging them to follow his deliberative statements.

CHAPTER III

THE PRESIDENT, THE PREACHER, AND THE CITIZEN-ORATOR IN OBAMA'S EULOGY FOR REVEREND PINCKNEY

On the evening of June 17, 2015, a 21-year-old white supremacist fatally shot nine people at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, a place affectionately called by its parishioners "Mother Emanuel." The victims included Reverend Clementa Pinckney, senior pastor, and eight members of the congregation: Reverend Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Cynthia Hurd, Susie Jackson, Ethel Lance, Reverend Depayne Middleton-Doctor, Tywanza Sanders, Reverend Daniel Simmons Sr., and Myra Thompson. In his eulogy, delivered on June 26, 2015, President Barack Obama interwove the Christian notion of grace with a call to political action. Speeches, of course, are meant to be heard and experienced, and this is emphatically true of this speech, given the both the setting—Obama spoke from the pulpit at the College of Charleston, surrounded by members of Emanuel AME Church, who were dressed in clerical robes—and Obama's oratorical ability. His speech was marked by call-and-response participation, and he closed by singing the first stanza of "Amazing Grace." Much of the eulogy came across as a sermon rather than a typical presidential address, which led Reverend Norvel Goff, a leader in the AME Church, to refer to Obama afterward as "Reverend President" (Sack and Gardiner).

Obama spoke in the tradition of African American preaching, and he delivered his speech in a surrogate Black Church to local and national Black communities in honor of those who were murdered. However, Obama was also tasked with speaking to an

audience of "all Americans" in his role as president. The disjunction of these two roles, as Philip Howard indicates, brings to light "one of the longstanding contradictions of American democracy," namely that "serving the democratic rights of people of Color (in this case, African Americans) seems to be considered within dominant discourse to be at loggerheads with serving the rights of 'all Americans,' while, in actual fact, these projects should be seen as reinforcing each other" (Howard 383). Moreover, as president, Obama spoke from the position of an office whose "historical function" has required "maintaining the status quo of White privilege" (384). It would seem that these two tasks—mourning and honoring members of the Black Church as one who is associated with that church, *and* speaking as president from within a (white) rhetorical tradition—were fundamentally at odds with one another.

It is not my goal nor my place as a white American woman to judge whether Obama should have had to appeal to a white audience in a speech delivered in honor of members of the Black Church, whether with this speech he successfully enacted positive material change for African Americans, or whether, by investigating this speech, one can definitively answer the question of whether "African agency possible within dominant institutions" in the United States (Howard 381). Rather, I will explore *how* Obama rhetorically navigated his dual roles of preacher and president, a task fraught with contradiction when one considers how, in the United States, "full de facto citizenship is not extended to African Americans, and Americanness is implicitly held to mean *White* Americanness" (384).

Obama's "solution" to this double-bind rests with President Abraham Lincoln. His speeches—most notably, his *Gettysburg Address*—still occupy a sacred place in post-

Civil War America. In the *Gettysburg Address*, Lincoln himself mediated the tradition of classical Athenian *epitāphios lōgos*, and his address was rhetorically shaped by Pericles' funeral oration. As Garry Wills notes, although Edward Everett was closely associated with the Greek Revival movement and referenced Pericles explicitly in his famously protracted *Gettysburg Address*, which he delivered just before Lincoln's considerably shorter speech, it is Lincoln's Address that "[set] standards for the future," "created a political prose for America," and captured "the challenge of *the moment*," just as Pericles' speech had established a historical benchmark in his time (52). By channeling Lincoln, who remains a paradigm of the American citizen-orator, Obama accessed the white presidential rhetorical tradition, a tradition that itself developed from classical Athenian notions of citizenship and speech. The ultimate goal of this engagement was mobilizing white Americans to support gun control initiatives.

My primary concern in this chapter is the deliberative element of Pericles' and Obama's respective speeches, the point at which the *rhētor* exhorted the audience to accomplish specific tasks after the speech is over. The success of Pericles' and Obama's deliberative statements in their respective speeches were successful, at least in part, insofar as the speaker convinced the audience that he had the appropriate ethos to make such demands. I consider the citizen-orator roles performed by Pericles and Obama in conversation primarily because of Lincoln's mediation of Pericles' oration, and the revered place Lincoln held for Obama during his presidency.[26] I argue that, in order to mobilize his white audience, Obama performed the role of citizen-orator, a role, in the

[26] As Cody Keenan, Obama's Chief Speechwriter who wrote the first draft of the Charleston eulogy, explained, "Lincoln is Obama's favorite," and since Obama's first presidential campaign in 2008, his speechwriters "immersed [themselves] in Lincoln just to try to get up to Obama's speed." Personal interview, 27 Sept. 2018.

context of the presidency, that inherently excluded African Americans. In order to fulfill this inherently exclusionary citizen-orator role, Obama spoke from within the white tradition of presidential rhetoric, a tradition which finds its origin in classical Athens and, in the case of eulogy, the figure of Pericles. I do not claim that Obama consciously accessed the classical Athenian tradition in his Charleston speech. However, by speaking in the tradition of presidential eulogistic rhetoric and thereby invoking Lincoln, Obama necessarily connected himself to the classical ideal of the citizen-orator, a role heretofore performed solely by white presidents.

To be clear, African American preaching and the Black Church have histories independent of Eurocentric comparisons to imperialist white religious and political practices.[27] These independent histories further emphasize how, in his Charleston speech, Obama had two separate and potentially irreconcilable tasks: he was asked to eulogize members of the AME Church from his personal position as an African American man who had both met Reverend Pinckney and was a longtime member of the Black Church; and he was also asked to deliver a speech from his political position as president. To explore these positions, I will first define the term "citizen-orator" and describe the qualities of this classical figure as it appears in Pericles' and Lincoln's eulogistic speeches. Then, I will explore the two independent roles Obama fulfilled in his speech: the first role is that of preacher in the Black Church, and the second is that of citizen-orator in the classically-derived tradition of presidential rhetoric. I will explore how he navigated and fulfilled the expectations of each role, and will consider this speech in the larger context of presidential rhetoric and eulogistic speech.

Masculinity remains a prerequisite for American presidents, and this fact reflects

[27] For such histories, see, for example, Abrams, Clark, Gilbert, and Wilmore.

and perpetuates the association of the citizen-orator with a masculine person. The lack of representation of women in American politics, and especially representation of Black and indigenous women and other women of color is unfortunately outside of the explicit scope of this article, but remains persistently assumed in the background and should be acknowledged. As Theodore Sheckels, Nichola Gutgold, and Diana Carlin explain, "the path to 'Madame President" [is] more tortuous than the path to 'Mr. President'" (169). In a rhetorical sense, women must be dynamic in their speech, because too restrained a style is not viewed as presidential by the public (170). Push the dynamic style too far, however, and the candidate risks being labeled too aggressive or assertive.[28] Obama's election as the first Black man to serve as President of the United States challenged the formerly unbroken sequence of white men to serve in the highest office. However, there are many more populations that remain unrepresented in the figure of the president, including women. For this reason, throughout this article I refer to the citizen-orator and the president by masculine pronouns.

Though U.S. democracy and its political oratory is in large part modeled after those of classical Athens, women were extremely restricted in their movement and speech in Athens, while in the U.S. those restrictions in large part do not exist—at least in an official sense. K.R. Walters points out that women in classical Athens had no political rights and could not hold office, and were, in essence, "perpetual minors, unable to perform any legal or economic function without the express approval of their trustees" (194). There is no surviving evidence for Athenian women's influence and power in the private domestic sphere, and what evidence there is involves women's influence on the

[28] See also Bachmann, Harp, and Loke; Falk; Dubriwny; Anderson; and Lawrence and Rose.

public, masculine, political world.[29] As noted in Chapter II, while women in the U.S. have political and personal agency that far outstrips their classical Athenian counterparts, there are still men who police women's movements in both the private and public spheres. It is ironic, then, that U.S. democracy is modeled after the "democracy" of Athens—a political system which did not include anyone who was not an Athenian citizen man—but, regarding women in positions of political power in the U.S., though women are permitted to run for and hold the presidency, as of yet that has not occurred.

The Preacher and the Black Church

In his Charleston speech, Obama primarily served as a preacher before a congregation of members of the Black Church. It is necessary to consider the history of Black preaching as it intersects with the history of the AME Church and the history of the Black Church in the United States to understand how Obama performed and fulfilled this critical figure.[30]

The history of the AME Church emphasizes the importance of the role of the preacher, and the preacher's responsibilities as a leader in the community. Since its inception, members of the AME Church have been united by both religious and political

[29] Walters also explains how, in classical Athens, it was not proper to use a woman's name in public, and "to use a woman's name publicly was to characterize her as 'common' in both senses of the word, as cheap and low and as a woman every man could have access to" (200-201). It is significant, then, that we know Aspasia's name—and her reputation of being manipulative, outspoken, and a possible sex worker—but we do not know the name of Pericles' first wife.

[30] With respect to capitalization and terminology, I follow Anthony Pinn. The capitalized phrase "Black Church" specifies "the collective reality of black Christianity across denominational lines." The phrase "Black churches" refers to "local churches within a particular denomination." He uses the adjective "Black" rather than "African American" to describe the Black Church to emphasize how "this church developed in response to racial tensions and prejudices," and this terminology "keeps this racial conflict in the forefront of the discussion." I follow his use of the adjective African to refer to black Americans prior to emancipation, and white Americans prior to emancipation are referred to as Europeans, "to denote the center of their history" (ix).

interests, and its leaders and parishioners alike are expected to participate in civic life. The AME Church has from its inception advocated for activism against racism and oppression. *The Doctrines and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, first published in 1817, states the Church's position on slavery: "We will not receive any person into our society, as a member, who is a slave-holder; and any who are now members, that have slaves, and refuse to emancipate them after notification being given by the preacher having the charge, shall be excluded" (190).

On May 5, 1794, Richard Allen held the first meeting of what would become Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, referred to as "Mother Bethel," which remains the oldest AME congregation in the United States (Walker 8).[31] Between 1794 and 1810, membership of Bethel AME Church rose nearly tenfold, from the original 40 parishioners to almost 400 (Newman 130). Prior to the Civil War, Morris Brown established his own independent African Methodist church in Charleston, South Carolina, but South Carolina law prevented him from legally associating his local church with the AME Church: predominantly African churches were illegal in the South because slaveholders feared those churches would serve as sites of organization for slave revolts, and, as a result, African people could only attend churches where the majority of the membership was European (Walker 19-20). Morris met Allen at an AME annual conference in 1818 in Philadelphia, and the two established a longstanding relationship between their churches (Newman 243). In 1822, Morris' Charleston church was forced to close after many of its parishioners were believed to have been associated with a slave uprising organized by Denmark Vesey, a founding member of Morris' church. After

[31] The current structure of the Bethel AME Church, dedicated in 1890, still stands in in South Philadelphia and in 1974 was named a National Historic Landmark.

plans for the rebellion were discovered hours before it was to take place, more than 30 African people were hanged, including Vesey himself, and some without trial, because of their suspected association with the planned events. Morris then moved to Philadelphia and within a few years became the assistant pastor at Bethel AME Church in 1825 (Newman 20). Though Emanuel was burned to the ground by Europeans in 1822, it was rebuilt between 1865 and 1872, a project which was overseen by Robert Vesey, the son of Denmark Vesey.[32]

The history of Black preaching is vast, and the phrase "describes a rich and varied tradition, covering a broad configuration of motivations, theological points of view, art forms, structures, and styles of delivery," as Cleophus LaRue emphasizes (9). According to Dolan Hubbard, generally "the black sermon in its emphasis on liberation and true Christianity is offered as a corrective to an inadequate history in which black people need not exist, except as beasts of burden" (4). The preacher, then, is "the transformational agent who walks the critical tightrope between the sacred and the secular; his speech act (sermon) is the agent for historical location" (14). LaRue suggests that there are some common characteristics of Black preaching regardless of religious sect, which include strong biblical content, creative uses of language, expressed emotion, and ministerial authority (9-12). According to Hubbard, when the sermon is performed effectively, the preacher "taps into the linguistic spaces to bring the community to the point of recognition—the collective catharsis" (7). In Charleston, Obama himself acted as preacher and delivered a sermon that fulfilled the criteria of Black preaching: he intertwined the sacred and the secular to imagine a future when violence against the

[32] Vesey's structure was destroyed by an earthquake in 1886; the current structure was built in 1891 ("History").

African American community would not exist, and expressed himself with both emotion and authority.

Generally, in the Black Church the act of preaching and the figure of the preacher play a role beyond religious leadership. According to Henry Mitchell, the preacher is a "natural leader of the Black community," and that at various times the preacher must assume various roles with "concomitant responsibilities," including those of "pastor or spiritual leader, political leader, social leader, and very often the leading proponent and exemplar of education" (Mitchell, qtd. in Niles 43). The preacher figure in the Black Church is both a member of its citizenry and a model for it, a person who is invested in the community and, because of the preacher's training and education, argues for its best interests. The preacher is a leader and role model, advises parishioners on matters both spiritual and social, and acts in the best interest of the community. Obama assumed the role of preacher in his Charleston speech before a congregation of fellow mourning members of the Black Church, and his audience at the College of Charleston recognized him in this role.

The Citizen-Orator and the *Epitāphios Lōgos*

Derived from an entirely distinct tradition, the citizen-orator is a figure that finds its origin in the Western classical tradition. It is important to be clear about the use of the term "citizen" in "citizen-orator" and how its denotation functions within the concept of the citizen-orator, because the word "citizen" has a specific and limited legal definition in the United States. Concerning Obama's 2011 statement at the dedication of the Martin Luther King, Jr. memorial in Washington, D.C., Robert Terrill characterizes the speech as

"a speech about citizenship, citizenship not as a legal status but rather as a mode of address, not merely a recognition of one's self in another but also a way of speaking to one another in a manner that articulates that recognition with a democratic political culture" (97). This is the understanding of citizenship embedded in the notion of the citizen-orator: the word "citizen" here does not denote legal status, but rather, emphasizes the individual's engagement in and support of democratic discourse. The citizen-orator, then, is a public figure actively engaged in democratic deliberation. When I employ the terms "citizen" and "citizenship" in this context, I refer to people engaged in civic life, not only to those born on U.S. soil or who are naturalized citizens.

The citizen-orator possesses one essential quality: since his skills are interwoven with and dependent upon civic life, he is a categorically *public* figure, and this criterion is present in both ancient Greek and Roman rhetorical traditions. A few illustrative examples are offered here. For example, Aristotle begins the *Rhetoric* with the statement that rhetoric is the *antīstrophos* of dialectic, and while the exact meaning of "*antīstrophos*" in this context remains a subject of debate, the philosopher posited that the public speech of rhetoric is the correlative to, or perhaps grows out of, the private one-on-one argumentation of dialectic (I.1.1). The *rhetor*, as opposed to the dialectician, speaks in public and his goal is to produce persuasion in an audience. Indeed, Book I of the *Rhetoric* contains Aristotle's examination of what he believed were the three species of public speech: deliberative, epideictic, and forensic.

Three centuries later, Cicero (in the mouth of Crassus, his teacher), argued that the orator cannot make specific arguments about public affairs (*rerum publicarum*) without knowledge of laws (*legum*), customs (*morum*), justice (*iuris scientia*), and the

nature of humankind (*natura hominum incognita*) (*De Oratore* 1.48). Knowledge of civic life and customs (*vitam atque mores*), then, allows the orator to argue persuasively even in subject areas with which he is unfamiliar (1.68). For Cicero, there was no orator without the *res publica*, and the public forum where deliberation could take place (1.69).[33]

Finally, in the *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian described the orator he wished to shape with his education as "the orator as defined by Marcus Cato, 'a good man, skilled in speaking (*vir bonus dicendi peritus*)'" (XII.1.1).[34] Quintilian emphasized that an orator must be a *vir bonus*; otherwise, the educator would find himself having "rendered the worst of services to mankind, if I forge these weapons not for a soldier, but for a robber" (XII.1.1). For Quintilian, the civic aspect of the citizen-orator figure related to the notion of the *vir bonus*: although his readers likely did not directly influence the structure of government or its legislation—the Roman Empire lasted another 200 years after Quintilian's death—he impressed upon each of them that in their private lives and in public disputes, one had a responsibility to others in his community to argue ethically and articulately.

For classical Athenians, Pericles was the exemplar of the citizen-orator. Living during the fifth century BCE, Pericles was a statesman who had served as a general in the Athenian army, and had used his status to initiate an expansive—and expensive—

[33] Quare hic locus de vita et moribus totus est oratori perdiscendus: cetera si non didicerit, tamen poterit, si quando opus erit, ornare dicendo, si modo erunt ad eum delata, et tradita. "For which reason this division of philosophy, concerned with human life and manners, must all of it be mastered by the orator; as for the other matters, even though he has not studied them, he will still be able, whenever the necessity arises, to beautify them by his eloquence, if only they are brought to his notice and described to him" (1.69). English and Latin of Cicero adapted from Sutton and Rackham.

[34] …ad facultatem dicendi conati sumus, pessime mereamur de rebus humanis si latroni comparamus haec arma, non militi. English and Latin of Quintilian adapted from Butler.

building project that included the Parthenon and the statue of Athena that resided within. His funeral oration in Thucydides' text is a subject of continual intrigue. The issue of authenticity is ever-present in Thucydides' work: by the historian's own admission, the speeches in his text were not word-for-word transmissions, but rather, were true to the spirit of the original speeches. Pericles' funeral oration is unlike other conventional funeral orations of the time in that the orator did not mention the actions of the dead, and even suggested that he did not need to, as the deeds of those who have perished should be sufficiently rewarded by the public funeral funded by the state.[35] As Simon Hornblower reminds us, there are no contemporary exempla of *epitāphioi* to which one may compare Pericles' oration, and it is very possible that convention had changed between the time of Pericles' oration and extant fourth-century examples of funerary speeches (295).

Nicole Loraux explains that the funeral oration was at "once a eulogy of worthy men, an honor accorded to the dead, and a stock of instructive examples" that was, at least for Pericles, "a lesson in civic morality intended for the living" (98). Athenian funeral orations honored the dead and encouraged the community to act in as noble and admirable a manner as the deceased. Therefore, it is not appropriate to classify the genre of funeral oration as merely epideictic, as these speeches also contained deliberative elements, which instructed viewers about how they should act in the future (78). Loraux argues that "the funeral oration was responsible for reminding Athenians that, in its many acts, diversity of situations, and vicissitudes of change, the city remained one and the same" (132) because "for the orator, the empire is merely the *sign* of a deeper, more

[35] ἐμοὶ δὲ ἀρκοῦν ἂν ἐδόκει εἶναι ἀνδρῶν ἀγαθῶν ἔργῳ γενομένων ἔργῳ καὶ δηλοῦσθαι τὰς τιμάς, οἷα καὶ νῦν περὶ τὸν τάφον τόνδε δημοσίᾳ παρασκευασθέντα ὁρᾶτε…. (II.35.1) "For myself, I should have thought that the worth which had displayed itself in deeds, would be sufficiently rewarded by honors also shown by deeds; such as you now see in this funeral prepared at the people's cost."

durable reality, namely, the greatness of Athens" (85). Pericles in his funeral oration not only praised the dead, but reminded the living about what made Athens a great city, and how they might continue her legacy.

In Pericles' oration, the statesman indicated that he would not adhere to the generally accepted structure of a funeral oration. He did not recount noteworthy battles, including the Battle of Marathon, which Loraux describes as a "compulsory topos of national history" for Athens because the battle "provides the orator in search of grandiloquence with a purple passage and inexhaustible lessons in virtue for generations of young Athenians" (132). Pericles instead chose to dwell upon those things that led Athens to its current flourishing state: namely, "what was the road by which we reached our position, what the form of government under which our greatness grew, what the national habits out of which it sprang" (II.36.1).[36] Since the deeds of the Athenian forebears were already known, Pericles expressed that he did not need to reference them explicitly. Thucydides' Pericles shirked convention, subverting the expected elements of a funeral oration while "exhorting the citizens to die for the city, whatever euphemisms are used to disguise the appeal" (Loraux 98). Pericles' speech was intended to rouse the Athenian population toward continuing the war effort in accordance with his military plans, and he emphasized to his audience that Athens would not only prevail in the war against Sparta and its allies, but also persist into the future as a constant entity as it had persisted through the past and present.

[36] …ἀπὸ δὲ οἵας τε ἐπιτηδεύσεως ἤλθομεν ἐπ᾽ αὐτὰ καὶ μεθ᾽ οἵας πολιτείας καὶ τρόπων ἐξ οἵων μεγάλα ἐγένετο….

Funeral Oration and the Citizen-Orator in the United States

In his examination of the place of oratory in the American education system, William Denman theorizes that the "concept of 'citizen-orator' had a central role in the link between the teaching and practice of rhetoric both in ancient Greece and in colonial America," and that this concept—"that a well-educated citizen could, and should, be an active participant in the deliberations of the polis"—was an essential component of the growth of democracy in the United States (10). Prior to the rise of industrialization in the 20th century, Denman argues, "the teaching of rhetoric was an instrumental part of the development of that civic persona, the 'citizen-orator,' whose skills were at the service of the community" (3). While Denman contends that the development and training of citizen-orators has slowly disappeared in contemporary education in the U.S., I argue that this concept remains in full effect in the figure of the president. The president is, or ought to be, the paradigm of the citizen-orator: a person constantly engaged in democratic discourse who uses his skills for the good of the state.

Obama engaged with the presidential tradition of speaking as a citizen-orator through Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*, which itself engages with Pericles' funeral oration. As Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson note, Lincoln's speech fulfilled the criteria of national eulogy, a category which describes a "unique blend of eulogistic content and elements that reconstitute the nation" after tragic events, and an interpretation of the meaning of those events for the citizenry (75). By Campbell and Jamieson's definition of national eulogy, Obama's speech in Charleston met the expectations of the genre.

As for Pericles, Wills explains that Pericles' speech "became the most famous

oration of its kind, a model endlessly copied, praised, and cited—especially in the early nineteenth century, during America's Greek Revival" (41). Everett referenced Pericles' sentiments throughout his speech.[37] As James Stevenson notes, the Library of Congress loaned a copy of Plutarch's *Lives* to the White House during the period of April 7 to July 29, 1862. The edition lent out contained the *Life of Pericles*, in which the Greek historian Plutarch references, but does not quote, the funeral oration. While we cannot say with absolute certainty that Lincoln read Pericles' speech in translation, Pericles' speech was clearly a point of reference available at the time. However, Stevenson states, "the most compelling evidence that Lincoln's Address borrowed inspiration from the Funeral Oration is found in the remarkable parallels of ideas and diction that the two speeches exhibit."[38]

Stevenson points to a number of elements of Pericles' speech that also appear in Lincoln's condensed oration. For example, Pericles and Lincoln each referred to the custom he fulfilled by offering a eulogy "to commemorate the patriotic dead" (Stevenson). Each stated that he knew his words would be "considered inadequate by his listeners," because it is not possible for orators to offer words that can match the deeds of those who have died (Stevenson). Furthermore, while Pericles and Lincoln saw their respective societies as "egalitarian meritocracies," they also viewed them as exceptional, and, for this reason were "worth defending" (Stevenson). Other related sentiments include that both speakers emphasized how "battle bestows virtue and lasting honor"

[37] See also Bray, who argues that it is "somewhat likely" that Lincoln read the funeral oration in translation between the years 1837 and 1860 (60), because the text has been "Attested by at least one of Lincoln's acquaintances, or mentioned in the Library of Congress circulation records, or reasonably thought to be among books Lincoln owned" (34).

[38] For further exploration of the relationship between Pericles' speech and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, see Stow.

(Stevenson). Ultimately, each speaker used "the matchless sacrifice of soldiers who had fallen in battle" to end their speeches with "moving appeals for the living to continue the struggle" (Stevenson). Wills compares Pericles' quintessential focus on the collective rather than the individual to Lincoln's generalizing articles, such as in the phrases "*a* great civil war" and "*a* great battlefield" (54). And though Everett was much more the classicist than Lincoln, Everett's speech ran far longer than Pericles' *epitāphios*, and, notably, Gorgias' extant *epitāphios* "is actually no longer than Lincoln's Address" (52). The most important contrast in both Pericles' and Lincoln's speeches is that between life and death, a contrast that is reinforced by the orator's praise of the fallen and his advice to the living (59).

However, Pericles' and Lincoln's speeches are not without their differences. Stevenson argues that the "principal difference which sets the Address apart from the Oration is the intense spirituality which is visible in the address but which is absent from the Oration." While Pericles' speech offered much in the way of historical explanation, there is very little in the speech that qualifies as "emotive inspiration." Significantly, Lincoln's speech "carries one from thoughts to glory to thoughts of sacrifice, from thoughts of victory to thoughts of humility, from thoughts of hatred to thoughts of forgiveness, and from thoughts of death to thoughts of rebirth" (Stevenson).

This is not to suggest that Obama's speechwriters read the *Gettysburg Address* in preparation for composing the Charleston speech, or that they had read Pericles' oration at all. In a personal interview, Keenan remarked that speechwriters do not have time to reread material to prepare a speech, but as scholars of speechwriting, significant speeches such as the *Gettysburg Address* are "always kind of there in our minds," and they are

"aware of what's come before without necessarily going back and looking at it" immediately before composing a presidential speech. Adam Frankel, former senior speechwriter to Obama, echoed this sentiment in a 2015 article in *Time* that "the best way to learn how to write speeches is to read the great ones," and he named Pericles' speech among those he considers great. When asked for speechwriting tips, Keenan suggested that "any great speech has to speak to something bigger than that particular moment," and while it is not necessary to "write speeches with an eye towards what people will say about it in 50 years," as a speechwriter composes a speech, they are "thinking about the broader sweep of history and where [they] fit" ("How to write a winning political speech").

In the context of the citizen-orator figure, a citizen-orator is a decidedly public figure educated in civic matters who, while representative of the citizenry, is also an exemplary member of it. The most visible modern expression of this figure in United States politics is the president, who ought to be the paradigm citizen-orator: both an average citizen and an exemplary one, engaged in public discourse, who uses his skills in service of public good. Lincoln very much fulfilled the role of citizen-orator, an average yet exemplary member of the American citizenry who considered himself unworthy of delivering a memorial address, but delivered one regardless because it was "altogether fitting and proper." However, he also recognized his place as one piece in a collective democratic whole, as expressed by his sentiment that, "in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground."[39]

J. Christian Spielvogel notes that the *Gettysburg Address* has been used alternately "to support either a harmonious vision of postwar regional reconciliation

[39] Quotes from Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address* are from the Bliss edition.

between whites or a commitment to postwar racial justice and equality" (26), and offers the example that, in the context of Gettysburg National Military Park (CNMP), the National Park Service has at times used Lincoln's speech "as an eloquent expression of white regional reconciliation" (28). Quotations from Lincoln's speech appear in the Visitor Center among collages and photographs that suggest, for example, that the "We" of "We are met on a great battlefield" refers to "a reunited (white) nation made whole by sectional reunion" (30). When interpreted from this perspective, the *Gettysburg Address* and, by association, Lincoln himself represent *white* reconciliation of the North and South, "perpetuating a racially exclusive memory of the war" (54). Whether Lincoln intended this exclusionary memory of the war is not paramount; the fact remains that the tradition of presidential rhetoric is one rooted in imperialism, colonialism, and whiteness. It is only possible to interpret the *Gettysburg Address* as expression of "white regional reconciliation" if the tradition with which Lincoln engaged was itself rooted in whiteness.

As Michelle Obama stated in her speech at the 2016 Democratic National Convention ("Transcript: Read Michelle Obama's full speech from the 2016 DNC"):

> …the story that has brought me to this stage tonight…[is] the story of generations of people who felt the lash of bondage, the shame of servitude, the sting of segregation, but who kept on striving and hoping and doing what needed to be done so that today I wake up every morning in a house that was built by slaves. And I watch my daughters, two beautiful, intelligent, black young women playing with their dogs on the White House lawn.

The presidency and the house in which the president resides are *themselves* the barrier that has excluded African Americans; the Obamas' residence in the White House did not

change the home's (or the country's) imperialist history. Similarly, in order to participate in the tradition of presidential rhetoric, a tradition rooted in this same imperialist history, it was necessary for Obama to speak from within the presidential rhetorical tradition—a tradition rooted in whiteness—which he did by looking to Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address* and Lincoln himself as models, and, by association, Pericles and his funeral oration.

Prior to Obama's election in 2008, the "public" role of citizen-orator extended only to a white public, and as a result the citizen-orator role performed by the president had been limited to white men. In his 2017 article "My President Was Black," Ta-Nehisi Coates writes that, "Against the specter of black pathology, against the narrow images of welfare moms and deadbeat dads, [Obama's] time in the White House had been an eight-year showcase of a healthy and successful black family spanning three generations, with two dogs to boot. In short, he became a symbol of black people's everyday, extraordinary Americanness." Obama's election expanded the concept of "everyday Americanness" and, as president, he was an exemplary yet ordinary member of the American citizenry, a public figure invested in democratic discourse, who used his skills in service of public good. However, the tradition in which this presidential citizen-orator role came to be is one in which protecting African Americans and promoting their interests, even when these actions upset the white public, only recently become part of its discourse.

Obama's Charleston Eulogy and Pericles' Funeral Oration

Syllogistically, then, we may read Obama's oration in Charleston in the context of the classical Athenian funeral oration, not to equate the preacher and the citizen-orator—two distinct roles derived from two distinct traditions—but to consider how, as an

African American man, Obama navigated among the dueling expectations of his audience(s): some expected him to deliver a eulogistic sermon as a preacher in the Black Church, while others expected him to deliver a national eulogy as President of the United States. Obama's speech alternately spoke to his audience of members of the AME Church and the Black Church-at-large as preacher *and* as president, while to his white audience he spoke only as president.

Both Pericles' and Obama's speeches began with an epideictic section in which the orator praised those who died, and the orators established themselves as members of their respective citizenries. However, while Pericles established himself among the Athenian citizenry but was careful not to ostracize his non-Athenian audience, Obama established himself as a member not of the general citizenry of the United States, but more specifically as a member of the African American religious community.

> Pericles began his funeral oration by expressing hesitation about his speech:
>
> For myself, I should have thought that the worth which had displayed itself in deeds, would be sufficiently rewarded by honors also shown by deeds; such as you now see in this funeral prepared at the people's cost. And I could have wished that the reputations of many brave men were not to be imperiled in the mouth of a single individual, to stand or fall according as he spoke well or ill. (II.35.1)[40]

The politician immediately placed himself squarely within the Athenian democratic tradition by emphasizing that, in a democracy, it should not fall upon the individual to

[40] οἱ μὲν πολλοὶ τῶν ἐνθάδε ἤδη εἰρηκότων ἐπαινοῦσι τὸν προσθέντα τῷ νόμῳ τὸν λόγον τόνδε, ὡς καλὸν ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐκ τῶν πολέμων θαπτομένοις ἀγορεύεσθαι αὐτόν. ἐμοὶ δὲ ἀρκοῦν ἂν ἐδόκει εἶναι ἀνδρῶν ἀγαθῶν ἔργῳ γενομένων ἔργῳ καὶ δηλοῦσθαι τὰς τιμάς, οἷα καὶ νῦν περὶ τὸν τάφον τόνδε δημοσίᾳ παρασκευασθέντα ὁρᾶτε, καὶ μὴ ἐν ἑνὶ ἀνδρὶ πολλῶν ἀρετὰς κινδυνεύεσθαι εὖ τε καὶ χεῖρον εἰπόντι πιστευθῆναι.

speak on behalf of the collective. This rhetorical move was vital to his performance as a citizen-orator: while Pericles was an individual respected for his political and military talents, as an Athenian citizen he had to express deference to those whom he memorialized, just as the men he praised were not out to gain personal glory (so says Pericles) fighting on behalf of Athens, but obtained glory as a collective.

Pericles expressed admiration for the Athenian ancestors, who resided "in the country without break in the succession from generation to generation, and handed it down free to the present time by their valor" (II.36.1),[41] and praised the Athenians' "own fathers, who added to their inheritance the empire which we now possess, and spared no pains to be able to leave their acquisitions to us of the present generation" (II.36.2).[42] However, Pericles resisted retelling the "part of our history which tells of the military achievements which gave us our several possessions, or of the ready valor with which either we or our fathers stemmed the tide of Hellenic or foreign aggression," because it was "a theme too familiar to my hearers for me to dilate on" (II.36.4).[43] Rather, the orator focused on how Athens had become great. The reason for this, he said, was that these are matters "to which the whole assemblage, whether citizens or foreigners, may listen with advantage" (II.36.4).[44] Pericles acknowledged the mixed audience to whom he spoke, including Athenian men and women, but also foreigners and slaves, and his oration

[41] ἄρξομαι δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν προγόνων πρῶτον: δίκαιον γὰρ αὐτοῖς καὶ πρέπον δὲ ἅμα ἐν τῷ τοιῷδε τὴν τιμὴν ταύτην τῆς μνήμης δίδοσθαι. τὴν γὰρ χώραν οἱ αὐτοὶ αἰεὶ οἰκοῦντες διαδοχῇ τῶν ἐπιγιγνομένων μέχρι τοῦδε ἐλευθέραν δι᾽ ἀρετὴν παρέδοσαν.

[42] καὶ ἐκεῖνοί τε ἄξιοι ἐπαίνου καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν: κτησάμενοι γὰρ πρὸς οἷς ἐδέξαντο ὅσην ἔχομεν ἀρχὴν οὐκ ἀπόνως ἡμῖν τοῖς νῦν προσκατέλιπον.

[43] ὧν ἐγὼ τὰ μὲν κατὰ πολέμους ἔργα, οἷς ἕκαστα ἐκτήθη, ἢ εἴ τι αὐτοὶ ἢ οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν βάρβαρον ἢ Ἕλληνα πολέμιον ἐπιόντα προθύμως ἠμυνάμεθα, μακρηγορεῖν ἐν εἰδόσιν οὐ βουλόμενος ἐάσω….

[44] …νομίζων ἐπί τε τῷ παρόντι οὐκ ἂν ἁπρεπῆ λεχθῆναι αὐτὰ καὶ τὸν πάντα ὅμιλον καὶ ἀστῶν καὶ ξένων ξύμφορον εἶναι ἐπακοῦσαι αὐτῶν.

underscored why both citizens and non-citizens should have felt indebted to Athens, inspiring them to prove themselves worthy of residing in the city.

At the beginning of *his* eulogy, Obama firmly established himself in the role of preacher, acknowledging his audience by welcoming them with the call "Giving all praise and honor to God," to which the congregation responded in unison, "Amen."[45] He then quoted scripture: "'They were still living by faith when they died,' Scripture tells us. 'They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on Earth.'" His audience immediately recognized that he fulfilled the role of preacher, and audience members aptly responded to him physically and verbally as he spoke. Though not explicitly, the opening portion of Obama's speech was directed at an African American religious audience, and his performance depended upon his audience successfully identifying him as a Black religious leader. To further emphasize his place among the AME community, Obama stated:

> We are here today to remember a man of God who lived by faith. A man who believed in things not seen. A man who believed there were better days ahead, off in the distance. A man of service who persevered, knowing full well he would not receive all those things he was promised, because he believed his efforts would deliver a better life for those who followed.

Consider that, in a different context, these same sentiments could be said of Obama: he may be described as a "man of service," one who persevered through hardship because he believed he could help those in need. It was not Obama's intention to compare himself

[45] All quotes of Obama's speech adapted from "Remarks by the President in Eulogy for the Honorable Reverend Clementa Pinckney."

with Pinckney. However, through his performance he emulated and embodied those traits that made Pinckney a great preacher and a great man worthy of remembrance.

After establishing himself as a Black religious and community leader, Obama admitted that he did not know the reverend well, but that he had met Pinckney in South Carolina, "back when we were both a little bit younger. Back when I didn't have visible grey hair." His audience chuckled knowingly. According to Obama, the first thing he noticed about Pinckney was "his graciousness, his smile, his reassuring baritone, his deceptive sense of humor—all qualities that helped him wear so effortlessly a heavy burden of expectation." Obama recounted how Pinckney's friends had told Obama that they felt, when Pinckney entered a room, "it was like the future arrived." The characterization he offered of Pinckney bore a striking resemblance to how people often consider Obama himself: he described the Reverend as gracious, warm, with a reassuring voice and a sense of humor, and as a man who appeared to bear the burden of expectation with grace. Obama then explained how Pinckney came from a family of preachers, who were also "a family of protesters who sowed change to expand voting rights and desegregate the South." It became clear by this description that, for Pinckney and the AME Church, political activism was part of one's responsibility as a preacher and leader in the Church, activism which was also embodied by Obama. In this way, his audience had further reason to view him as a preacher in the Black Church rather than (only) as president.

As for Pericles, he took advantage of the epideictic portion of his speech to defend the Athenian practice of delivering funeral orations itself: rather than see the speech as frivolous, he viewed it as an opportunity to communally reassert Athens'

values among both citizens and non-citizens. He described how, regarding military policy, Athenians threw "open our city to the world" and refused to exclude foreign people from the affairs of the city (II.39.1).[46] In leisure, Athenians cultivated "refinement without extravagance and knowledge without effeminacy (*malakīas*, softness)" (II.40.1),[47] and understood the value of deliberation: rather than "looking on discussion as a stumbling-block in the way of action," Athenians thought "it an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all" (II.40.2).[48] His statements about Athenian values implied that the delivery of the funeral oration denoted not Athens' "softness" but its belief in and reliance on intelligent reflection and debate.

When Obama first praised Pinckney in the opening portion of *his* speech, he associated the reverend primarily with the African American religious community. As he continued, Obama portrayed Pinckney as an outstanding member not only of the AME community but of the larger American citizenry, as a man engaged in public life by seeking opportunities both within and outside of politics, and who devoted himself, at least in part, to helping those in the greatest need. Obama described how, as a South Carolina senator, Pinckney had represented an area neglected by other politicians, "a place still racked by poverty and inadequate schools, a place where children can still go hungry and the sick can go without treatment—a place that needed somebody like Clem." As Obama underscored the importance of Pinckney's role in politics, by association he underscored his own role in both African American religious and political life. After

[46] τήν τε γὰρ πόλιν κοινὴν παρέχομεν

[47] φιλοκαλοῦμέν τε γὰρ μετ᾽ εὐτελείας καὶ φιλοσοφοῦμεν ἄνευ μαλακίας.…

[48] …οὐ τοὺς λόγους τοῖς ἔργοις βλάβην ἡγούμενοι, ἀλλὰ μὴ προδιδαχθῆναι μᾶλλον λόγῳ πρότερον ἢ ἐπὶ ἃ δεῖ ἔργῳ ἐλθεῖν.

praising Pinckney, Obama remembered how Pinckney "was often asked why he chose to be a pastor and a public servant," and mused that "the person who asked probably didn't know the history of the AME Church," since the roles of religious leader and civic figure are one and the same. This statement, directed at his audience members associated with the Black Church, elicited a chuckle among those audience members. They applauded in response, recognizing the joke meant only for them.

Obama then transitioned from an epideictic mode to a forensic one, situating the deaths of Reverend Pinckney and his parishioners in a larger national context of racially motivated violence by recounting the history of Mother Emanuel and the significance of Black churches in general. He expressed how the shooting was that much more painful to the Black community because it took place in a church, which "is and always has been the center of African American life—a place to call our own in a too often hostile world, a sanctuary from so many hardships." In addition to their function as places "where slaves could worship in safety" and "where their free descendants could gather and shout hallelujah," Obama described Black churches as "community centers where we organize for jobs and justice; places of scholarship and network; places where children are loved and fed and kept out of harm's way, and told that they are beautiful and smart and taught that they matter." By using the pronouns "our" and "we," Obama emphasized his own connection with the Black Church. For African Americans, he said, the church is their "beating heart."

Obama then narrated the history of the physical building of Mother Emanuel and described how it was "built by blacks seeking liberty, burned to the ground because its founder sought to end slavery, only to rise up again, a Phoenix from these ashes." Just

as Pericles underscored how Athens persisted into the distant past and would persist into the future, Obama described Mother Emanuel as a place that would continue to be reborn each time it is wounded. Significantly, Obama here adeptly expanded the community for whom he orated when he described how this church has been a sacred place not only for African Americans, and "not just for Christians, but for every American who cares about the steady expansion of human rights and human dignity in this country; a foundation stone for liberty and justice for all." By referring to "all Americans," he reengaged those audience members not associated with the Black Church—including white Americans—who believed in the values of liberty and justice.

Obama reported the story of the shooting in such a way as to recast those who died not as victims but as role models. Obama described how the killer was so blinded by hatred that he "could not see the grace surrounding Reverend Pinckney and that Bible study group—the light of love that shone as they opened the church doors and invited a stranger to join in their prayer circle." Their acceptance of a stranger into the womb of their church was their final act of benevolence. Obama marveled at the forgiveness the families of those who died offered the killer. According to Keenan, Obama recognized a "tragic cycle" of the mass shootings, a cycle "that always ended with Barack Obama giving a nice speech and absolving all of us for our collective sin [for] not electing people who care."[49] However, after watching the footage of the family members offering forgiveness, the president was struck by this example of grace, and decided that grace would be the theme of the speech. On a grander scale, Obama recounted how Charleston,

[49] Personal interview, 27 Sept. 2018. After the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012, Obama and Democratic senators pushed a set of amendments regarding gun laws, including expanding background checks and banning certain types of semi-automatic weapons. Obama was notably frustrated after the Senate voted down these amendments (Barrett and Cohen).

South Carolina, and indeed the entire United States responded "not merely with revulsion at his evil act, but with big-hearted generosity and, more importantly, with a thoughtful introspection and self-examination that we so rarely see in public life." Once again, Obama expanded the scope of his audience by his use of the term "public life" to resonate with those unaffiliated with the African American community and the AME Church.

By contrast, Pericles did not linger on the traditional forensic portion of his funeral oration. He moved to the deliberative portion of his speech after he successfully publicly reasserted Athens' values of intelligence, training, and civic duty. The climax of Pericles' speech occurs in the deliberative section of his speech, in which the orator stated:

> So died these men as became Athenians. You, their survivors, must determine to have as unfaltering a resolution in the field, though you may pray that it may have a happier issue. And not contented with ideas derived only from words of the advantages which are bound up with the defense of your country…you must yourselves realize the power of Athens, and feed your eyes upon her from day to day, till love of her fills your hearts; and then when all her greatness shall break upon you, you must reflect that it was by courage, sense of duty, and a keen feeling of honor in action that men were enabled to win all this…. (II.43.1)[50]

The orator encouraged his audience to protect Athens and revel and participate in its greatness, though they would likely never achieve the glory of those whom they

[50] καὶ οἵδε μὲν προσηκόντως τῇ πόλει τοιοίδε ἐγένοντο: τοὺς δὲ λοιποὺς χρὴ ἀσφαλεστέραν μὲν εὔχεσθαι, ἀτολμοτέραν δὲ μηδὲν ἀξιοῦν τὴν ἐς τοὺς πολεμίους διάνοιαν ἔχειν, σκοποῦντας μὴ λόγῳ μόνῳ τὴν ὠφελίαν, ἣν ἄν τις πρὸς οὐδὲν χεῖρον αὐτοὺς ὑμᾶς εἰδότας μηκύνοι, λέγων ὅσα ἐν τῷ τοὺς πολεμίους ἀμύνεσθαι ἀγαθὰ ἔνεστιν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον τὴν τῆς πόλεως δύναμιν καθ᾽ ἡμέραν ἔργῳ θεωμένους καὶ ἐραστὰς γιγνομένους αὐτῆς, καὶ ὅταν ὑμῖν μεγάλη δόξῃ εἶναι,ἐνθυμουμένους ὅτι τολμῶντες καὶ γιγνώσκοντες τὰ δέοντα καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις αἰσχυνόμενοι ἄνδρες αὐτὰ ἐκτήσαντο…

memorialize. It is worth noting the Greek text: "τὴν τῆς πόλεως δύναμιν καθ᾽ ἡμέραν ἔργῳ θεωμένους καὶ ἐραστὰς γιγνομένους αὐτῆς" may be rendered in literal translation as "every day beholding the power of Athens and becoming her *erastaī*." Sara Monoson argues that the use of the sexual metaphor embedded in the word *erastaī* reinforces the reciprocal nature of the pederastic *erastēs* and *erōmenos* relationship, citizen and city. As a successful citizen-orator, Pericles performed Athenian citizenship by expressing his own love and encouraging love for and protection of the sacred city in his audience.

Once Obama praised the subjects of his eulogy, and recounted the events that led to their deaths, he moved to the deliberative portion of his speech. While Pericles presented the citizen's relationship with his city as one of desiring and desired, of dominant and submissive, Obama emphasized grace, the goal of which is an even balance of power. The shooter exercised his own power when he murdered people during a prayer circle at Emanuel AME Church. Forgiving this abhorrent act and the killer himself allowed the families of those murdered to exercise their own power. However, rather than asserting their dominance over the shooter, this expression of grace moved toward an equilibrium of power. Grace, therefore, expresses the idea that everyone is equal in the eyes on God, and all are equally worthy of forgiveness.

Obama explained that, in the Christian tradition, "grace is the free and benevolent favor of God as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings." He expanded his audience from the AME Church and larger African American communities to the entire United States by emphasizing how everyone has the opportunity to make positive changes, even though "We may not have earned it, this grace, with our rancor and complacency, and short-sightedness and fear of each other—but we got it all the

same," though "it is up to us now to make the most of it, to receive it with gratitude, and to prove ourselves worthy of this gift." This "us" referred to the entire audience, regardless of race or religious affiliation, and suggested once again that everyone in the audience was equal before God. Forgiveness is embedded in Obama's language, and implied that above all, in order to enact positive change, audience members must see themselves as equally responsible for enacting this change.

Obama referenced the Confederate Flag, and how as Americans they had been "blind to the pain that the Confederate flag stirred in too many of our citizens." However, though he attributed this blindness to "all Americans"—himself included—in actuality this statement was not meant primarily for his African American audience. He explained that the flag's removal from public spaces would not be "an insult to the valor of Confederate soldiers," but "would simply be an acknowledgment that the cause for which they fought—the cause of slavery—was wrong." It was his white audience, *not* his African American audience, who needed to be convinced that slavery was wrong and the statues should come down. By taking down the flag, he argued, "we express God's grace." Obama adeptly returned to the concept of grace, demanding that his entire audience take action, and that that action will fulfill both religious and secular obligations. Similarly, he then spoke directly to audience members unaffiliated with the AME Church or the Black community by suggesting that "Maybe we now realize the way racial bias can infect us even when we don't realize it," which involves "not just racial slurs," but also "guarding against the subtle impulse to call Johnny back for a job interview but not Jamal," or ratifying "laws to make it harder for some of our fellow

citizens to vote." Once again, this "we" did not refer to members of the AME Church or the Black community to whom he spoke at the beginning of the speech.

Obama then moved to his primary deliberative subject: advocating for stricter gun control measures. He lamented that "For too long, we've been blind to the unique mayhem that gun violence inflicts upon this nation." He explained how most Americans and even most gun owners support gun control measures, and that, "by making the moral choice to change, we express God's grace." Obama highlighted Americans' responsibility for making these changes by stating that "it would be a betrayal of everything Reverend Pinckney stood for, I believe, if we allowed ourselves to slip into a comfortable silence again." This exhortation echoed Pericles' call to Athenians to protect the city for which their loved ones gave their lives, and also engaged with the tradition of presidential rhetoric. As Lincoln proclaimed:

> It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Obama wove together the individual significance of Reverend Pinckney with his own greater message when he said near the end of his speech:

> Clem understood that justice grows out of recognition of ourselves in each other. That my liberty depends on you being free, too. That history can't be a sword to justify injustice, or a shield against progress, but must be a manual for how to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past—how to break the cycle. A roadway toward a better world.

According to Obama, it is up to the individual to stop the cycle of violence and instead set America on its path toward a better future. Just as Michelle Obama's remarks at the 2016 DNC considered the imperialist origins of the United States in light of her own experience as the first Black woman to serve as First Lady, President Obama brought together the United States' unjust history with the audience's capacity for enacting permanent and peaceful change. Hubbard describes "the preacher's call to worship" as "an open invitation for the congregation to participate in an act of creation; their collective construction has as its end result the transformation of reality" (15). By means of his eulogy, Obama constructed a new and different world in which the sort of tragedy he memorialized no longer takes place, and called upon his audience to participate in this act of creation.

Any explication of Obama's Charleston speech would be remiss not to discuss the most unique and memorable aspect of his performance, and the aspect that was reported most: his leading the congregation in the first stanza of the hymn "Amazing Grace." The morning of the ceremony, Obama remarked that, if it felt right, he would sing at the end of the speech (@codykeenan). Obama paused for a full 13 seconds after he finished speaking, during which time there was absolute silence, though there were "thousands hanging on his next words: grieving church members, a phalanx of purple-robed clergy,

and a church band that had until then had been all too ready to accompany him with organ trills and guitar licks," as Peter Manseau describes. After this extended pause, Obama closed his eyes and began to sing. Immediately church members seated behind Obama stood, and the entire audience joined in, singing slowly and deliberately: "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found; was blind but now I see." To an uplifted crowd, Obama returned to his preacher role and shouted, "Clementa Pinckney found that grace," and repeated this for each of the nine who are deceased. He ended the speech, "Through the example of their lives, they've now passed it on to us. May we find ourselves worthy of that precious and extraordinary gift, as long as our lives endure. May grace now lead them home. May God continue to shed His grace on the *United* States of America." The audience applauded, and Obama turned to the clergy members standing behind him, hugged them and shook their hands, welcomed as preacher by elders of the AME Church.

The Future of the Citizen-Orator in the United States

Prior to Obama's election in 2008, the citizen-orator role performed by the President of the United States had been limited to white, primarily Protestant men. Coates remembers how, "Much as the unbroken ranks of 43 white male presidents communicated that the highest office of government in the country—indeed, the most powerful political offices in the world—was off-limits to black individuals, the election of Barack Obama communicated that the prohibition had been lifted." However, even after his election, Obama's American citizenship was questioned by members of what became known as the Birther Movement. So-called Birthers pointed to Obama's race, his

name, and the fact that he grew up on the island state of Hawaii as some of the reasons why the president would need to prove his citizenship and, consequently, the legitimacy of his presidency. Even when Obama publicly released his birth certificate, skeptics insisted that it was fake. This "birther question," as one *New York Times* op-ed put it, "was simply a proxy for those who never accepted the president's legitimacy, for a toxic mix of reasons involving ideology, deep political anger and, most insidious of all, race" ("A Certificate of Embarrassment").

It was not as though Obama had ever denied his African heritage—his father, from whom he was estranged, was from Kenya—or his identity as a Black man. For example, in his 2009 speech at the Centennial Convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Obama expressed gratitude to those who fought for equal rights for African Americans, and acknowledged that, "Because of them I stand here tonight, on the shoulders of giants. And I'm here to say thank you to those pioneers and thank you to the NAACP." The same year, White House photographer Pete Souza captured a photo in the Oval Office of Jacob Philadelphia, a young Black boy, curiously patting Obama's head. According to Souza, the boy "said his friends had said his haircut was just like the president's and he wanted to see if it really was" (Laurent and Lull). In 2012, Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old African American young man who, while visiting relatives in Florida, was shot by a member of the local neighborhood watch, George Zimmerman, although Martin had been unarmed. Zimmerman was later acquitted of the charge of murder on the grounds of self-defense. Obama said that when Martin "was first shot I said that this could have been my son," or that he "could have been me

35 years ago."[51] In the same speech, Obama spoke of the common experience among Black men of "being followed when they were shopping in a department store," or "the experience of walking across the street and hearing the locks click on the doors of cars," which, he said, "happens to me—at least before I was a senator."

In his speech in Charleston, Obama spoke both as preacher and as president. The speech itself took place at the TD Arena at the College of Charleston, but the stage was adorned with a pulpit draped with the AME crest, behind which sat AME Church elders; the arena functioned as the proxy nave of Mother Emanuel. Obama's speech, then, delivered by the first Black President of the United States, took place inside of a Black church among its members. However, in order to involve his white audience and convince them that stricter gun control measures should be pursued, he also had to speak in the presidential tradition of the citizen-orator, a rhetorical tradition that originated in classical Athens and originated from colonialism and whiteness. Thus, the question remains: if as an office the presidency has historically represented, protected, and maintained the interests of white Americans, how ought a non-white and/or non-masculine president engage with the exclusionary tradition of presidential rhetoric? While there are no ready or easy answers, in order to expand this tradition, it is first necessary to acknowledge that the tradition *has always been* exclusionary, and, to involve and persuade white American voters, one has been compelled to appease white voters and pander to white interests.

Having explore Obama's speeches in the context of Pericles' funeral oration, In the following chapter I consider how Obama, viewed as "divisive" by some, aimed to unify the American citizenry to work in favor of gun control measures in his speech on

[51] Adapted from "Remarks by the President on Trayvon Martin."

common-sense gun safety reform in January 2016. He rhetorically unified his audience by expressing anger over continued gun violence; this unity was achieved not by standing in opposition to his audience and getting angry *at* them, but standing with his audience and getting angry *alongside* them. Obama expressed anger in a way that encourage continued discourse, but while his anger was "productive," it was also mediated to avoid separating himself from the rest of the citizen body.

CHAPER IV

UNIFYING AUDIENCES THROUGH THE REDIRECTION OF ANGER: OBAMA'S SPEECH ON COMMON-SENSE GUN SAFETY REFORM AND PERICLES' FINAL SPEECH

On January 5, 2016, President Barack Obama delivered a speech on what he termed "common-sense gun safety reform." Since taking office in January 2013, 16 mass shootings had taken place (Follman, Aronsen, and Pan). Unlike the speeches examined in the previous two chapters, this speech was not delivered as a eulogy after a specific shooting in honor of specific victims. Rather, Obama spoke to the public from the East Room of the White House to delineate his plans for reforming gun safety laws in light of continued instances of gun violence. In a way, this speech is more comparable to an *epitāphios* than either of the speeches explored in Chapters II and III: Obama's speech memorialized all those who had died from instances of gun violence over the course of his presidency thus far, rather than specific individuals.

In this chapter, I read Obama's speech on common sense gun laws and Pericles' final speech in Thucydides' *History*. Both Obama and Pericles used anger as a rhetorical tool to unify their respective audiences; while Pericles unified his audience by getting angry *at* them, Obama unified his audience by getting angry *alongside* them. In Chapter III I explored the citizen-orator role Obama and Pericles each perform in order for the deliberative statements in the Charleston speech and the funeral oration, respectively, to have their intended effect. In the speeches I will investigate in this chapter, the use of anger reveals a crucial difference between the democracy of classical Athens and the

democratic republicanism of the contemporary United States, and, necessarily, the type of oratory mandated by each: classical Athenian democracy allowed for and even invited moments of self-interest by and personal glory for the orator, while the American ideal of egalitarianism in the democratic republic requires even the president to defer to the democratic body.

The situations which prompted Obama's and Pericles' respective speeches were, once again, quite different. Soon after Pericles delivered his funeral oration in 431 BCE, as *strategōs* (general) he continued his tactic of avoiding engaging the Spartans in a battle on land. Athens' inhabitants and their neighbors were drawn within the city's walls, which had been erected around the city and connected to the Long Walls (*tā makrā teīche*), which extended to Phaleron and Piraeus, the ports of Athens (Conwell 20).[52] In 429 a plague spread through Athens, and was transmitted easily due to the close proximity and high density of the population within the city. Many Athenians died horrific and painful deaths, graphically described by Thucydides, who tells his readers that he himself survived the plague (II.48.3).[53] According to Thucydides, Pericles delivered what would be his final speech in response to the public outcry against his defensive decision and the unfortunate timing of the plague. In his speech, Pericles acknowledged the public's anger with him, but instead of apologizing or appearing deferential he expressed anger at and frustration with the Athenians; he then directed both his and the audience's anger onto other targets such as the Spartans in order to reunify the

[52] See Conwell for extensive information concerning the Long Walls.

[53] …ἐγὼ δὲ οἷόν τε ἐγίγνετο λέξω, καὶ ἀφ᾽ ὧν ἄν τις σκοπῶν, εἴ ποτε καὶ αὖθις ἐπιπέσοι, μάλιστ᾽ ἂν ἔχοι τι προειδὼς μὴ ἀγνοεῖν, ταῦτα δηλώσω αὐτός τε νοσήσας καὶ αὐτὸς ἰδὼν ἄλλους πάσχοντας. "…for myself, I shall simply set down its nature, and explain the symptoms by which perhaps it may be recognized by the student, if it should ever break out again. This I can the better do, as I had the disease myself, and watched its operation in the case of others."

population. His anger toward his fellow Athenians was largely self-interested: he did not want his legacy tainted by the high death toll of the plague, the origin and spread of which had been outside of his control.

Obama also expressed anger in his speech, but unlike Pericles, he did not separate himself from the body with whom he was angry; rather, he expressed anger, frustration, and disappointment that the American people—Obama himself included—had been up to that point unable and unwilling to protect its citizens from continued gun violence. Obama's anger was directed both at Congress and the U.S. government generally, and at the American public, who had not elected members of congress who supported gun reform measures. He unified his audience by identifying with them, and his anger at his own "failings" and dedication to preventing further gun violence modeled how members of the American citizenry were encouraged to feel and react. This chapter traces how, by expressing anger, both political leaders attempted to unify their audiences. Their respective expressions of anger were also part of their performances of citizenship, performances which were ultimately determined and limited by their respective systems of government.

It must be noted that the spread of the plague in Athens and instances of gun violence in the United States are disparate circumstances: the plague spread passively throughout the Athenian population, while enacting gun violence requires action. However, in his speech Obama reminded his audience that not every gun-related death is intentional, and his proposed common-sense gun safety reform would not only prevent those with violent criminal records from acquiring guns, but would also potentially prevent accidental deaths caused by guns. Additionally, Obama underscored how, as a

citizenry, being passive had allowed instances of accidental and intentional gun violence to occur. As Cody Keenan, Obama's chief speechwriter, explained after the shooting in Charleston:

> [Obama] was very frustrated that day. It was one of the more cynical moments I've ever seen him [sic]. And he said, you know, what do I do the next time there's a mass shooting? Do I go give another eulogy after this? You know? If we've decided as a country that after Newtown we're not going to do *anything*? And I have to go keep giving these eulogies?

Further, as mentioned in Chapter III, Keenan explained that there seemed to be a "tragic cycle" to the mass shootings, a cycle "that always ended with Barack Obama giving a nice speech and absolving all of us for our collective sin [for] not electing people who care." Obama expressed frustration about this cycle in his gun reform speech: as an elected leader, he relied on the public to make these changes, and the public and their elected members of Congress had time and again not made the right choices in his opinion, and gun safety measures had unfortunately become a hardline partisan issue. Unlike Pericles, Obama did not solely chastise his audience; he included himself in the group he felt had failed to protect innocent people. In this way he identified with his audience and emphasized his role as just one single member of the larger citizen body.

Anger and Identification

Before exploring Obama's and Pericles' respective speeches, it is necessary to define anger in a rhetorical sense, and to understand rhetorical identification and its relationship with anger. In Book II of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle describes anger as "a

longing, accompanied by pain, for a real or apparent revenge for a real or apparent slight, affecting a man himself or one of his friends, when such a slight is undeserved" (II.2.1).[54] The philosopher explores which sorts of people are inclined toward anger, with whom they are usually angry, and what situations encourage or breed anger. The point of this discussion, Aristotle says, is to learn how to rouse one's audience toward anger, as it is necessary and desirable for one's rhetorical goals. Therefore, an effective orator may inspire anger in the audience in order to convince the audience to complete a certain task or support specific action. In order to acquire this capability, one must have an understanding of the three aspects of anger described above: subject, object, and situation.

Kenneth Zagacki and Patrick Boleyn-Fitzgerald differentiate between what they term "angry rhetoric" and "non-angry rhetoric." Angry rhetoric evokes anger in an audience, making an audience angry (or angrier) so that the orator may "direct this anger toward a particular agent, policy, or idea," (295). Non-angry rhetoric, then, "involves transforming and reflecting upon anger in public discourse" (290). The latter, they contend, is the sort of anger that leads to reconciliation and forgiveness, and allows the orator to "manage anger in their public discourse in order to achieve ends which are both morally and pragmatically productive" (290). They argue:

> While there are times when individuals seem to deserve our angry rhetoric, it may not be justified from a broader moral perspective, especially when the goal is the good of the state or the community—viz., if angry rhetoric leads to the violent dissolution of democratic community. Ultimately, we argue that the moral

[54] ἔστω δὴ ὀργὴ ὄρεξις μετὰ λύπης τιμωρίας φαινομένης διὰ φαινομένην ὀλιγωρίαν εἰς αὐτὸν ἢ τῶν αὐτοῦ, τοῦ ὀλιγωρεῖν μὴ προσήκοντος.

> constitution of political, deliberative communities must be viewed in terms of rhetoric and anger—that is, in terms of the ways in which the expression, encouragement, or management of anger in public discourse hinders or assists individuals living, working, and deliberating together. (291)

Considered from this perspective, while both Pericles and Obama inspired and channeled their audiences' anger, Pericles employed "angry rhetoric" that intentionally hindered democratic deliberation, reinforcing his military tactics alone, while Obama employed "non-angry rhetoric" in order to encourage public deliberation. Importantly, this understanding of productive and counterproductive anger must also be considered in the context of race in the U.S.: Obama had to be conscious of the (non-Black) audience's perception of his anger, and how he negotiated this will be addressed in the next section.

In the funeral oration, Pericles diffused and redirected the Athenians' potential anger to extra-Athenian targets. For example, he acknowledged the potential shortcomings of offering a funeral oration at the start of his speech:

> …[It] is hard to speak properly upon a subject where it is even difficult to convince your hearers that you are speaking the truth. On the one hand, the friend who is familiar with every fact of the story, may think that some point has not been set forth with that fullness which he wishes and knows it to deserve; on the other, he who is a stranger to the matter may be led by envy to suspect exaggeration if he hears anything above his own nature. For men can endure to hear others praised only so long as they can severally persuade themselves of their

own ability to equal the actions recounted: when this point is passed, envy comes in and with it incredulity. (Thuc. II.35.2)[55]

If anger is as Aristotle describes, as a longing accompanied by pain for a real or apparent slight, then it is possible that the Athenian audience could become angry with Pericles either for failing to praise the dead sufficiently, or for praising them excessively. Aristotle also notes in the *Rhetoric* that anger occurs when one is slighted, and a slight, by definition, occurs when one is not treated with the respect he believes he deserves from one whom he perceives as inferior to himself;[56] this explains how the latter sort of listener Pericles mentioned might become angry. By acknowledging the possible problems with respect to anger in his speech, Pericles subverted the listeners' expectations, and encouraged empathy toward him from the audience.

Later in his funeral oration, Pericles reminded his audience that even enemies of the Athenians did not feel angry toward Athens, "For Athens alone of her contemporaries is found when tested to be greater than her reputation, and alone gives no occasion to her assailants to blush at the antagonist by whom they have been worsted, or to her subjects to question her title by merit to rule" (II.41.3).[57] Since anger is only felt when one is slighted by someone whom one deems inferior, according to Pericles the enemies of the

[55] χαλεπὸν γὰρ τὸ μετρίως εἰπεῖν ἐν ᾧ μόλις καὶ ἡ δόκησις τῆς ἀληθείας βεβαιοῦται. ὅ τε γὰρ ξυνειδὼς καὶ εὔνους ἀκροατὴς τάχ᾽ ἄν τι ἐνδεεστέρως πρὸς ἃ βούλεταί τε καὶ ἐπίσταται νομίσειε δηλοῦσθαι, ὅ τε ἄπειρος ἔστιν ἃ καὶ πλεονάζεσθαι, διὰ φθόνον, εἴ τι ὑπὲρ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν ἀκούοι. μέχρι γὰρ τοῦδε ἀνεκτοὶ οἱ ἔπαινοί εἰσι περὶ ἑτέρων λεγόμενοι, ἐς ὅσον ἂν καὶ αὐτὸς ἕκαστος οἴηται ἱκανὸς εἶναι δρᾶσαί τι ὧν ἤκουσεν: τῷ δὲ ὑπερβάλλοντι αὐτῶν φθονοῦντες ἤδη καὶ ἀπιστοῦσιν.

[56] καὶ τοῖς ἐν μηδενὶ λόγῳ οὖσιν, ἄν τι ὀλιγωρῶσι, μᾶλλον: ὑπόκειται γὰρ ἡ ὀργὴ τῆς ὀλιγωρίας πρὸς τοὺς μὴ προσήκοντας, προσήκει δὲ τοῖς ἥττοσι μὴ ὀλιγωρεῖν…. (II.2.18) "And they are more angry with those who are of no account, if they slight them; for anger at a slight was assumed to be felt at those who ought not to behave in such a manner; for inferiors ought not to slight their superiors."

[57] μόνη γὰρ τῶν νῦν ἀκοῆς κρείσσων ἐς πεῖραν ἔρχεται, καὶ μόνη οὔτε τῷ πολεμίῳ ἐπελθόντι ἀγανάκτησιν ἔχει ὑφ᾽ οἵων κακοπαθεῖ οὔτε τῷ ὑπηκόῳ κατάμεμψιν ὡς οὐχ ὑπ᾽ ἀξίων ἄρχεται.

Athenian state did not feel anger when they were defeated by Athens because they deemed Athens to be superior. (The truth value of this statement is questionable, but the sentiment is in keeping with the spirit of *epitāphioi*.)

Aristotle describes in the *Rhetoric* the various emotions one may inspire in an audience, and what use these emotions may have. The philosopher notes:

> The emotions are all those affections which cause men to change their opinion in regard to their judgements, and are accompanied by pleasure and pain; such are anger, pity, fear, and all similar emotions and their contraries. And each of them must be divided under three heads; for instance, in regard to anger, the disposition of mind which makes men angry, the persons with whom they are usually angry, and the occasions which give rise to anger. For if we knew one or even two of these heads, but not all three, it would be impossible to arouse that emotion. (II.1.8-9)[58]

George Kennedy suggests that II.2-11 contains "the earliest systematic discussion of human psychology" (*On Rhetoric* 113) and that the "primary rhetorical function of the account is apparently to provide a speaker with an ability to arouse these emotions in an audience and thus to facilitate the judgment sought" (113-4). A secondary purpose also emerges in Book II: that of how to arouse an audience's emotions not only in favor of the *rhētor*, but also *against* an opponent (114). Aristotle continues:

> Let us then define anger as a longing, accompanied by pain, for a real or apparent revenge for a real or apparent slight, affecting a man himself or one of his friends,

[58] ἔστι δὲ τὰ πάθη δι᾽ ὅσα μεταβάλλοντες διαφέρουσι πρὸς τὰς κρίσεις οἷς ἕπεται λύπη καὶ ἡδονή, οἷον ὀργὴ ἔλεος φόβος καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τοιαῦτα, καὶ τὰ τούτοις ἐναντία. δεῖ δὲ διαιρεῖν περὶ ἕκαστον εἰς τρία, λέγω δ᾽ οἷον περὶ ὀργῆς πῶς τε διακείμενοι ὀργίλοι εἰσί, καὶ τίσιν εἰώθασιν ὀργίζεσθαι, καὶ ἐπὶ ποίοις: εἰ γὰρ τὸ μὲν ἓν ἢ τὰ δύο ἔχοιμεν τούτων, ἅπαντα δὲ μή, ἀδύνατον ἂν εἴη τὴν ὀργὴν ἐμποιεῖν….

> when such a slight is undeserved. If this definition is correct, the angry man must always be angry with a particular individual (for instance, with Cleon, but not with men generally), and because this individual has done, or was on the point of doing, something against him or one of his friends; and lastly, anger is always accompanied by a certain pleasure, due to the hope of revenge to come. For it is pleasant to think that one will obtain what one aims at; now, no one aims at what is obviously impossible of attainment by him, and the angry man aims at what is possible for himself. (II.2.1-2)[59]

Edward Cope explains that, according to Aristotle, anger "is directed against the individual, not the *genus* or *species*: that is, it is excited by a definite, concrete, single individual, and by a distinct provocation, not by a mere mental abstraction, or a whole class of objects" (12). This is a significant point, and reinforces how Pericles' task in his final speech was difficult, if not impossible: to redirect the Athenians' anger away from him and his political leadership, and onto a generic group of people, namely the Spartans. This difficulty is amplified by the fact that the plague, which had caused so many violent and tangible deaths, was not an individual with whom one could be angry. In an equally delicate situation, in his speech on common-sense gun reform Obama attempted to navigate viewers' emotions—sadness, anger, frustration, even apathy—toward *themselves* in order to inspire his audience to action.

[59] ἔστω δὴ ὀργὴ ὄρεξις μετὰ λύπης τιμωρίας φαινομένης διὰ φαινομένην ὀλιγωρίαν εἰς αὐτὸν ἤ τι τῶν αὐτοῦ, τοῦ ὀλιγωρεῖν μὴ προσήκοντος. εἰ δὴ τοῦτ᾽ ἐστὶν ἡ ὀργή, ἀνάγκη τὸν ὀργιζόμενον ὀργίζεσθαι ἀεὶ τῶν καθ᾽ ἕκαστόν τινι, οἷον Κλέωνι ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἀνθρώπῳ, καὶ ὅτι αὐτὸν ἢ τῶν αὐτοῦ τί πεποίηκεν ἢ ἤμελλεν, καὶ πάσῃ ὀργῇ ἕπεσθαί τινα ἡδονήν, τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ τιμωρήσασθαι: ἡδὺ μὲν γὰρ τὸ οἴεσθαι τεύξεσθαι ὧν ἐφίεται, οὐδεὶς δὲ τῶν φαινομένων ἀδυνάτων ἐφίεται αὑτῷ, ὁ δὲ ὀργιζόμενος ἐφίεται δυνατῶν αὐτῷ.

In order to inspire what I will term "rhetorically-productive anger," both Obama and Pericles were required to identify in some way with their respective audiences. In *The Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke explores the concept of identification. He argues that persuasion always involves identification, because one person can persuade another "only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his" (55, original emphasis). By his own admission, "one need not scrutinize the concept of 'identification' very sharply to see, implied in it at every turn, its ironic counterpart: division," because in order to persuade someone of something, one must also separate oneself from the other person in order to communicate (23). In fact, he maintains, identification is affirmed *because* there is division; otherwise "there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity" (22). Thus, the process of identification already implies a sense of difference. Rhetoric, then, provides the "mediatory ground" that makes communication between and among different rhetorical bodies possible.

The aim of rhetoric in Burke's estimation is to open up a space for possible communication once participants are able to use a common language. Rhetoric, although aimed at finding similarities among communicating bodies, presupposes inherent difference. Identification, then, results in a situation in which one person is "substantially one" with another (21). The person also "remains unique," and is "an individual locus of motives" (21). Burke explains that the person "is both joined and separate, at once a distant substance and consubstantial with another" (21). Recall in Chapter III when, in his Charleston eulogy, Obama stated that Reverend Pinckney "understood that justice grows out of recognition of ourselves in each other," and that "my liberty depends on you

being free, too." Such recognition requires both an awareness of division—that one person's freedom does not mean that everyone is free in the same way—and consubstantiality—that, by identifying with another, one may understand that the freedom they enjoy should be enjoyed by everyone.

I acknowledge that some may take issue with my describing Obama's sentiments in his speech on common-sense gun reform as "angry," rather than frustrated, despairing, or even weary. If we return to the notion of productive anger—or "non-angry" rhetoric—we may rethink Aristotle's description of anger as "a longing, accompanied by pain, for a real or apparent revenge for a real or apparent slight." Instead, we may understand productive anger not as a longing for revenge, but perhaps, in this context, as a longing for action.

Black Masculinity and Obama's Anger

Additionally, it is necessary to address the relationship between Black masculinity and anger. Obama's famously even-keeled demeanor became the subject of a series of eight sketches from 2012 to 2017 on *Key & Peele*, a television show starring Keegan-Michael Key and Jordan Peele. In the sketches, Obama, played by Peele, calmly speaks to the camera about current political issues, while Luther, his anger translator, played by Key, yells, paces, and gesticulates exasperatedly in the background. In the first of these sketches, "Meet Luther," Obama explains that, while some people think he does not get angry, he in fact gets angry a lot, but that "the way I express passion is different from most." He introduces Luther, standing in the background with eyes wide and fingers interlaced at his chest. Near the end of the sketch Obama serenely states that his

"intentions as your president are coming from the right place," and Luther walks toward the camera, shouting "They comin' from Hawaii, which is where I'm from, which is in the United States of America, y'all. OK? This is ridiculous! I have a birth certificate! I have a birth certificate!" The sketches became so popular that Key played Luther at the White House Correspondents' Dinner in 2015. Key stood behind the real Obama, who in the segment became angry himself, until finally Luther retreated, saying, "All due respect, sir, you don't need a anger translator. You need counseling" (sic) ("Obama's Anger Management Translator").

The humor of these sketches relies on the audience's familiarity with Obama's composed demeanor and they engage with the trope of the "angry Black man." Amy Wilkins investigates how self-described middle-class Black men attending universities express emotion while navigating both racial and gendered expectations. Wilkins' study focused on middle-class Black men attending universities, and not Black men in U.S. politics. However, I argue that her study may help us understand perceptions about Obama precisely because he is a university-educated Black man who occupies historically white and exclusionary social spaces. In an effort to combat the "angry Black man" trope, the men she interviewed "use shared narrative strategies," strategies which she terms "moderate blackness" (41). Wilkins describes moderate Blackness as having three components: first, "restrained, positive emotional standards," second, "a temperate approach to black politics," and third, "the ability to get along with white people" (41). Moderate Blackness, then, is moderate in two ways: it moderates both "the importance of blackness to individual identities"—Blackness, then, becomes just one of the men's many

identities—and "racial discord, distancing itself from stereotypes of blacks as angry and/or dangerous" (41). She argues that, for the men she interviewed:

> Successful participation in dominant institutions…requires black men to exhibit extraordinary emotional restraint. Because anger is culturally associated with men, however, suppressing anger also violates masculine expectations. Thus, African American men not only face more difficult emotional expectations but also face emotional dilemmas in which expected emotional displays undermine other identity expectations. (35)

Thus, the way Black men express anger in historically white spaces also affects the way they conceive of their masculinity.

In the 2008 *New York Times* article "Calm in the Swirl of History," Michael Powell describes then-presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Obama as having "the appearance of a strikingly laid-back victor" and a "deliberative fellow in a manic game." Powell contrasts Obama's demeanor with that of Reverend Jeremiah Wright, Jr., Obama's former pastor of 20 years who, in March 2008, came under fire after excerpts of his sermons were circulated. In the sermons in question, Wright criticized the U.S. government, and, on the Sunday after 9/11, stated that the U.S. had "supported state terrorism against the Palestinians and black South Africans, and now we are indignant because the stuff we have done overseas is now brought right back to our own front yards. America's chickens are coming home to roost" (qtd. in Ross and El-Buri). Obama addressed Wright's sermons in his March 2008 speech "A More Perfect Union," in which he contextualized the pastor's comments while also condemning them, stating:

> Reverend Wright's comments were not only wrong but divisive, divisive at a time when we need unity; racially charged at a time when we need to come together to solve a set of monumental problems—two wars, a terrorist threat, a falling economy, a chronic health care crisis and potentially devastating climate change—problems that are neither black or white or Latino or Asian, but rather problems that confront us all.[60]

Powell comments that, "When [Obama's] now-retired pastor…offered incendiary views on race and politics, Mr. Obama was slow to recognize how quickly Mr. Wright's words inflamed voters' doubts about him." Note how, in Powell's explanation, Wright's anger is transferred to Obama: Wright's views were "incendiary," and his comments "inflamed" doubts in voters regarding Obama. Obama effectively dissociated himself from Wright's image as an "angry Black man" with his "More Perfect Union" speech.[61]

In the same *New York Times* article, Powell describes First Lady Michelle Obama as someone "whose fires often burn hotter than those of her husband," and who "pointedly advises Mr. Obama to forswear the cerebral and embrace the visceral." Regarding moderate Blackness, Wilkins argues that it threatens Black men's claims to masculinity "precisely because it requires them to ignore, trivialize, or reinterpret cross-racial interactions" (55). This "emotion work" requires deference to white people, and "To maintain their masculinity, then, moderate black men must resignify the meaning of their emotional displays" (55). The result, she argues, is that Black men "define moderation as masculine by inverting the link between anger and gender, portraying

[60] Adapted from "Transcript: Barack Obama's Speech on Race."

[61] Importantly, as Wilkins notes, "If hardship generates anger, then it makes sense for black people to be angrier than white people" (36).

anger as a feminine emotional response" (56). The Black university men Wilkins interviewed redefined moderation as masculine by typifying Black women "as political and angry," and Black men "as apolitical and easygoing" (56). I wish to make clear that I do not argue that Obama himself portrayed First Lady Obama as political and angry, in contrast to his own calmness; rather, the *Times* article indicates that the (white) perception of Obama as a serene and controlled Black man relies on his legibility by non-Black audiences as a moderate Black man. Further, Powell notes how Obamas' friends are "black and white, upper-middle class to wealthy, University of Chicago law professors and historians and lawyers and foundation types"; these comments speak directly to Wilkins' assessment that moderate Blackness also involves the ability—or, at least, the perception of one's ability—to "get along with white people." While Obama's strategy of identifying himself with his audience served to unify that audience, it also allowed him to avoid any characterization as or association with the "angry Black man" trope among non-Black audience members.

Obama's Speech on Common-Sense Gun Safety Reform and Pericles' Final Speech

Soon after Pericles delivered the funeral oration after the first year of the Peloponnesian War, Athens was struck by a terrible plague, the details of which Thucydides provides. We are told that "a pestilence of such extent and mortality was nowhere remembered" (II.47.3), and the historian, always scientifically-minded, describes the plague's effects in detail. I include the extended description of the plague below because the emotional state of Pericles' audience—their anger, sadness,

exhaustion, and hopelessness—can only be understood in light of the gravity of their situation:

> As a rule, however, there was no ostensible cause [for the plague]; but people in good health were all of a sudden attacked by violent heats in the head, and redness and inflammation in the eyes, the inward parts, such as the throat or tongue, becoming bloody and emitting an unnatural and fetid breath. These symptoms were followed by sneezing and hoarseness, after which the pain soon reached the chest, and produced a hard cough. When it fixed in the stomach, it upset it; and discharges of bile of every kind named by physicians ensued, accompanied by very great distress. In most cases also an ineffectual retching followed, producing violent spasms, which in some cases ceased soon after, in others much later. Externally the body was not very hot to the touch, nor pale in its appearance, but reddish, livid, and breaking out into small pustules and ulcers. But internally it burned so that the patient could not bear to have on him clothing or linen even of the very lightest description; or indeed to be otherwise than stark naked. What they would have liked best would have been to throw themselves into cold water; as indeed was done by some of the neglected sick, who plunged into the rain-tanks in their agonies of unquenchable thirst; though it made no difference whether they drank little or much. Besides this, the miserable feeling of not being able to rest or sleep never ceased to torment them. The body meanwhile did not waste away so long as the distemper was at its height, but held out to a marvel against its ravages; so that when they succumbed, as in most cases, on the seventh or eighth day to the internal inflammation, they had still some strength in

them. But if they passed this stage, and the disease descended further into the bowels, inducing a violent ulceration there accompanied by severe diarrhea, [and] this brought on a weakness which was generally fatal. For the disorder first settled in the head, ran its course from thence through the whole of the body, and even where it did not prove mortal, it still left its mark on the extremities; for it settled in the [genitals], the fingers and the toes, and many escaped with the loss of these, some too with that of their eyes. Others again were seized with an entire loss of memory on their first recovery, and did not know either themselves or their friends. (II.49.2-8)[62]

Every Athenian either suffered from the plague, or knew many who had suffered from it and either died or survived, albeit likely traumatized by the experience. Tragically, it was difficult even to help one's friends, because "the most terrible feature in the malady was the dejection which ensued when anyone felt himself sickening, for the despair into which they instantly fell took away their power of resistance…[and] there was the awful

[62] τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους ἀπ᾽ οὐδεμιᾶς προφάσεως, ἀλλ᾽ ἐξαίφνης ὑγιεῖς ὄντας πρῶτον μὲν τῆς κεφαλῆς θέρμαι ἰσχυραὶ καὶ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἐρυθήματα καὶ φλόγωσις ἐλάμβανε, καὶ τὰ ἐντός, ἥ τε φάρυγξ καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα, εὐθὺς αἱματώδη ἦν καὶ πνεῦμα ἄτοπον καὶ δυσῶδες ἠφίει: ἔπειτα ἐξ αὐτῶν πταρμὸς καὶ βράγχος ἐπεγίγνετο, καὶ ἐν οὐ πολλῷ χρόνῳ κατέβαινεν ἐς τὰ στήθη ὁ πόνος μετὰ βηχὸς ἰσχυροῦ: καὶ ὁπότε ἐς τὴν καρδίαν στηρίξειεν, ἀνέστρεφέ τε αὐτὴν καὶ ἀποκαθάρσεις χολῆς πᾶσαι ὅσαι ὑπὸ ἰατρῶν ὠνομασμέναι εἰσὶν ἐπῆσαν, καὶ αὗται μετὰ ταλαιπωρίας μεγάλης. λύγξ τε τοῖς πλέοσιν ἐνέπιπτε κενή, σπασμὸν ἐνδιδοῦσα ἰσχυρόν, τοῖς μὲν μετὰ ταῦτα λωφήσαντα, τοῖς δὲ καὶ πολλῷ ὕστερον. καὶ τὸ μὲν ἔξωθεν ἁπτομένῳ σῶμα οὔτ᾽ ἄγαν θερμὸν ἦν οὔτε χλωρόν, ἀλλ᾽ ὑπέρυθρον, πελιτνόν, φλυκταίναις μικραῖς καὶ ἕλκεσιν ἐξηνθηκός: τὰ δὲ ἐντὸς οὕτως ἐκάετο ὥστε μήτε τῶν πάνυ λεπτῶν ἱματίων καὶ σινδόνων τὰς ἐπιβολὰς μηδ᾽ ἄλλο τι ἢ γυμνοὶ ἀνέχεσθαι, ἥδιστά τε ἂν ἐς ὕδωρ ψυχρὸν σφᾶς αὐτοὺς ῥίπτειν. καὶ πολλοὶ τοῦτο τῶν ἠμελημένων ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἔδρασαν ἐς φρέατα, τῇ δίψῃ ἀπαύστῳ ξυνεχόμενοι: καὶ ἐν τῷ ὁμοίῳ καθειστήκει τό τε πλέον καὶ ἔλασσον ποτόν. καὶ ἡ ἀπορία τοῦ μὴ ἡσυχάζειν καὶ ἡ ἀγρυπνία ἐπέκειτο διὰ παντός. καὶ τὸ σῶμα, ὅσονπερ χρόνον καὶ ἡ νόσος ἀκμάζοι, οὐκ ἐμαραίνετο, ἀλλ᾽ ἀντεῖχε παρὰ δόξαν τῇ ταλαιπωρίᾳ, ὥστε ἢ διεφθείροντο οἱ πλεῖστοι ἐναταῖοι καὶ ἑβδομαῖοι ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐντὸς καύματος, ἔτι ἔχοντές τι δυνάμεως, ἢ εἰ διαφύγοιεν, ἐπικατιόντος τοῦ νοσήματος ἐς τὴν κοιλίαν καὶ ἑλκώσεώς τε αὐτῇ ἰσχυρᾶς ἐγγιγνομένης καὶ διαρροίας ἅμα ἀκράτου ἐπιπιπτούσης οἱ πολλοὶ ὕστερον δι᾽ αὐτὴν ἀσθενείᾳ διεφθείροντο. διεξῄει γὰρ διὰ παντὸς τοῦ σώματος ἄνωθεν ἀρξάμενον τὸ ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ πρῶτον ἱδρυθὲν κακόν, καὶ εἴ τις ἐκ τῶν μεγίστων περιγένοιτο, τῶν γε ἀκρωτηρίων ἀντίληψις αὐτοῦ ἐπεσήμαινεν. κατέσκηπτε γὰρ ἐς αἰδοῖα καὶ ἐς ἄκρας χεῖρας καὶ πόδας, καὶ πολλοὶ στερισκόμενοι τούτων διέφευγον, εἰσὶ δ᾽ οἳ καὶ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν. τοὺς δὲ καὶ λήθη ἐλάμβανε παραυτίκα ἀναστάντας τῶν πάντων ὁμοίως, καὶ ἠγνόησαν σφᾶς τε αὐτοὺς καὶ τοὺς ἐπιτηδείους.

spectacle of men dying like sheep, through having caught the infection in nursing each other," which "caused the greatest mortality" (II.51.4).[63]

The plague spread throughout the city and was likely made worse by Pericles' strategy for the Athenians to stay inside the city's walls. Robert Luginbill explains further that "Thucydides represents the original Athenian strategy of this period as an uncharacteristically low-risk, defensive one, thanks to the foresight and influence of Pericles" (137), and the politician encouraged the Athenians to rely on their navy for protection, and not to expand their land while actively engaged in warfare (Thuc. II.65.7).[64] According to the historian, this strategy was prudent, as Pericles accurately perceived the power of the Athenian forces.[65] However, the Athenian *dēmos* became angry with Pericles because many of their number were decimated by the plague. Thucydides describes the dire conditions: "Their land had now been twice laid waste; and war and pestilence at once pressed heavy upon them" (II.59.1)[66] and, after Sparta invaded for a second time, "Their despair was now complete and all vented itself upon Pericles" (II.59.2).[67] In his final oration, during which he needed to rouse the citizenry to support his political initiatives once again, Pericles had to find a way to redirect the Athenians' anger away from him and toward more productive targets, namely, their Spartan foes. If, according to Aristotle, one does not feel anger toward a generic target, then Pericles ran

[63] δεινότατον δὲ παντὸς ἦν τοῦ κακοῦ ἥ τε ἀθυμία ὁπότε τις αἴσθοιτο κάμνων (πρὸς γὰρ τὸ ἀνέλπιστον εὐθὺς τραπόμενοι τῇ γνώμῃ πολλῷ μᾶλλον προΐεντο σφᾶς αὐτοὺς…) καὶ ὅτι ἕτερος ἀφ᾽ ἑτέρου θεραπείας ἀναπιμπλάμενοι ὥσπερ τὰ πρόβατα ἔθνῃσκον: καὶ τὸν πλεῖστον φθόρον τοῦτο ἐνεποίει.

[64] ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἡσυχάζοντάς τε καὶ τὸ ναυτικὸν θεραπεύοντας καὶ ἀρχὴν μὴ ἐπικτωμένους ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ μηδὲ τῇ πόλει κινδυνεύοντας ἔφη περιέσεσθαι…. "He told them to wait quietly, to pay attention to their marine, to attempt no new conquests, and to expose the city to no hazards during the war, and doing this, promised them a favorable result."

[65] …ἐπειδή τε ὁ πόλεμος κατέστη, ὁ δὲ φαίνεται καὶ ἐν τούτῳ προγνοὺς τὴν δύναμιν. (II.65.5) "When the war broke out, here also he seems to have rightly gauged the power of his country."

[66] ὡς ἥ τε γῆ αὐτῶν ἐτέτμητο τὸ δεύτερον καὶ ἡ νόσος ἐπέκειτο ἅμα καὶ ὁ πόλεμος….

[67] πανταχόθεν τε τῇ γνώμῃ ἄποροι καθεστηκότες ἐνέκειντο τῷ Περικλεῖ.

the risk of functioning as the specific target for his audience's anger. Pericles' task, then, was to redirect their anger from him to the Athenians' enemies, who had been heretofore too nonspecific to incur Athenian wrath. He also selfishly attempted to salvage his military and political legacies that would, ultimately, outlive him.

Thucydides explains how, when Pericles saw the Athenians "exasperated at the present turn of affairs and acting exactly as he had anticipated, he called an assembly" in his role at *strategōs*, and had the dual goals of "restoring confidence and of leading them from these angry feelings to a calmer and more hopeful state of mind" (II.59.2-3).[68] Notably, this explanation of is part of Thucydides' historical narrative, rather than direct speech attributed to Pericles. It is the historian, not the orator, who registers the audience's sentiments and interprets the need for a speech for the reader.

I return to the process of learning to communicate after catastrophic events—that of analyzing the event from a rhetorical perspective, dismantling preexisting beliefs concerning communication, and rebuilding an understanding of effective communication—described in Chapter II. In Pericles' final speech and Obama's speech on common-sense gun reform, both orators take their respective audiences through this process, the goal of which was unity: for Pericles, he encouraged unity so his audience would follow his political lead and improve his personal reputation, ultimately reinforcing the political hierarchy and dividing him from his audience, while Obama encouraged unity to defer retaliatory violence and help enact political change, and this unity required him to identify with his audience and dissipate the existing hierarchy.

[68] πανταχόθεν τε τῇ γνώμῃ ἄποροι καθεστηκότες ἐνέκειντο τῷ Περικλεῖ. ὁ δὲ ὁρῶν αὐτοὺς πρὸς τὰ παρόντα χαλεπαίνοντας καὶ πάντα ποιοῦντας ἅπερ αὐτὸς ἤλπιζε, ξύλλογον ποιήσας (ἔτι δ᾽ ἐστρατήγει) ἐβούλετο θαρσῦναί τε καὶ ἀπαγαγὼν τὸ ὀργιζόμενον τῆς γνώμης πρὸς τὸ ἠπιώτερον καὶ ἀδεέστερον καταστῆσαι: παρελθὼν δὲ ἔλεξε τοιάδε.

Establishing Anger: Negotiating Division and Identification

Pericles began his oration by specifically delineating his oratorical agenda. He stated that he was "not unprepared for the indignation of which I have been the object, as I know its causes," and, in fact, he had "called an assembly for the purpose of reminding you upon certain points, and of protesting against your being unreasonably irritated with me, or cowed by your sufferings" (II.60.1).[69] He immediately established himself as a leader who was well-aware of the feelings of his fellow citizens and would not bend to their will. He explained that, while an individual "may be personally ever so well off," if the country were to be ruined, that individual "must be ruined with it" (II.60.3).[70] As explored in the previous chapter, Pericles' status as a citizen-orator necessitated that he both identify himself with the citizenry and stand apart as an exemplary member. Here, too, he negotiated his identity as an individual and as a member of the democratic collective; by stating that if the country were ruined then individuals would be ruined as well, he appeared to prize the *pōlis*—the unified collective—above all else. His insistence that he separate himself from that collective, however, indicated otherwise.

According to Pericles, it was the responsibility of each individual to defend the city, a responsibility the Athenians were not upholding because they were "so confounded with your domestic afflictions as to give up all thoughts of the common safety, and to blame me for having counselled war and yourselves for having voted it"

[69] καὶ προσδεχομένῳ μοι τὰ τῆς ὀργῆς ὑμῶν ἕς με γεγένηται (αἰσθάνομαι γὰρ τὰς αἰτίας) καὶ ἐκκλησίαν τούτου ἕνεκα ξυνήγαγον, ὅπως ὑπομνήσω καὶ μέμψωμαι εἴ τι μὴ ὀρθῶς ἢ ἐμοὶ χαλεπαίνετε ἢ ταῖς ξυμφοραῖς εἴκετε.

[70] καλῶς μὲν γὰρ φερόμενος ἀνὴρ τὸ καθ᾽ ἑαυτὸν διαφθειρομένης τῆς πατρίδος οὐδὲν ἧσσον ξυναπόλλυται….

(II.60.4).[71] As for blaming the statesman himself, he stated that, "if you are angry with me, it is with one who, as I believe, is second to no man either in knowledge of the proper policy, or in the ability to expound it, and who is moreover not only a patriot but an honest one" (II.60.5).[72] The word for "patriot" here is *philōpolis*, literally one who loves the city. Pericles divided himself from the Athenians by describing himself not only as an exemplary citizen but as the *best* citizen, then quickly identified himself with his audience as one of countless others who also love the city of Athens. Immediately upon beginning his speech, Pericles negotiated his status as both an exemplary individual and a member of the *pōlis*, and focused his anger on the Athenians and attempted to protect his own reputation.

Obama began his speech not by separating himself from but in solidarity with his audience. After having been introduced by Mark Barden, whose son Daniel was one of the 20 first-graders murdered at Sandy Hook Elementary School, Obama described how he still remembered the first time the two men met, "the time we spent together, and the conversation we had about Daniel. And that changed me that day. And my hope, earnestly, has been that it would change the country."[73] If he himself had been persuaded toward action by his conversation and identification with Barden, perhaps Obama would be able to spread this change among the citizenry through the same methods.

Obama then turned to his role as president by explaining that, "Five years ago this week, a sitting member of Congress and 18 others were shot at, at a supermarket in

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[71] …ταῖς κατ᾽ οἶκον κακοπραγίαις ἐκπεπληγμένοι τοῦ κοινοῦ τῆς σωτηρίας ἀφίεσθε, καὶ ἐμέ τε τὸν παραινέσαντα πολεμεῖν καὶ ὑμᾶς αὐτοὺς οἳ ξυνέγνωτε δι᾽ αἰτίας ἔχετε.

[72] καίτοι ἐμοὶ τοιούτῳ ἀνδρὶ ὀργίζεσθε ὃς οὐδενὸς ἥσσων οἶομαι εἶναι γνῶναί τε τὰ δέοντα καὶ ἑρμηνεῦσαι ταῦτα, φιλόπολίς τε καὶ χρημάτων κρείσσων.

[73] All quotes from Obama's speech adapted from "Remarks by the President on Common-Sense Gun Safety Reform."

Tucson, Arizona," and that instance "wasn't the first time I had to talk to the nation in response to a mass shooting, nor would it be the last." This statement had a slight ring of paternalism, as though Obama needed to lecture the U.S. as a father would a child. Obama reminded the audience of the events in Tucson (explored in Chapter II) before listing locations where mass shootings had taken place in the years since: "Fort Hood. Binghamton. Aurora. Oak Creek. Newtown. The Navy Yard. Santa Barbara. Charleston. San Bernardino. Too many." Engaging in momentary call-and-response, multiple audience members repeated the phrase "Too many." Within the first minutes of his speech, Obama had both identified himself with his audiences and subtly reminded the audience of his powerful political position.

He then joked with Representative Gabrielle Giffords' husband, Mark Kelly, whose twin brother Scott, like Mark himself, was an astronaut and at the time "in outer space." Obama described how Mark "came to [my] office, and I said, how often are you talking to [Scott]? And he says, well, I usually talk to him every day, but the call was coming in right before the meeting so I think I may have not answered his call, which made me feel kind of bad." The audience chuckled, and Obama waited a beat before stating, "That's a long-distance call." This moment of levity encouraged the audience to see Obama as a fellow American rather than solely as a politician.

After eliciting chuckles from his audience, Obama became serious once more and regained his presidential composure. He explained that the "more than 30,000 Americans [who] have their lives cut short by guns" every year weighed on his mind, deaths due to suicide, domestic violence, gang violence, and gun-related accidents. He articulated how "Hundreds of thousands of Americans have lost brothers and sisters, or buried their own

children," and how "Many have had to learn to live with a disability, or learned to live without the love of their life." Then he noted that some of those people were in the room, people who could "tell you some stories." "In this room right here," he stated, "there are a lot of stories," "a lot of strength," but "also a lot of pain." In this way he began to draw his audience together in solidarity due to their shared experiences. It was as though, as president, Obama also shared in each of these experiences as would a family member.

It was only after he began to rhetorically unify his audience that he began to express his frustration, his emotions still very controlled. He noted that, while the U.S. "is not the only country on Earth with violent or dangerous people" and "not inherently more prone to violence," the U.S. was "the only advanced country on Earth that sees this kind of mass violence erupt with this kind of frequency," his voice raising to an exasperated staccato. "It's not even close," he stated with subtle frustration. As Keenan commented regarding Obama and the "tragic cycle" of gun violence, Obama lamented that "somehow we've become numb" to such frequent instanced of gun violence, which then caused people to "start thinking that this is normal." Note that Obama used possessive pronouns to describe how "*we've* become numb" and "*we* start thinking that this is normal." Rather than separate himself from the citizenry as Pericles did with the Athenians, Obama associated himself with his audience, even and especially when expressing emotion.

Unpacking Anger

Pericles and Obama then analyzed and attempted to dismantle the current state of communication in their respective political systems. For Pericles, his frustration stemmed from the lack of support given to him by the Athenians; thus, "communication" for him

meant "compliance." Rather than sidestepping the Athenians' anger, Pericles openly recognized his audience's anger toward him, and became angry in return:

> I am the same man and do not change: but you change, since it seemed beneficial to you to be persuaded while you were unharmed, but to regret your choices while you are suffering, and my strategy does not appear right to your weakness of thought, because to be grieved possesses sensation for each person; but the manifestation of the advantage is still absent for everyone, and, with this reverse of fortune having befallen you within a brief span of time, your resolve is too weak to achieve the things which you planned. (II.61.2)[74]

Pericles painted the Athenians as capricious and weak, which he contrasted with his own steadfastness. The division is emphasized by the use of the particles *mēn* and *dē* with the pronouns *egō* ("I") and *humeīs* ("you"): *kaī egō mēn…humeīs dē*. While Pericles was the "same man," there were many in the audience who supported his defensive strategy originally but who ceased to support him once they began to suffer losses. He continued to emphasize this division when he underscored the audience's responsibility to Athens itself; since the audience had been born "citizens of a great state," raised "with habits equal to your birth," they should have been "ready to face the greatest disasters" (II.61.4),[75] the implication being that Pericles had already lived up to his Athenian pedigree, while the audience had not.

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[74] καὶ ἐγὼ μὲν ὁ αὐτός εἰμι καὶ οὐκ ἐξίσταμαι: ὑμεῖς δὲ μεταβάλλετε, ἐπειδὴ ξυνέβη ὑμῖν πεισθῆναι μὲν ἀκεραίοις, μεταμέλειν δὲ κακουμένοις, καὶ τὸν ἐμὸν λόγον ἐν τῷ ὑμετέρῳ ἀσθενεῖ τῆς γνώμης μὴ ὀρθὸν φαίνεσθαι, διότι τὸ μὲν λυποῦν ἔχει ἤδη τὴν αἴσθησιν ἑκάστῳ, τῆς δὲ ὠφελίας ἄπεστιν ἔτι ἡ δήλωσις ἅπασι, καὶ μεταβολῆς μεγάλης, καὶ ταύτης ἐξ ὀλίγου, ἐμπεσούσης ταπεινὴ ὑμῶν ἡ διάνοια ἐγκαρτερεῖν ἃ ἔγνωτε.

[75] ὅμως δὲ πόλιν μεγάλην οἰκοῦντας καὶ ἐν ἤθεσιν ἀντιπάλοις αὐτῇ τεθραμμένους χρεὼν καὶ ξυμφοραῖς ταῖς μεγίσταις ἐθέλειν ὑφίστασθαι καὶ τὴν ἀξίωσιν μὴ ἀφανίζειν (ἐν ἴσῳ γὰρ οἱ ἄνθρωποι δικαιοῦσι τῆς τε

Pericles then demanded that they cease "to grieve for…private afflictions," and instead address themselves "to the safety of the commonwealth" (II.61.4).[76] He continued to berate his audience by stating that their "country has a right to your services in sustaining the glories of her position" and that these are "a common source of pride to you all," and they "cannot decline the burdens of empire and still expect to share its honors" (II.63.1).[77] Of those who disapproved of his strategy and did not support his leadership, Pericles described how they could convert others to their side, and "would quickly ruin a state"; thus, these "unambitious" men would "never [be] secure without vigorous protectors at their side,"[78] and in fact such men would be "useless to an imperial city" (II.63.3).[79] If those in his audience had thought of themselves as brave or valuable to Athens, Pericles was quick to reject their logic.

The orator encouraged his audience not to "be seduced by citizens like these" who would change tactics and blame Pericles, nor should they have been angry with Pericles, who, if he voted for war, "only did as you did yourselves" (II.64.1).[80] In this way he both divided his audience into "good" and "bad"—those citizens attempting to seduce others with their lies, and those citizens who were to resist—while also reminding the audience

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ὑπαρχούσης δόξης αἰτιᾶσθαι ὅστις μαλακίᾳ ἐλλείπει καὶ τῆς μὴ προσηκούσης μισεῖν τὸν θρασύτητι ὀρεγόμενον)….

[76] …ἀπαλγήσαντας δὲ τὰ ἴδια τοῦ κοινοῦ τῆς σωτηρίας ἀντιλαμβάνεσθαι.

[77] τῆς τε πόλεως ὑμᾶς εἰκὸς τῷ τιμωμένῳ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄρχειν, ᾧπερ ἅπαντες ἀγάλλεσθε, βοηθεῖν, καὶ μὴ φεύγειν τοὺς πόνους ἢ μηδὲ τὰς τιμὰς διώκειν: μηδὲ νομίσαι περὶ ἑνὸς μόνου, δουλείας ἀντ᾽ ἐλευθερίας, ἀγωνίζεσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀρχῆς στερήσεως καὶ κινδύνου ὧν ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ ἀπήχθεσθε.

[78] τάχιστ᾽ ἄν τε πόλιν οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἑτέρους τε πείσαντες ἀπολέσειαν καὶ εἴ που ἐπὶ σφῶν αὐτῶν αὐτόνομοι οἰκήσειαν: τὸ γὰρ ἄπραγμον οὐ σῴζεται μὴ μετὰ τοῦ δραστηρίου τεταγμένον….

[79] οὐδὲ ἐν ἀρχούσῃ πόλει ξυμφέρει

[80] ὑμεῖς δὲ μήτε ὑπὸ τῶν τοιῶνδε πολιτῶν παράγεσθε μήτε ἐμὲ δι᾽ ὀργῆς ἔχετε, ᾧ καὶ αὐτοὶ ξυνδιέγνωτε πολεμεῖν….

that, at least at some point, his own political positions agreed with those of the majority of the voting body. He argued that the plague was "the only point indeed at which our calculation has been at fault," which "had a large share in making me more unpopular than I should otherwise have been" (II.64.1).[81] Blaming Pericles for the plague was unfair, he argued, unless those in the audience were "also prepared to give me the credit of any success with which chance may present you" (II.64.1).[82] It had been the custom in Athens to meet evils caused by enemies "with fortitude," and, he warned the audience, "do not prevent it being so still" (II.64.2).[83]

As for Obama, he transitioned to analysis portion of his speech when he stated that, "instead of thinking about how to solve the problem" of continued gun violence, it had "become one of our most polarized, partisan debates—despite the fact that there's a general consensus in America about what needs to be done." The division he noted was not between Obama and his audience, but between political parties, and Obama's goal was ultimately "to bring good people on both sides of this issue together for an open discussion." He highlighted the fact that he was "not on the ballot again" and "not looking to score some points" with the audience. He argued that people should disagree "without impugning other people's motives" or talking past one another." However, he believed the public should "feel a sense of urgency" because "people are dying," and "the constant excuses for inaction no longer do, no longer suffice." He articulated his agenda as "Not to debate the last mass shooting, but to do something to try to prevent the next

[81] …ἐπιγεγένηταί τε πέρα ὧν προσεδεχόμεθα ἡ νόσος ἥδε, πρᾶγμα μόνον δὴ τῶν πάντων ἐλπίδος κρεῖσσον γεγενημένον.

[82] καὶ δι' αὐτὴν οἶδ' ὅτι μέρος τι μᾶλλον ἔτι μισοῦμαι, οὐ δικαίως, εἰ μὴ καὶ ὅταν παρὰ λόγον τι εὖ πράξητε ἐμοὶ ἀναθήσετε.

[83] φέρειν δὲ χρὴ τά τε δαιμόνια ἀναγκαίως τά τε ἀπὸ τῶν πολεμίων ἀνδρείως: ταῦτα γὰρ ἐν ἔθει τῇδε τῇ πόλει πρότερόν τε ἦν νῦν τε μὴ ἐν ὑμῖν κωλυθῇ.

one," which was met with applause. Obama used his paternalistic, presidential register to instill a sense of urgency in the audience, but he was quick to point out that he did this not for personal reasons in order to get reelected, but because he, like his audience, cared about the safety of those residing in the U.S.

He then addressed some misconceptions: though he had "said this over and over again," he recognized the Second Amendment, but believed "that we can find ways to reduce gun violence consistent" with that amendment. He described how Senator Joe Manchin, a Democrat from West Virginia, and Senator Pat Toomey, a Republican from Pennsylvania, worked together to compose a bill that "would have required virtually everyone who buys a gun to get a background check," which Obama believed was "Pretty common-sense stuff." Though, according to the President, 90 percent of Americans supported universal background checks, and 90 percent of Democrats in the Senate voted in favor of the bill, the bill failed because most Republicans voted against it. In analyzing how people in the U.S. communicated about gun safety reform, Obama maintained that the compromise and unity that had joined Manchin and Toomey was not to be found among other senators.

Obama wondered how gun reform had become "such a partisan issue." He asked the crowd, "How did we get here? How did we get to the place where people think requiring a comprehensive background check means taking away people's guns?" Once again, the use of possessive pronouns reinforced how he included himself in the group with whom he was frustrated. Obama argued that, each time gun safety reform was on the table, "we are fed the excuse that common-sense reforms like background checks might not have stopped the last massacre… so why bother trying." He noted definitively, "I

reject that thinking," and his voice lowered a bit when he said, "We know we can't stop every act of violence, every act of evil in the world. But maybe we could try to stop one act of evil, one act of violence."

Obama completed his analysis when he reinforced the division not between himself and his audience, but division between members of Congress and their constituents. He stated that "nobody argues that guns are potentially deadly," but that "Congress actually voted to make it harder for public health experts to conduct research into gun violence" that would ultimately aim "to reduce gun violence." He maintained that "the gun lobby may be holding Congress hostage right now, but they cannot hold America hostage" and that "*We* do not have to accept this carnage as the price of freedom" (my emphasis). By arguing that everyone agrees that guns are potentially deadly, but that Congress did not vote in favor of further research to reduce gun violence, Obama argued that his line of thinking was logical and would reduce violence, while the path Congress took would not. In this way, he positioned himself in opposition to Congress, but as on the same side as his audience.

Reunifying and Rebuilding Communication

In an effort to unify his audience in support of a common cause after having criticized them harshly, Pericles attempted to rally his audience around their Athenian heritage. He urged them to remember that if Athens had "the greatest name in all the world," it was because the city had "never bent before disaster" (II.64.3).[84] Moreover, he emphasized, the effort Athenians had exerted in the past in war was equal to the rewards for doing so: because Athens had "expended more life and effort in war than any other

[84] γνῶτε δὲ ὄνομα μέγιστον αὐτὴν ἔχουσαν ἐν ἅπασιν ἀνθρώποις διὰ τὸ ταῖς ξυμφοραῖς μὴ εἴκειν…

city," it had also won "a power greater than any hitherto known, [and] the memory of which will descend to the latest posterity" (II.64.3).[85] He then used first-person plural verbs to describe Athens' success: "even if now…*we* should ever be forced to yield [*hupendōmen*], still it will be remembered that *we* held rule [*ērxamen*] over more Hellenes than any other Hellenic state," and that "*we* sustained [*antēschomen*] the greatest wars against their united or separate powers, and inhabited [*okēsamen*] a city unrivalled by any other in resources or magnitude" (II.64.3, my emphasis).[86] Pericles separated himself from the masses when he criticized their cowardice, but included himself in the collective when praising Athens' noble past and promising future.

Pericles also insisted that hatred is short-lived, but "that which makes the splendor of the present and the glory of the future remains forever unforgotten" (II.64.5).[87] Here, the orator implied that he could forgive and forget the Athenians' lack of support, as long as they were willing to follow his directives in the future. He ended his speech by stating that "they whose minds are least sensitive to calamity, and whose hands are most quick to meet it, are the greatest men and the greatest communities" (II.64.6).[88] Once again, he compelled his audience to unite in support of his strategies by implying that doing so would lead them to become the greatest men residing in the greatest city. Even as his

[85] …πλεῖστα δὲ σώματα καὶ πόνους ἀνηλωκέναι πολέμῳ, καὶ δύναμιν μεγίστην δὴ μέχρι τοῦδε κεκτημένην, ἧς ἐς ἀΐδιον τοῖς ἐπιγιγνομένοις….

[86] …ἣν καὶ νῦν ὑπενδῶμέν ποτε…μνήμη καταλελείψεται, Ἑλλήνων τε ὅτι Ἕλληνες πλείστων δὴ ἤρξαμεν, καὶ πολέμοις μεγίστοις ἀντέσχομεν πρός τε ξύμπαντας καὶ καθ᾽ ἑκάστους, πόλιν τε τοῖς πᾶσιν εὐπορωτάτην καὶ μεγίστην ᾠκήσαμεν.

[87] …μῖσος μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἐπὶ πολὺ ἀντέχει, ἡ δὲ παραυτίκα τε λαμπρότης καὶ ἐς τὸ ἔπειτα δόξα αἰείμνηστος καταλείπεται.

[88] …ὡς οἵτινες πρὸς τὰς ξυμφορὰς γνώμῃ μὲν ἥκιστα λυποῦνται, ἔργῳ δὲ μάλιστα ἀντέχουσιν, οὗτοι καὶ πόλεων καὶ ἰδιωτῶν κράτιστοί εἰσιν.

speech came to a close, Pericles reinforced the separation between himself and those in the audience.

As for Obama, in the final portion of his speech he delineated how he believed the U.S. should approach continued gun violence. Although "we can reduce gun violence a whole lot more" once Congress approved of such measures, we "also can't wait" for that to happen. And so, "Until we have a Congress that's in line with the majority of Americans, there are actions within my legal authority that we can take to help reduce gun violence and save more lives." If as an audience member one had been in agreement up to this point in the speech—that political action was necessary to curb gun violence, and that Congress refused to act in the best interest of Americans—then one would presumably agree with Obama that he should take executive action. He then outlined his plans for gun safety reform, including requiring background checks for those selling guns, expanding background checks to prevent violent criminals from purchasing firearms, ensuring current gun safety laws are enforced, and increasing gun safety technology. He reinforced that "none of us can do this alone," and that "All of us should be able to work together to find a balance" to ensure Second Amendment rights are protected, but also the "right to worship freely and safely," which was denied to Christians in Charleston, Jews in Kansas City, Muslims in Chapel Hill, and Sikhs in Oak Creek. Raising his voice, he emphasized that the right to peaceful assembly "was robbed from moviegoers in Aurora and Lafayette," and the "unalienable right to life, and liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" was "stripped from college students in Blacksburg and Santa Barbara, and from high schoolers at Columbine, and from first-graders in Newtown."

Like Obama's singing of "Amazing Grace" at the end of his speech in Charleston, the most memorable and oft-reported section of his speech on gun safety reform was the moment when he began to weep. His voice cracked and his eyes filled with tears as he repeated incredulously, "First-graders." He paused to wipe his eyes and rested his hand on his mouth, composing himself, before saying quietly, "Every time I think about those kids it gets me mad." He pointed at the audience and reminded them that gun violence also occurs "on the streets of Chicago every day." Maya Rhodan points out that crying for Obama was not unusual; he cried at Vice President Joe Biden's son's funeral, at a retirement ceremony for former Attorney General Eric Holder, and, of course, the day of the Newtown shooting. However, Rhodan argues, his tears during the gun safety reform speech "seemed to come from a different place"—that as much as they were "about the sadness of the deaths of innocents," his tears also indicated "a recognition of his powerlessness to change the situation." Rhodan describes the ceremony as "designed to create the opposite of closure, to pick at a wound and make it raw again" in order to mobilize voters, and Obama organically performed that lack of closure through his weeping.

Moreover, Obama's weeping allowed his audience to identify even more strongly with him. Rather than reinforce the hierarchy between the president and everyday Americans, his crying—and difficulty keeping himself from crying—revealed him to be one member of the citizen body among many, as an individual dependent upon all other members of the citizenry. Obama then urged "all of us" to "demand a Congress brave enough to stand up to the gun lobby's lies," and that "All of us need to stand up and protect" fellow Americans "to demand governors and legislatures and businesses do their

part to make our communities safer." And though "the gun lobby is loud," those in favor of gun reform "have to be just as passionate." He said near the end of his speech:

> But if we love our kids and care about their prospects, and if we love this country and care about its future, then we can find the courage to vote. We can find the courage to get mobilized and organized. We can find the courage to cut through all the noise and do what a sensible country would do.

Obama reminded his audience in the room and those watching on television that, rather than remaining numb in the face of escalating violence, they could work together using civil discourse to enact material change on the local and national levels to prevent further violence.

Athenian Individualism and Unity in the United States

Among Pericles' primary concerns in his final oration was his personal legacy after death. Even if the Athenians had not approved of his policies, Pericles trusted that he would be remembered appropriately in the future. Indeed, this appears to be true; Thucydides tells us that, though the Athenians must have been angry with him, at least at first—the historian notes that the statesman must pay a fine[89]— Pericles' foresight toward war "became better known by his death."[90] Athenian democracy allowed for and encouraged the disparity between exemplary citizen and common people. For this reason, Pericles' anger at the Athenians ultimately motivated them to follow his directives, unifying the citizen body which the statesman led.

[89] οὐ μέντοι πρότερόν γε οἱ ξύμπαντες ἐπαύσαντο ἐν ὀργῇ ἔχοντες αὐτὸν πρὶν ἐζημίωσαν χρήμασιν. (II.65.3) "In fact, the public feeling against him did not subside until he had been fined."

[90] … καὶ ἐπειδὴ ἀπέθανεν, ἐπὶ πλέον ἔτι ἐγνώσθη ἡ πρόνοια αὐτοῦ ἡ ἐς τὸν πόλεμον. (II.65.6)

In the U.S., such a hierarchy—even if it exists—is not part of either the official governmental procedure or the American ideal. On the contrary, Constitutionally the executive branch and the president himself are one piece of a larger system of government, and the system rests on the balance of power and the voice of the common people. Thus, Obama expressed anger at continued instances of gun violence in his speech, but this anger was intended to unify him with his audience in service of a common cause.

CHAPTER V

RHETORICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND MATERIAL CHANGE

In each of the three preceding chapters, I have explored one speech delivered by President Barack Obama after instances of gun violence in the context of Athenian *epitāphioi* and, more broadly, alongside the fifth-century BCE politician and orator Pericles. By placing ancient and modern political rhetoric and funerary speech in dialogue, I have endeavored to bring into relief the pedagogical, deliberative, and unifying functions of both *epitāphioi* and national eulogy. I have argued that Obama's speeches were composed and delivered in the tradition of classical oratory—though the extent to which the speeches were consciously influenced by such a tradition, even at the close of this dissertation, remains a subject of debate—but also departed from the conventions of this tradition. It is in these differences that I believe we may uncover how U.S. democratic republicanism allows for a greater range of post-catastrophe political speech than does the democracy of classical Athens, but also relies on the relegation of non-white, non-masculine voices to maintain a single, united national identity in its eulogistic speeches.

The shooting in Tucson in 2011 and Representative Giffords' temporary "silence" due to her coma necessitated that Obama speak on her behalf. However, unlike in Athenian *epitāphioi*, which did not allow for women's voices, in Obama's speech, he emphasized that Giffords had been temporarily silenced because of her willingness to engage vocally with the public, and he used her voice to educate the audience about how to engage in productive dialogue after such tragic events. In his Charleston speech in 2015, Obama spoke both to members of the Black Church and the national Black

community more broadly, and spoke to "all Americans." To encourage the latter audience to vote for political leaders who would support gun reform initiatives, he engaged with the tradition of classical *epitāphioi* through President Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*, a tradition in the U.S. that has historically upheld white supremacy. Finally, in his speech on common-sense gun safety reform in 2016, Obama expressed anger, and he did so by identifying himself with his audience in order to unite them in a common cause. Unlike Pericles, who, in his final speech, became angry with the Athenians, Obama included himself in the community with which he was angry; these dissimilar approaches underscore the socio-political hierarchy upon which Athenian democracy rested, and the egalitarianism toward which modern U.S. democracy ideally aims.

Just as catastrophe itself marks the end of the main action and the beginning of the dénouement, so too this conclusion functions as a commencement, marking the end of one project and beginning of another. I begin this conclusion by examining more closely the process of deferral in the aftermath of violence, and end by enumerating possible paths this project may follow in the future.

Deconstruction, Deferral, and the "Human Barnyard"

In this dissertation, I have argued that the process of rebuilding communication after catastrophic events by means of eulogistic speech requires three steps: analyzing the event from a rhetorical perspective, dismantling previously held ideas and beliefs concerning language and communication, and rebuilding an understanding of functional communication. This process was discussed in detail in Chapter II, and I argue that its goal in the context of eulogy is a continual deferral of reactive violence. Onto these three

steps I have mapped the functions of national eulogy: pedagogical, deliberative, and unifying. The eulogy occupies a liminal moment between action and reaction, memorializing those whose lives have ended and marking the possible beginning of a resolution.

Arguments regarding the eulogist's opportunity to promote possible nonviolent resolutions rest on the belief that language has the power to help rebuild after catastrophic events. With language comes aid, and with language comes empathy. But language necessarily has the potential to inspire further violence. To illustrate the potential of post-catastrophe speech and the nonviolent power of the rhetorical deconstructive process, I wish to turn to the story of Babel. When read allegorically, this story may aid us in understanding the difficulty but also the possibility of communicating after catastrophe. God's destruction of Babel may be categorized as a catastrophic event, a closing-off of the possibility of discourse. However, after such events we are left with an opening-up of linguistic possibilities that can prevent verbal communication. The above process that takes place in the wake of catastrophic events may forestall further tragic action.

In "Des tours de Babel", Jacques Derrida argues that the biblical story of Babel not only tells "of the inadequation of one tongue to another, of one place in the encyclopedia to another, of language to itself and to meaning, and so forth, [but] it also tells of the need for figuration, for myth, for tropes, for twists and turns, for translation inadequate to supply that which multiplicity denies us" (191). The story of Babel, told in the book of Genesis in the Hebrew Bible, is quite short. After the flood, the sons of Shem speak a single language. In the land of Shine'ar, they decide to build a city and a tower in an effort to make a name for themselves, "that we not be scattered over the face of all the

earth" (194). However, when God sees the city and the tower, He "[confounds] their lips" and disperses them, which causes them to "cease to build the city" (195). It is not clear from the account in Genesis why, exactly, God destroys the city and tower. We are never told whether God is jealous or angry, and whether the sons of Shem acted hubristically; the motivation for the destruction is ambiguous. Regardless of the account's brevity, this story functions as an allegory for Derrida that "recounts, among other things, the origin of the confusion of tongues, the irreducible multiplicity of idioms, the necessary and impossible task of translation, its necessity as impossibility" (197). And Kenneth Burke himself paints rhetoric as "concerned with the state of Babel after the Fall" (23).

As addressed in Chapter IV, in order to persuade someone of something, one must identify themselves with that person in order to communicate. But the process of identification already implies a sense of difference, for there is no need for rhetoric if there is perfect identification. Burke notes that, in "pure identification, there would be no strife," just as "there would be no strife in absolute separatedness, since opponents can join battle only through a mediatory ground that makes their communication possible, thus providing the first condition necessary for their interchange of blows" (25). Burke views war as the ultimate site of irony because it involves both conflict and cooperation, "wherein millions of cooperative acts go into preparation for one single destructive act" (22). He refers to war as the "ultimate *disease* of cooperation" and argues:

> You will understand war much better if you think of it, not simply as strife come to a head, but rather as a disease, or perversion of communion. Modern war characteristically requires a myriad of constructive acts for each destructive one;

> before each culminating blast there must be a vast network of interlocking operations, directed communally. (22, original emphasis)

It is essential to Burke's conception of rhetoric that war is not the ultimate mark of success, but rather, a "perversion of communion." Although there are individual instances of synergy and communication, the goal of war is one of destruction rather than construction. If we consider the allegory of Babel, then war represents the catastrophic act: the destruction of the tower and the scattering of its people. We do not know why God destroys Babel; there is no explanation offered. The destruction simply represents decisive and total catastrophe. Likewise, war does not promote or encourage continued conversation, nor does it revel in communicative possibility; instead, violence or the threat of violence is used to intimidate and strong-arm an opposing force. Identification has no place in war.

What, then, is the purpose of rhetoric? According to Burke, rhetoric:

> must lead us through the Scramble, the Wrangle of the Market Place, the flurries and flare-ups of the Human Barnyard, the Give and Take, the wavering line of pressure and counterpressure, the Logomachy, the onus of ownership, the Wars of Nerves, the War. (23)

Rhetoric is a tool that allows humans to navigate what Burke affectionately terms the "Human Barnyard." In the wake of the destruction of Babel, the sons of Shem, scattered over the earth, unable to speak the same language, must find a way to communicate. It is not enough to learn a common lip or tongue; they must continue to speak and persuade one another through a process of continual identification and empathy, difference and deferral. The very existence of the process prevents further catastrophe from occurring.

In a similar spirit, rather than approach the subject of rhetoric from a place of self-evident absolutes, Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca choose instead to begin their project of a "new" rhetoric from the Greek notions of rhetoric and dialectic. The authors suggest that people "adhere to opinions of all sorts with a variable intensity, which we can only know by putting it to the test," and such "beliefs are not always self-evident, and they rarely deal with clear and distinct ideas" (511). When differences in beliefs arise, the resulting arguments do not simply exist; rather, "*it is in terms of an audience than an argumentation develops*" (5, original emphasis). Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's understanding of argumentation underscores the value of flexibility and a willingness to change one's mind. They argue that, unlike "authors of scientific reports and similar papers," who "often think that if they merely report certain experiments, mention certain facts, or enunciate a certain number of truths, this is enough of itself to automatically arouse the interest of their hearers or readers," rhetoricians must not take for granted the notion that "facts speak for themselves and make such an indelible imprint on any human mind that the latter is forced to give its adherence regardless of its inclination" (17). Facts only speak for themselves insofar as we take for granted certain moral, ethical, and rhetorical absolutes. Rhetoric does not lose validity because the practice allows speakers to adjust an argument to an audience and question the assumptions on which the argument is founded. Rather, rhetoric is elevated in importance because the authors believe it is not useful "to separate the form of a discourse from its substance, to study stylistic structures and figures independently of the purpose they must achieve in the argumentation" (142). Like the act of God that destroys the tower of Babel, or a definitive interpretation that prevents further exploration of

communicative possibilities, absolutism prohibits discourse and restricts dialogic opportunities.

On the societal level, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca suggest that in "an egalitarian society language belongs to everybody and evolves quite freely," but that "in a hierarchic society it congeals. Its expressions and formulas become ritual and are listened to in a spirit of communion and total submission" (164). If we consider *The New Rhetoric* in light of Derrida and the allegory of Babel, then Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca attempt to prevent catastrophe by promoting continued discourse.

Post-catastrophe speechmaking may be both a response to catastrophe and its counterweight: once catastrophe occurs, it is the responsibility of humans as rhetorical beings to defer further violence in favor of an opening-up of interpretive possibilities. By engaging in discourse, we promise, implicitly and explicitly to one another, to continue talking. As Burke explains, "rhetoric as such is not rooted in any past condition of human society. It is rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols" (43, originally italicized).

In the United States, at a time when one must confront the legal and ethical meanings of citizenship, the purpose of presidential rhetoric, the aim of public oratory, and the state of communal values, let us return to Obama's speech in Charleston in 2015. In the wake of such harrowing tragedy, the president spoke of the compassionate and forgiving power of grace to a congregation of his peers, people who, like the president himself, could have just as easily been the victims of the shooting: "May we find

ourselves worthy of that precious and extraordinary gift, as long as our lives endure." Through the recognition of ourselves in one another, may we protect, uphold, expand, and cultivate the nonviolent, transformative power of rhetoric.

Coda: The Future of *Speaking After Silence*

In the introduction to her 2019 translation of Thucydides' speeches, Johanna Hanink cites John Adams' 1777 recommendation to his then-10-year-old son, John Quincy, to read Thucydides' *History*, which he believed was "full of Instruction to the Orator, the Statesman, the General, as well as to the Historian and the Philosopher" (xvi). There are similar stories from the founding of the United States through the present day, and it is clear that Thucydides has long held a treasured position in American political though. But there still to be explored regarding the relationship between Athenian *epitāphioi* and national eulogies delivered by presidents of the United States. Below, I outline some of the plans for this dissertation and this subject more broadly.

Visualizing Funerary Speech: The Parthenon Frieze as Epitāphios

In future iterations and evolutions of this dissertation, in addition to examining political rhetoric I also plan to examine physical spaces and artifacts and their relationship with e*pitāphios* and national eulogy. One such artifact is the Parthenon and its frieze in Athens. Over two-thirds of the frieze depicts horsemen in various stages of preparation and riding, and John Boardman notes that, of the 138 meters of the frieze, over 80% is devoted to the cavalcade and "its sheer length and possibly even the numbers had a special significance, and excluded the possibility of showing other expected

participants" (328). I believe we may gain valuable insight into the meaning of the frieze—specifically, the large percentage of cavalry—and its relationship to the Battle of Marathon if we consider the representation of the cavalry on the frieze as akin to, and as a visual representation of, a funeral oration. I believe that the art of rhetoric, as it is employed in Athenian oratory, and the art of sculpture, as it is employed on the Parthenon frieze, represent and demonstrate a reverence for past heroic achievements in similar ways, and seek to inspire a democratic impulse in those experiencing such arts.

As noted previously, Nicole Loraux argues that the Battle of Marathon became a necessary topos in funeral orations, a battle that took place in 490 BCE, and during which the considerably smaller Greek force prevailed over Darius I and the Persian army. Ten years later, in 480, led by Darius' son Xerxes, the Persian forces sacked the Acropolis, and destroyed the so-called Older Parthenon, erected on the south side of the Acropolis, and still in progress when it was destroyed (Kousser 264). It is not unlikely, then, that when the Parthenon sculptural program was begun in 447, the memory of both the success at Marathon and the defeat in 480 remained vivid in the Athenian consciousness. As Rachel Kousser notes, between 480 and 447, Athenians engaged in a number of commemorative practices to alternately conceal and come to terms with the Persian sack, and represent what Kousser terms the "collective memory" of the Athenians in the early classical period (269). Indeed, pieces of the destroyed Older Parthenon were incorporated into the Classical Parthenon, and Kousser's notion of a "collective memory" seems remarkably akin to "social memory," explored in Chapter I, that funeral orations typically created and activated (275).

Marathon was undoubtedly an important battle to the Athenians. Of the dead in the early battles of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides notes that they are entombed "in the public sepulcher in the most beautiful suburb of the city, in which those who fall in war are always buried; with the exception of those slain at Marathon, who for their singular and extraordinary valor were interred on the spot where they fell" (II.34.5).[91] Success at Marathon became a necessary element of the Athenian democratic consciousness, and, though Pericles did not mention Marathon, he reinforced the notion that Athens had persisted indefinitely into the past, and that those he addressed ought to ensure that the succession of generations continues into the distant future.

The cavalry depicted on the Parthenon frieze are not unlike the conventions employed in funeral orations. Presumably, Thucydides' Pericles recognized that knowledge of success at Marathon was ubiquitous, and did not feel the need to recount such deeds because they were so well known by the Athenian citizenry. The Parthenon frieze, then, seems an acceptable substitute for a speech: it is a public spectacle that underscores the great deeds of the Athenians and their past achievements, while extolling its citizen body and encouraging them to continue such deeds into the future. It is, then, not outside of the realm of possibility that the Parthenon, having been built using materials from the old Parthenon, and being part of a sculptural program initiated by Pericles in 447 BCE, indicated to visitors an acknowledgement of the past while looking toward the future of a democratic Athens.

It is difficult to view the Parthenon and its frieze as anything other than a celebration of Athenian virtue. On the microscopic level on the frieze, its citizenry and

[91] τιθέασιν οὖν ἐς τὸ δημόσιον σῆμα, ὅ ἐστιν ἐπὶ τοῦ καλλίστου προαστείου τῆς πόλεως, καὶ αἰεὶ ἐν αὐτῷ θάπτουσι τοὺς ἐκ τῶν πολέμων, πλήν γε τοὺς ἐν Μαραθῶνι: ἐκείνων δὲ διαπρεπῆ τὴν ἀρετὴν κρίναντες αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν τάφον ἐποίησαν.

associated persons participate in a procession in honor of its eponymous goddess, whether in her guise as Athena Parthenos or Athena Polias, with the gods observing. Although some of the population who may ordinarily have participated in the procession are not present on the frieze, those who are present represent a cross-section of Athenian life, and can be described as joyous and communal. The frieze, when viewed along with the structure of the Parthenon itself, represents an acknowledgement of the past and encourages current Athenians to continue the legacy of their ancestors by making Athens a strong and flourishing city.

However, there is always, necessarily, an undercurrent of loss in funeral orations, and the same can be said of the Parthenon frieze. Not only, as I suggest, does the cavalcade remind viewers of the success at Marathon; it also, perhaps more so, reminds viewers of those who have perished on behalf of the city. Tonio Hölscher suggests that artistic images, while they "represent the world of reality," also "select specific subjects and motifs relevant for their purpose" and are therefore "reflections of cultural imagination" (2). These reflections differ, but, "in so far as they are produced by the same society, they will have some basic features in common," and this underlying feature Hölscher terms a cultural *habitus* (2). Athens' specific cultural *habitus* with respect to those who died in battle appears similar in both funeral orations and on the Parthenon frieze. As Kousser notes, "the Parthenon repeatedly alluded to the Greek's struggle against the Persians, for instance, through famous mythological contests: battles between men and centaurs, Athenians and Amazons, Greeks and Trojans, gods and giants" (263). Moreover, Kousser maintains that, "[a]s the display of damaged objects gave way to reworkings of the story [of the Persian sack of the *polis* in 479] within the timeless world

of myth, and the memory of the sack became increasingly divorced from it historical foundation" (263). That is, like orators of funeral orations, who rewrote history each time they retold it, creating new communal memories of past events, so, too, the sculptors of the Parthenon frieze rewrote historical events such as the Battle of Marathon and the sack of the city by the Persians into a larger mythico-historical narrative that emphasized the valor, strength, and persistence of Athenian forces and of Athens itself.

The Civilian in Mourning

In a future monograph, *The Civilian in Mourning:* Epitāphios Lōgos*, National Eulogy, and the Construction of Citizenship in the Speeches of Barack Obama*, I will consider Obama's eulogistic speeches in the context of classical Athenian funeral orations to explore to what extent and for what purpose he intentionally or incidentally engaged with classical eulogistic models. Obama sometimes consciously engaged with the classical tradition; however, most often these allusions were subtle, if intentional at all. This monograph will explore how presidents of the United States typically present and perform the notion of citizenship in eulogistic speeches, and will speak to the larger question of what is—and what should be—the place of ancient ideologies in modern American politics. Exploring eulogy will also offer an opportunity to study larger rituals around death and dying in the United States, and how such rituals and performances on a national scale impact how viewers are meant to interpret funerary events.

The monograph itself will be divided into four chapters. The first chapter will consider eulogies delivered in honor of those who have died in war or political conflict. Speeches to be explored in this chapter include Obama's address in May 2012 on the 50th

anniversary of the Vietnam War and his speech in Hiroshima in May 2016. The second chapter will consider eulogies delivered after instances of unexpected violence, and will include the Tucson and Charleston eulogies, as well as Obama's speech in San Bernardino in December 2015. The third chapter, will concern eulogies delivered in honor of former presidents and politicians, and will include his eulogies for Senator John McCain and for President George H. W. Bush. The fourth chapter will concern eulogies delivered in honor of civilians, and will include Obama's speech in December 2006 commemorating World AIDS Day.

Ultimately, this monograph will continue the work I have begun in this dissertation: by intersecting the fields of classical rhetoric and political discourse and modern political rhetoric of the United States, I aim to enrich our understanding of the foundations of political rhetoric of the United States, and the alternately oppressive and expansive possibilities of presidential rhetoric.

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